

Fresh vaccine hope as world tops 10,000 daily virus deaths

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Top US government scientist Anthony Fauci said Thursday the coronavirus vaccine "cavalry" was on its way, bringing fresh hope as the world registered more than 10,000 deaths in just 24 hours, a record.

The world-leading expert on infectious diseases said that after this week's much-trumpeted news that a vaccine developed by US drug giant Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech was 90 percent effective, another is "literally on the threshold of being announced."

"The cavalry is coming, but don't put your weapons down," Fauci said by video-link to a think-tank in London, as US biotech firm Moderna was poised to reach a threshold in [vaccine trials](#) that would allow it to apply for an emergency use authorisation from US regulators.

The scientist, who has gained global fame for standing up to President Donald Trump on COVID-19, urged the public to continue respecting [public health measures](#) such as wearing masks and washing hands.

News of promising vaccine results has brought much-needed hope as the world grapples with a pandemic that shows no sign of abating, with grim statistics flowing in day after day.

An AFP tally of official sources found Thursday that the daily number of global deaths had gone over the symbolic level of 10,000 in the past 24 hours for the first time since the start of the pandemic, standing at 10,010.

'People just don't care

Global markets slid on fears of the virus surge that threatens [economic recovery](#), eroding earlier gains led by vaccine hopes.

France reported Thursday that the number of people in hospital for COVID-19 was now higher than previous peaks in April.

Serbia's Health Minister Zlatibor Loncar meanwhile cautioned that there were no more hospital beds available for virus patients in the capital

Belgrade.

But for all the dire warnings, there was growing evidence that people were ignoring restrictions imposed by governments and minimising the risk of infection.

In France, a survey revealed that more than half of the population had broken regulations governing a current partial lockdown.

It showed that 60 percent had flouted the rules at least once, either by giving a false reason for going out on their self-signed permission slip or by meeting up with family and friends.

"The [second wave](#) is extremely strong," Prime Minister Jean Castex warned in a virtual news conference. "One in four deaths is now due to COVID."

Over in India, crowds packed New Delhi markets ahead of the Diwali festival of lights, the country's biggest holiday, saying they were fed up with being cooped up.

India has the world's second-highest caseload behind the United States, and there are fears that a Diwali surge could hit major cities across the country of 1.3 billion.

"People just don't care," said Tanisha, a 19-year-old student. "People want to come out."

"I am so bored at home that I am not scared to shop."

Vaccine concerns

Compounding the weariness, a report by a non-profit that fights

misinformation delivered worrying news on Thursday, saying conspiracy theories about COVID-19 vaccines played an "outsized role" on social media that could threaten their efficacy.

Many posts analysed by researchers at First Draft linked vaccines to [conspiracy theories](#) such as the belief that a future COVID-19 shot will be used to microchip individuals and develop mass population-tracking systems.

Some posts claimed vaccines that used the novel mRNA technology—as developed by Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna—would "change people's DNA," or linked them to "targeted depopulation efforts or malign human engineering programs."

"We have reached a pivotal and hypersensitive crossroads where increasing rates of vaccine skepticism may not only jeopardise the effectiveness of a potential COVID-19 [vaccine](#), but that of vaccines more broadly," the non-profit said.

There were also concerns about poorer countries' access to future vaccines.

With that in mind, the Paris Peace Forum international conference was set to raise more than \$500 million for a mechanism led by the World Health Organization that aims to ensure access to [coronavirus](#) tests, treatments and vaccines for all countries.

And there was some good news in Britain, whose economy enjoyed a record third-quarter rebound from its deepest ever recession, even if experts predicted another slump due to fresh virus restrictions.

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