

# WHO warns of 'accelerating' pandemic as Brazil reaches 50,000 deaths

June 22 2020

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The World Health Organization sent out a fresh warning on Monday over the dangers of the new coronavirus even as France returned to life by staging an annual music festival and sending millions of children back to school.

In spite of numerous European countries further easing their lockdown restrictions, cases around the world are rising especially in Latin America with Brazil now registering over 50,000 deaths.

There are also fears of a second wave with Australians being warned against travelling to Melbourne.

"The pandemic is still accelerating," WHO's director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the virtual health forum organised by Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

"We know that the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it is an [economic crisis](#), a social crisis and in many countries a political crisis.

"Its effects will be felt for decades to come."

Ghebreyesus said the greatest threat facing the world is not the virus itself, which has now killed over 465,000 people and infected nearly nine million worldwide, but "the lack of global solidarity and global leadership".

"We cannot defeat this pandemic with a divided world," he said. "The politicisation of the pandemic has exacerbated it."

Brazil falls into that bracket with President Jair Bolsonaro comparing the virus to a "little flu" and arguing that the economic impact of shutdowns is often worse than the virus itself.

Brazil is the second worst-affected country behind the United States, another country where political infighting has prevented a unified policy to handle the virus.

The spread of COVID-19 is accelerating across Latin America, with

Mexico, Peru and Chile also hard-hit as death tolls soar and healthcare facilities are pushed toward collapse.

Mexico City has delayed reopening markets, restaurants, malls, hotels and places of worship, with the country now recording over 20,000 COVID-19 deaths.

Highlighting the region's woes, Peru passed 8,000 deaths on Sunday despite preparing to reopen shopping malls on Monday.

## **Fete in France**

In Europe, meanwhile, the feelgood factor continues as countries ease their lockdown restrictions.

Thousands of French danced and partied well into Monday for an annual music festival, in the first big blow out since the lockdown.

Revellers packed the streets of Paris, most shunning masks and social distancing, to enjoy concerts in cafes and on street corners.

Although none of the usual extravaganzas were held beyond what French electronic music legend Jean-Michel Jarre billed as the world's first live virtual "avatar" concert, many felt the authorities were too lax.

"This is not what a gradual end to the lockdown looks like," said Dr. Gilbert Deray.

"I understand that the Festival of Music is something of a liberation, but did we really have to have it this year?"

Swimming pools and cinemas also reopened on Monday—with one cinema opening one minute after midnight for a sneak preview of the

upcoming French comedy, "Les Parfums" (The Perfumes).

Children up to the age of 15 also returned to school as attendance was switched from voluntary to compulsory.

## **Second wave**

Fears remain, however, that the virus, may be on its way back even as countries where infections have ebbed lift their lockdowns to restart battered economies.

Australians were warned Monday to avoid travelling to Melbourne, as the country's second biggest city tightened restrictions over fears of a second wave.

Victoria state has recorded more than 110 cases in the past week—many of them in Melbourne—prompting leaders of other regions to warn against visiting the city's six designated virus "hot spots".

China, Germany and Japan are also battling new outbreaks with some reintroducing containment measures.

Kyrgyzstan also reported a significant rise in coronavirus cases on Monday, less than a month after the Central Asian nation's government lifted restrictions in key cities.

## **Markets dip**

The spike in infections increased nervousness in the business world as markets mostly fell on Monday.

After enjoying a broadly positive week, with equities rallying from their

March trough, traders turned cautious on news of a worrying jump in fresh cases in several US states including California, Texas and Florida.

German airline group Lufthansa, meanwhile, says it has backup plans ready in case shareholders reject a nine-billion-euro (\$10.1 billion) pandemic rescue plan agreed with the state.

Like rival airlines, Lufthansa was plunged into crisis after efforts to contain the coronavirus brought air travel to a near standstill for several months this year.

Investors are to meet Thursday to sign off on the rescue.

## **Sporting concerns**

The sporting world has been reemerging from the darkness, although for every step forward it seems to take one back.

Japan announced that up to 5,000 fans will be able to attend football and baseball games from July 10 but the presence of fans at other sporting events, notably in the Balkans, appears to have caused problems.

Five players from Serbian club Red Star Belgrade tested positive for [coronavirus](#) after playing a match attended by 16,000 people, the club said Monday.

Montenegro, which had declared itself virus-free, announced a new cluster of cases, predominantly football fans who had travelled to Belgrade to watch the match.

In neighbouring Croatia, Borna Coric became the second top tennis player, after Grigor Dimitrov, to test positive after taking part in an exhibition tournament featuring world number one Novak Djokovic.

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Citation: WHO warns of 'accelerating' pandemic as Brazil reaches 50,000 deaths (2020, June 22)  
retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-pandemic-brazil-deaths.html>

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