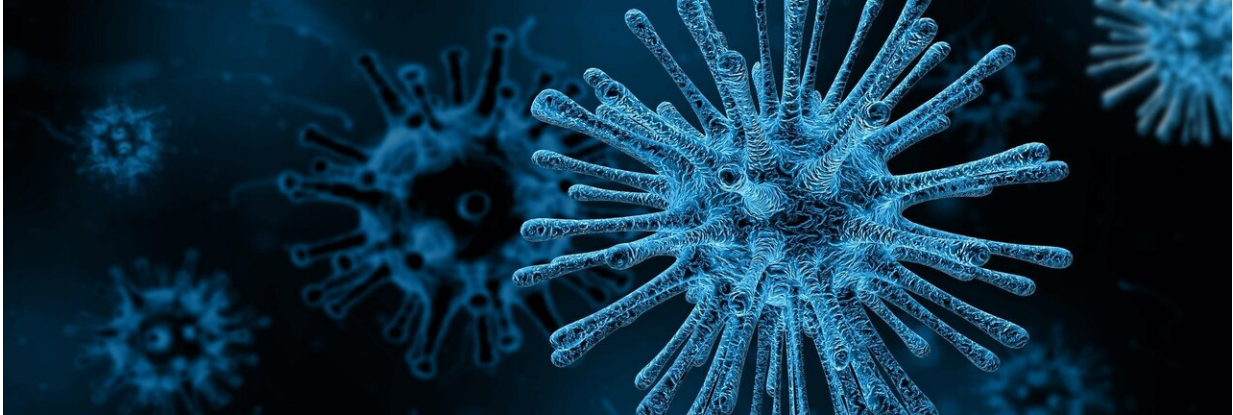


Spain mulls curfew to fight virus surge

October 20 2020



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The Spanish government said Tuesday it was considering imposing a nighttime curfew to halt a rise in virus infections as has been put in place in other European nations like France and Belgium.

"The possibility of imposing a curfew, I insist, is something we have to consider. We have to study that possibility and we are open to everything," Health Minister Salvador Illa told a news conference.

The minister said "several" regional governments, which he did not name, had proposed the measure and the central [government](#) was considering the request.

Imposing a curfew would require invoking a [state of emergency](#) and the government would want to have the support of the main opposition conservative Popular Party (PP) to adopt it, he added.

A nighttime curfew would be the most restrictive anti-coronavirus measure Spain has seen since emerging in June from a national lockdown which was underpinned by a state of emergency that was opposed by the PP.

The regional government of Madrid, which is governed by right-wing coalition headed by the PP, has wrangled with Spain's leftist central government over measures to fight the virus.

The central government earlier this month invoked a state of emergency in the region to impose a partial lockdown in Madrid and several cities that opposed by the regional government, which preferred neighbourhood lockdowns.

But earlier on Tuesday the region's top health official, Enrique Ruiz Escudero, said regional authorities were evaluating whether a curfew was needed although he stressed it was up to the central government to impose one.

The state of emergency in Madrid expires on Saturday and the [health minister](#) said the central government would not extend it.

Spain has become one of the pandemic's hotspots in the European Union, with close to 975,000 registered cases and nearly 34,000 deaths.

Illa also announced that the government had authorised the purchase of 31.5 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine currently being developed by British pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca.

The supply of the vaccine is part of a European Union scheme and it could start reaching Spain in December "if there are no delays," he added.

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