

WHO warns that COVID-19 pandemic is not over

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Geneva, July 7 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned governments around the world against easing COVID-19 restrictions too soon, saying countries that did so risked paying a heavy price for rushing back to normality.

Speaking at a press briefing on Monday, the UN health agency's top emergency expert Mike Ryan said a new wave of infections could be round the corner and noted that for much of the world, the pandemic was just getting started.

"All of the countries of the Americas, we still have nearly one million cases a week," he said. "And the same in Europe...with half a million cases a week. It's not like this thing has gone away," Ryan added. "It isn't over."

Last week, the WHO's Africa director had warned that "the speed and scale" of the continent's third wave "is like nothing we've seen before". "COVID-19 cases are doubling every three weeks, compared to every

four weeks at the start of the second wave,” Dr Matshidiso Moeti told a briefing on Thursday.

In Russia, meanwhile, coronavirus deaths hit another daily record on Tuesday, with authorities reporting 737 more fatalities. The daily tally of confirmed infections has more than doubled in the past month, soaring from about 9,000 in early June to more than 23,000 this week.

The warnings come amid renewed concerns over the new coronavirus Delta variant, first detected in India in April. The new strain, which is considered to be the most transmissible variant yet, has now spread to nearly 100 countries worldwide.

Experts say more than 80 percent of a country’s population would need to be inoculated in order to contain it – a challenging target even for nations with advanced vaccination programmes. The variant is now responsible for more than 90 percent of all new infections in the United Kingdom and about 30 percent in the United States.

Lab tests have shown it is more resistant to vaccines compared with other forms of coronavirus. However, there is evidence that available jabs retain important effectiveness against it after two doses.

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