

Germany cautions virus risk still high as economies restart

June 27 2020, by David Rising and Paul J. Weber



People, social distancing and wearing masks to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, wait in line at a mask distribution event, Friday, June 26, 2020, in a COVID-19 hotspot of the Little Havana neighborhood of Miami. Florida banned alcohol consumption at its bars Friday as its daily confirmed coronavirus cases neared 9,000, a new record that is almost double the previous mark set just two days ago. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel cautioned Saturday that the coronavirus pandemic is far from over, as regional outbreaks gave rise to fears of a second wave. Two of the largest U.S. states reversed course and reinstated some coronavirus restrictions amid a surge in new infections.

India reported more than 18,000 new cases, pushing its cumulative total over the half-million mark, the fourth highest globally behind the U.S., Brazil and Russia. Elsewhere, Egypt and Britain said they would ease virus controls, while China and South Korea battled smaller outbreaks in their capitals.

Merkel said in her weekly video podcast that getting Europe's economy back on track is her primary goal as Germany takes over the rotating European Union presidency next week, but stressed that everyone shared a "joint responsibility" in following social distancing, mask and hygiene rules as lockdown rules are relaxed.

German authorities renewed a lockdown in a western region of about 500,000 people last week after about 1,300 slaughterhouse workers tested positive for COVID-19, in an attempt to prevent the outbreak from spreading across the area.

Germany has recorded nearly 195,000 [coronavirus](#) infections and only around 9,000 deaths, with more than 177,000 recoveries, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.



Lines of cars wait at a coronavirus testing site outside of Hard Rock Stadium, Friday, June 26, 2020, in Miami Gardens, Fla. Florida banned alcohol consumption at its bars Friday as its daily confirmed coronavirus cases neared 9,000, a new record that is almost double the previous mark set just two days ago. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

"The risk posed by the virus is still serious," Merkel said. "It's easy to forget because Germany has gotten through the crisis well so far, but that doesn't mean we are protected, that the risk has been averted; that is not the case, as is demonstrated by these regional outbreaks."

Fans of Germany's Schalke soccer club planned to demonstrate later in the day at the stadium against chairman Clemens Toennies, one of whose companies owns the slaughterhouse where the outbreak began. Workplace and living conditions for migrant workers employed at the

facility have come into focus after the outbreak.

In the U.S., the daily number of confirmed infections surged to an all-time high of 45,300 on Friday, eclipsing the previous high of 40,000 set the previous day, according to Johns Hopkins. Newly reported cases per day have risen on average about 60% over the past two weeks, according to an Associated Press analysis.



Bartender Katie McGranahan pours a beer at the Saint Arnold Brewing Company Friday, June 26, 2020, in Houston. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced Friday that he is shutting bars back down and scaling back restaurant capacity to 50%, in response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Texas.(AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

While the rise partly reflects expanded testing, experts say there is ample evidence the scourge is making a comeback, including rising deaths and hospitalizations in parts of the country and higher percentages of virus tests coming back positive.

About 600 people are dying every day from the coronavirus in the U.S., down from a peak of around 2,200 in mid-April. Some experts doubt that deaths will return to that level, because of advances in treatment and prevention and because younger adults are more likely than older ones to survive.

The virus is blamed for about 125,000 deaths and nearly 2.5 million confirmed infections nationwide in the U.S., by Johns Hopkins' count. But [health officials](#) believe the true number of infections is about 10 times higher. Worldwide, the virus has claimed close to a half-million lives with nearly 10 million cases.



Owner Tom Garrison prepares to lock up his bar, Stoneleigh P, in the Oak Lawn area of Dallas on Friday, June 26, 2020. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Friday took more countermeasures to stem a tide of coronavirus infections, as he closed bars, ordered restaurants to return to 50% capacity, shut river-rafting outfits and gave local officials more control over large gatherings ahead of the Fourth of July holiday. (Lynda M. Gonzalez/The Dallas Morning News via AP)

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott ordered all bars closed, and Florida banned alcohol at such establishments. They joined a small but growing number of states that are either backtracking or putting any further reopening of their economies on hold because of a comeback by the virus, mostly in the country's South and West.

Health experts have said a disturbingly large number of cases are being

seen among [young people](#) who are going out again, often without wearing masks or observing other social-distancing rules.

"It is clear that the rise in cases is largely driven by certain types of activities, including Texans congregating in bars," Abbott said.

The Republican governor, who had pursued one of the most aggressive reopening schedules of any state, also scaled back restaurant capacity and said outdoor gatherings of more than 100 people would need approval from local officials.



Chairs are stacked on a table inside The Rustic, Friday, June 26, 2020, in Houston. The restaurant and bar will be limited to 50% capacity after Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced Friday that he is shutting bars back down and scaling back restaurant capacity to 50%, in response to the increasing number of

COVID-19 cases in Texas. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

Mayor Carlos Gimenez in Florida's Miami-Dade County announced Friday night that he would close beaches over the Fourth of July weekend. He said cracking down on recreational activities is prudent given the growing number of infections among young adults.

Florida's agency that regulates bars acted after the daily number of new confirmed cases neared 9,000, almost doubling the record set just two days earlier.

Colleen Corbett, a 30-year-old bartender at two places in Tampa, said that she was disappointed and worried about being unemployed again, but that the restrictions are the right move. Most customers were not wearing masks, she said.

