

Coronavirus: latest global developments

July 15 2020

Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

Vaccine hope

American biotech firm Moderna says it will start the final stage of human trials for its vaccine candidate on July 27, after promising results from earlier testing. The study should run until October 2022 but preliminary results should be available long before then.

Markets boost

News of the US vaccine candidate, along with another round of US stimulus, hands strong gains to most stock markets, although advances are tempered by the reimposition of lockdown measures, and China-US tensions weigh on Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Staying home in Catalonia

Following a standoff with the courts, the Catalan regional government in Spain tells residents to stay home in and around the city of Lerida, a measure affecting 160,000 people.

Regional officials issue a similar call in several districts of Hospitalet de Llobregat, a city near Barcelona.

Hong Kong tones down

Bars, gyms, and beauty salons close again in the city, a ban on gatherings with more than four people comes into force and while most residents voluntarily adopt facemasks, the government now requires passengers on public transport to wear them or risk a fine.

Tokyo top alert

Tokyo is on its highest [coronavirus](#) alert level after a spike in new cases, the city's governor warns, as experts say the rising infections are a clear "red flag", though the move to a top alert does not mean the city will ask businesses to close or events to be postponed.

More than 578,000 deaths

The pandemic has killed at least 578,746 people worldwide since it surfaced in China late last year, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT on Wednesday based on official sources.

The United States is the worst-hit country with 136,466 deaths. It is followed by Brazil with 74,133, Britain with 44,968, Mexico with 36,327, and Italy with 34,984 fatalities.

Australia urges caution

Authorities in Australia plead with the public to heed social distancing guidelines, with some five million people locked down in Melbourne. The appeal comes days after a group was fined Aus\$26,000 (US\$18,200) when their house party was exposed by a large takeout food order.

No hugs with Mickey

Disneyland Paris, Europe's biggest private tourist attraction, reopens its gates, but with limited access, a ban on hugging the famous characters and no princess makeovers.

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Citation: Coronavirus: latest global developments (2020, July 15) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-07-coronavirus-latest-global-1.html>

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