

Primary schools close as Kiev tightens coronavirus restrictions

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New coronavirus curbs, including primary school closures and travel restrictions, came into force in Ukraine's capital Kiev on Monday, as infections surged.

Last month, authorities re-introduced anti-virus restrictions in the city of three million. These were tightened with primary schools and kindergartens closing on Monday and only essential workers such as doctors allowed to use public transport.

Kiev is "very close" to the "collapse of the medical system," Mayor Vitali Klitschko told Ukrayina 24 television.

"Today our hospitals are almost completely full," he said, adding that seven out of 10 cases in the capital required hospitalisation.

Kiev officials said they had issued more than 430,000 travel passes for essential workers.

Police checked passengers for special passes before letting them take buses and trams, and taxi fares skyrocketed as a result of the curbs.

Authorities had for months resisted tightening restrictions, fearing further strain on the struggling economy of one of Europe's poorest countries.

Since March 20 cultural venues and large shopping centres in Kiev have been closed and restaurants limited to takeouts.

In Kiev, more than 400 new cases and 32 coronavirus-related deaths were registered over the past 24 hours, Klitschko said on Telegram on Monday.

Ukraine, which is plagued by an ageing healthcare system, on Saturday reported the highest number of daily infections since the start of the pandemic, with more than 20,000 cases.

The country of 40 million has recorded over 1.7 million COVID

infections and more than 34,000 deaths.

It has so far received only 500,000 doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and 215,000 doses of China's CoronaVac jab.

Ukraine launched a vaccination campaign at the end of February, later than many other European countries, and more than 290,000 people have received a first dose.

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