"It was like they forgot there was a pandemic or just stopped caring," Corbett said.

Elsewhere, Britain was expected to scrap a 14-day quarantine requirement for people returning from abroad in a bid to make summer vacation travel possible. Only travelers from "red" zones, places with a high level of COVID-19, will be told to self-isolate. A full list of countries, due to be published next week, is likely to give Spain, Greece and France a green light.



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Egypt on Saturday lifted many restrictions put in place against the coronavirus pandemic, reopening cafes, clubs, gyms and theaters after more than three months of closure, despite a continued upward trend in new infections.

Authorities in other countries were taking a more cautious approach,

with the Indian city of Gauhati, the capital of Assam state, announcing a new two-week lockdown starting Monday, with night curfews and weekend lockdowns in the rest of the state. India added 18,552 cases in the past 24 hours, raising its total to 508,953. The death toll reached 15,685.

China saw an uptick in cases, one day after authorities said they expect an outbreak in Beijing to be brought under control in the near future. The National Health Commission reported 17 new cases in the nation's capital, the most in a week, among 21 nationwide.



Eighty five-year-old Crisologo Enriquez holds steady as he receives a influenza vaccine during a vaccination campaign and COVID-19 testing operation in the Villa El Salvador neighborhood of Lima, Peru, Friday, June 26, 2020. In an attempt to strengthen primary health care for vulnerable populations in the

country, the Ministry of Health has increased services. (AP Photo/Martin Mejia)



Hugo, 3, has his temperature taken by a teacher as he arrives at Cobi kindergarten in Barcelona, Spain, Friday, June 26, 2020. Spain's cabinet will extend the furlough schemes adopted during the coronavirus lockdown that brought the economy to a standstill until the end of September. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



Deep Sushi restaurant employees Jordan Arrowood, left, cleans the bar top as Carrie Souza enters an order at the sushi restaurant in the Deep Ellum entertainment district in Dallas, Friday, June 26, 2020. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced Friday that he is shutting bars back down and scaling back restaurant capacity to 50%, in response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the state. (AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez)



A healthcare worker wearing full protective gear looks at the chest X-ray of a patient in a ward reserved for COVID-19 patients at the Hospital Juarez, in Mexico City, Friday, June 26, 2020. Mexico ranks seventh globally in COVID-19 deaths and third in its mortality rate among the 20 currently most affected countries, according to Johns Hopkins University. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



Wellington Goncalves, right, sits next to his colleague as they wait to refill their tanks during a disinfection to help contain the spread of the new coronavirus in an area occupied by squatters in a poor region of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Friday, June 26, 2020. For the 21-year-old volunteer, who lives in this occupation, the sanitization is a way to avoid the COVID-19 and if it was not for him and other volunteers working on it, "the situation would be worse". (AP Photo/Leo Correa)



Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey speaks about the latest coronavirus data at a news conference Thursday, June 25, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, Pool)



A health worker takes a swab test of a woman during a free medical checkup in Dharavi, one of Asia's biggest slums, in Mumbai, India, Friday, June 26, 2020. India is the fourth hardest-hit country by the pandemic in the world after the U.S., Russia and Brazil. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



Dawn Dickinson, 60, from Willoughby, Ohio, plays a slot machine at Presque Isle Downs & Casino on the first day of reopening under the green phase Friday, June 26, 2020, in Summit Township, Pa. The casino has been closed for three months due to the coronavirus pandemic. (Greg Wohlford/Erie Times-News via AP)



Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci, center, speaks as Vice President Mike Pence, right, and Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus response coordinator, left, listen during a news conference with members of the Coronavirus task force at the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, Friday, June 26, 2020. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)



Funeral home workers wait their turn to pick up a body of a client who died from COVID-19, outside Almenara public hospital in Lima, Peru, Thursday, June 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Mayra Miranda, 34, wears a mask while exercising at a gym in Los Angeles. Friday, June 26, 2020. With the coronavirus surging, at least four California counties on Friday paused or prepared to backtrack on their reopening plans in a bid to halt the spread of the virus. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



A man wearing a face mask to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, walks past the Hong Kong Space Museum, Saturday, June 27, 2020. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)



A man wearing a face mask to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus watches the sunset from a park in Kansas City, Mo., Friday, June 26, 2020. Sunsets and sunrises are more vibrant than usual lately due to dust in the atmosphere from a Saharan dust cloud. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)



Youth gather before practicing bodyboard in the Pacific Ocean on the coast of Lima, Peru, Friday, June 26, 2020. The emblematic surfers who dot Peru's coastline are retaking to the waves as the hard-hit nation relaxes coronavirus-related restrictions on outdoor sports. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

Xu Hejian, the deputy chief of Beijing's publicity department, said the situation is severe and complex. "We must not, in the slightest degree, lower our guard," he said.

South Korea, where a resurgence in the past month threatens to erase the country's earlier success, reported 51 new cases, including 35 in the Seoul metropolitan area. Officials, worried about the fragile economy, have resisted calls to reimpose restrictions eased in April.

Australia braced for more imported cases as citizens return home. About 300 people were due to arrive this weekend from Mumbai, India, with others expected to follow from South America and Indonesia. One state health official said he is preparing for 5% to 10% of the returnees to be infected, based on arrivals from Indonesia in other states.

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