Greece faces new virus lockdown from Saturday

November 5 2020

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Greece will go back into lockdown from Saturday for three weeks to battle a second wave of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced.

"It was a difficult decision" but "measures must be taken for three weeks to overcome this second wave", he told a videoconference on Thursday.

Under the measures, Greeks can only leave their homes if they make an official request via mobile phone and then receive authorisation.

Only "essential shops" including supermarkets and pharmacies can stay open when the lockdown starts at 6am (0400 GMT) on Saturday, Mitsotakis said.

Unlike the previous six-week lockdown that began in late March, he said kindergartens and primary schools will remain open.

Secondary school pupils will be taught remotely, something university students are already doing under recent measures.

"Travellers arriving in Greece, by land and air, will now have to submit a negative PCR test, carried out 48 hours before entering Greek territory," civil protection deputy minister Nikos Hardalias added Thursday evening.

The new lockdown comes as the daily tally of coronavirus cases continues to grow.

A total of 2,646 new infections and 18 deaths were recorded on Wednesday, up sharply from last week.

The virus has killed 673 people in Greece among almost 47,000 infected.

But it is the number of people in intensive care that worries authorities most of all.

The number of patients hospitalised on ventilators has more than doubled in a month, from 82 on October 4 to 169 on Wednesday.

"Why take this decision now?" said the prime minister. "In the last five days we have seen a dangerous increase in the number of dead" and the number of people in intensive care in hospital.

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