

Serbia reports record daily virus death toll

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Serbia announced a record coronavirus death toll for a single day on Friday, as the government hit back at protests over its handling of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Ana Brnabic said the Balkan state recorded 18 fatalities

and 386 new cases over 24 hours in what she described as a "dramatic increase."

At the same time, Brnabic slammed as "irresponsible" protests held for a third straight day in Belgrade and other cities on Thursday, after demonstrations in the capital on the previous two days had spilled over into violence.

"With regard to the demonstrations, there is no more irresponsible behaviour right now," said Brnabic.

"We shall see the results of the protests in three to four days," she said and called on people "to respect the measures in place" to restrict the spread of the virus.

Protesters have given vent to their frustration with President Aleksandar Vucic, who is seen by many as having facilitated a virus second wave by lifting an initial lockdown so that elections could be held on June 21 and which his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) largely won.

The first demonstration on Tuesday was triggered after Vucic announced the return of a weekend curfew to combat a second wave of coronavirus infections that has overwhelmed hospitals in Belgrade.

The president later backtracked on his plan, but the protests continued, turning into a general rebuke of his handling of the health crisis.

On Thursday, the government formally dropped the curfew plan and announced restrictions on public gatherings of more than 10 people—effectively barring protests.

A wave of new infections came after a number of sporting events were allowed to go ahead amid minimal social distancing.

These included a tennis tournament organised by multiple grand slam champion Novak Djokovic, who tested positive for coronavirus along with three other participants at his ill-fated Adria Tour.

Several senior politicians also tested positive in the wake of SNS celebrations of its election triumph.

To date, Serbia has logged 370 [coronavirus](#) deaths and almost 18,000 cases.

Neighbouring Croatia and Bosnia likewise posted 24-hour records for new virus cases Friday—116 and 316 respectively.

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