

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

21st Jul 2022

Lockdown Exit

Covid. Vacation. Covid.

Public health officials warn that this is no time for complacency. In the United States, BA.5 has become the dominant strain and is driving a significant spike in cases -- more than 120,000 a day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), though experts say that number may be more like 1 million, given the underreporting of home test results. Europe, meanwhile, has seen a tripling of new Covid-19 infections over the past six weeks, with nearly 3 million reported last week, accounting for almost half of all new cases worldwide. Hospital admissions in Europe over the same period have doubled.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/20/world/coronavirus-newsletter-intl-07-20-22/index.html>

China braced for renewed lockdowns as Omicron subvariant spreads

China is at risk of more frequent lockdowns and mass testing as officials struggle to contain the spread of the highly transmissible BA.5 Omicron subvariant despite the damage pandemic restrictions have already wrought on the world's second-biggest economy. Forty-one Chinese cities are under full or partial lockdowns or district-based controls, covering 264mn people in regions that account for about 18.7 per cent of the country's economic activity, according to an analysis released on Monday by Japanese investment bank Nomura.

<https://www.ft.com/content/d12159d4-8d94-44ae-92fe-d4ad0b731006>

Data shows most Hong Kong Covid inpatients are elderly from community

New trend deviates from start of fifth wave when Omicron variant swept across care homes. Officials racing for measures to prevent healthcare system from being overwhelmed

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3185911/whos-hospital-covid-data-shows-most-hong-kong?module=live&pgtype=homepage>

Micronesia last of bigger nations to have COVID-19 outbreak

Article reports that Micronesia has likely become the final nation in the world with a population of more than 100,000 to experience an outbreak of COVID-19. For more than two-and-a-half years, the Pacific archipelago managed to avoid any outbreaks thanks to its geographic isolation and border controls. Those people who flew into the country with the disease didn't spread it because all new arrivals were required to quarantine. But as has been the case in several other Pacific nations this year, those defenses couldn't keep out the more transmissible omicron variant forever.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-new-zealand-micronesia-99151c153e05d9528777c9b832dbd66c>

Hospitalisation rates double as COVID cases triple across Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) says coronavirus cases have tripled across Europe in the past six weeks, accounting for nearly half of all infections globally. Super-infectious relatives of the Omicron variant have been driving the new wave of disease across the continent, with repeated infections potentially leading to long COVID. Although intensive care admissions have remained low, the United Nations' health agency said on Tuesday hospitalisation rates had doubled. "With rising cases, we're also seeing a rise in hospitalisations, which are only set to increase further in the autumn and winter months," Hans Kluge, WHO's Europe director, said in a statement. "This forecast presents a huge challenge to the health workforce in country after country, already under enormous pressure dealing with unrelenting crises since 2020," he added.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/19/who-warns-pandemic-not-over-as-covid-triples-across-europe>

Covid-19 Complication Among Children Fades in Latest Wave of Virus

A serious inflammatory complication that strikes some children in the weeks following a Covid-19 infection has almost disappeared. A buildup of immunity and changes to the virus both likely play a part, pediatric infectious-disease doctors and researchers said. Multisystem inflammatory syndrome is afflicting far fewer children as a proportion of known Covid-19 cases than during earlier waves of the pandemic, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The condition, also known as MIS-C, is similar to Kawasaki disease, another rare pediatric inflammatory condition. Early in the pandemic, doctors believed they were seeing Kawasaki disease but soon recognized MIS-C as a distinct condition associated with an earlier Covid-19 infection.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-complication-among-children-fades-in-latest-wave-of-virus-11658307276>

Nurse Burnout Reaches New High as Latest Omicron Variant Surges

Many people may be moving on from Covid, but nurses certainly aren't — and as the latest variant sweeps the US, the mental stresses on the profession have reached new highs. A survey of 2,500 nurses released Wednesday finds that 64% are looking to leave the health-care profession, a nearly 40% increase from a similar survey a year ago. Three-quarters of those surveyed said they've experienced burnout since the pandemic began and half said they had experienced feelings of trauma, extreme stress or PTSD. "Our nurses are the backbone of our health system," said Dr. Dani Bowie the vice president of clinical strategy and transformation at Trusted Health, a healthcare advocacy group that released the survey. "So, if they're not operating out of their best state, it's very detrimental to the wellbeing of our community and our patients."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-20/nurse-burnout-reaches-new-high-as-latest-omicron-variant-surges>

First case of antibody-avoiding Covid subvariant detected

The first case of Covid-19 attributed to a new antibody-avoiding subvariant, BA.2.75, has been detected in Thailand, but experts do not foresee it causing serious outbreaks, according to the Centre for Medical Genomics. The centre, part of the faculty of medicine at Ramathibodi Hospital, said on Wednesday the subvariant was detected in the southern province of Trang in a sample collected for examination on June 28.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2350003/first-case-of-antibody-avoiding-covid-subvariant-detected>

'None of us has a crystal ball': Scientists try to keep up with faster coronavirus evolution.

