

Pandemic slows across the world

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The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down for the third week in a row and new cases are now at their lowest level since the end of October, with new infections falling by half in South Africa, according to a specialised AFP database.

Here is the state of play worldwide:

Fewer than half a million per day

The number of new daily cases dipped below the half-million mark for the first time since late October, standing at 493,000, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

New infections dropped by 13 percent over the week, after reaching a record 725,000 in mid-January.

Nearly every area of the world saw a slackening off, with new cases decreasing in Africa by 27 percent, by 17 percent in the United States and Canada, by 12 percent in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean and by two percent in Asia.

The number of new cases picked up slightly, by four percent, in the Middle East, however, while there were only 14 cases per day (43 percent more) in Oceania.

The number of confirmed cases only reflects a fraction of the actual number of infections, as different countries have different counting practices and levels of testing.

Steepest falls

The biggest decrease was in South Africa, the continent's worst-hit country, where the number of new cases dropped by 49 percent, at 4,100 new cases per day, confirming a strong deceleration that started the previous week.

The country, where a more contagious variant of the [coronavirus](#) has

been detected, in late 2020 saw an upsurge in cases, which led it to impose a curfew in late December.

Lithuania has the next big drop at minus 37 percent, (700 cases per day), Mexico (minus 35 percent, 10,600), Japan (31 percent fewer, 3,000), Panama (minus 31 percent, 1,100) and Portugal (30 percent fewer or 9,100 cases).

Biggest spikes

Malaysia is the country where the epidemic is picking up most speed, with 30 percent more, or 4,800 new cases per day, among the countries which have registered more than 1,000 daily cases over the past week.

Jordan follows with 27 percent more, or 1,100 new cases, Peru (23 percent, 6,500), Iraq (21 percent, 1,000) and Turkey (16 percent more, or 7,400 cases).

US still has most cases, deaths

The US again had by far the highest number of new cases, with 133,500 per day on average, a 17-percent decrease over the previous week.

Brazil follows with 48,200, or minus seven percent and Spain (29,800, minus 16 percent).

Then come the United Kingdom with 21,200, or 26 percent fewer and France (20,600, one percent more).

On a per-capita basis, Portugal remains the country with the highest number of infections, at 622 cases per 100,000 people.

The US also again registered the most deaths over the past week, with 3,279 per day on average, followed by Mexico (1,111), Brazil (1,035), the United Kingdom (1,018), Germany (690), Russia (507) and France (450).

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