

Czechs extend emergency virus measures until Nov 20

October 30 2020



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The Czech government said Friday it was extending until November 20 a state of emergency in order to keep strict curbs in place to reverse resurgent novel coronavirus cases.

The state of emergency, originally declared for 30 days on October 5, makes decision-making easier for the government at the time of crisis.

Friday's decision means schools, restaurants and most shops will remain closed, public gatherings restricted and an overnight curfew in place in the European Union country of 10.7 million people.

The Czech Republic ranks second in the EU in new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 inhabitants and is top for new deaths, according to data compiled by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

On Friday evening, the country had almost 317,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 3,000 deaths.

But in recent days the number of new infections has dropped from the daily record of over 15,000, giving the government a cause for cautious optimism.

"What is happening now is probably the beginning of a slowdown," Health Minister Jan Blatny told reporters on Friday. "But we're definitely not past the worst."

Ladislav Dusek, head of the Institute of Health Information and Statistics, said the next two weeks would show whether the country is really on the mend.

"We can see the growth is slowing down, but it's not a victory yet" as the number of new infections reported daily is still considerable, he said.

Dusek added the figure of how many people a sick person will infect had dropped from 1.53 in early October to 1.13 now.

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