

Mexico City prolongs virus curbs as cases soar

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Mexico City on Friday scrapped plans to reopen non-essential activities as it grapples with a spike in the number of coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

The ban, announced on December 18, had been due to expire on Sunday.

But Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said the capital would remain at the maximum alert status indefinitely.

"Being at the highest peak at the moment it would be very difficult to reopen," she told a news conference.

"The [city](#) is today at its highest level of hospitalization since the start of the pandemic," with 86 percent of beds full, Sheinbaum said.

The city of nine million people this week reported a new daily record of more than 13,000 infections and three straight days of more than 1,000 deaths.

The country's official [death](#) toll from the virus, the fourth highest in the world, now stands at more than 131,000.

The authorities acknowledge that the real figure is probably much higher due to limited testing.

Mexico began a mass immunization program on December 24 using the [coronavirus](#) vaccine developed by US drugs giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech.

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