

Portugal detects record 10,000 Covid cases in 24h

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Portugal reported a record 10,000 new coronavirus cases in 24 hours on Wednesday, and the government warned that its hospitals were under "enormous pressure" from the resurgence of the pandemic.

At the same time, with less than three weeks to go before a presidential election, the country's conservative incumbent Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was briefly forced to self-isolate as a precautionary measure after coming into contact with a member of his team who had tested positive for COVID-19.

Nevertheless, Rebelo de Sousa's office said in a statement that the 72-year-old had tested negative, and since the health authorities had assessed the risk of him becoming infected as "low", he would "resume his programme of work".

The official election campaign begins on Sunday, but Rebelo de Sousa has already taken part in a series of head-to-head television debates with rival candidates.

His scheduled debate with populist candidate Andre Ventura will go ahead as scheduled on Wednesday with the president attending in person, according to the TV broadcaster hosting it.

In late December, Prime Minister Antonio Costa self-quarantined for 14 days after having coming into contact with French President Emmanuel Macron who had tested positive to the novel coronavirus.

After loosening restrictions over the Christmas weekend, Portugal is currently seeing a new surge in infections, with a record 10,027 cases recorded over the past 24 hours and 513 people taken into intensive care.

Nearly 7,400 people have died so far in the country from COVID-19.

"We're again seeing enormous pressure on the national health service," said Health Minister Marta Temido.

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