The rapid evolution of the coronavirus into an alphabet soup of subvariants presents a vexing challenge to health officials: They must make far-reaching policy decisions based on little biological certainty of which viral variants will be dominant this fall or winter. The Food and Drug Administration said at the end of June that it would update coronavirus vaccines for a booster campaign in the fall targeting highly contagious Omicron subvariants. But the ground is shifting beneath its feet. In just eight weeks, the subvariant known as BA.5 has gone from a blip in U.S. case counts to the dominant version of the virus in the country, now making up more than three-quarters of new cases. Perhaps the most transmissible subvariant yet, it is pushing up positive tests, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions across the country. There is no evidence that BA.5 causes more severe disease, but the latest metrics certainly bust the myth that the virus will become milder as it evolves.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/health/covid-ba5-omicron-variant.html?smid=url-share>

Exit Strategies

Australians urged to wear masks and work from home amid Covid-19 surge

It's been eight months since Sydney was released from its last lockdown, and in that time, Australia has slowly been shedding many of its Covid-related mandates. Mask wearing is required only in a handful of places, returning to the office has been encouraged, and domestic and international travel are back on the cards. But amid attempts to return to normalcy, a third wave of Omicron is giving cause for concern. In a joint press conference with health minister Mark Butler, chief medical officer Paul Kelly strongly advised that employers allow their employees to work from home where feasible, and to reinstate mask wearing in the workplace. "There were 300,000 cases or thereabouts reported over the last seven days, and I think the CMO and I are pretty confident that the real number is likely more than double that," said Butler.

<https://www.timeout.com/sydney/news/australians-urged-to-wear-masks-and-work-from-home-amid-covid-19-surge-072022>

China's Covid slowdown raises spectre of middle-income trap

Ahead of this year's 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, we take a look at how the country is responding to three potential traps highlighted by President Xi Jinping in the past decade. In the third of a three-part series, we examine the middle-income trap and the hurdles China's economy must clear to escape it. Chinese officials like to use numbers to describe the country's economic miracle. So that is what Han Wenxiu, a senior official with the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission, did when he summarised almost a decade of achievements under President Xi Jinping in mid-May.

<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3185813/china-cusp-joining-high-income-club-slowdown-raises-spectre>

CDC stops monitoring COVID-19 cases on cruise ships

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has discontinued a program that tracked cases of COVID-19 aboard cruise ships in the U.S. and reported the findings to the public. The initiative, called the COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships, ended Monday, according to the government agency. "CDC will continue to publish guidance to help cruise ships continue to provide a safer and healthier environment for passengers, crew and communities going forward," the agency said on its website.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-cruise-ships-covid-19-tracking-program-ends/>

Illinois governor tests positive for COVID-19; symptoms mild

Article reports that Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office announced Tuesday that the Illinois governor has tested positive for COVID-19. Pritzker is experiencing mild symptoms and has been prescribed the anti-viral medication Paxlovid, according to a statement from his office. He is working from home. The Democrat undergoes a routine COVID-19 testing regimen and received the positive result after he was notified that several close contacts had contracted the illness. Pritzker is vaccinated and has received two booster shots. He has long urged everyone to be vaccinated and follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for staying healthy and stopping the spread.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-public-illinois-60cf2a739940823da90bee78a263d9d4>

Australians urged to work from home as COVID hospital cases surge

Australians have been urged to work from home and wear masks indoors as the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 nears record levels. The country is in the midst of a third wave of coronavirus, driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants, and earlier this month broadened access to second booster shots to deal with the surge in cases. Daily cases climbed to 50,248 on Tuesday, the highest in two months. Some 5,239 Australians are currently in hospital with COVID-19, just short of the record 5,390 recorded in January. "We need to do some things differently at least for a short period of time," Australia's Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly told ABC Radio on Wednesday, as he predicted the number of people admitted to hospital will soon hit an all-time high.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/20/australians-told-to-work-from-home-as-covid-hospital-cases-surge>

China rules out 'excessive stimulus' to save economy, but Li Keqiang vows to refine coronavirus policy

Premier Li Keqiang tells World Economic Forum that China will not employ large-scale stimulus to hit economic growth targets, but will adjust coronavirus policy. His comments to international business leaders come amid fresh concern about the economic toll of zero Covid and frustration among foreign firms in China.

https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3185952/china-rules-out-excessive-stimulus-save-economy-li-keqiang?module=lead_hero_story&pgtype=homepage

City of London Bankers Trigger Nearly 650 Covid Restrictions Breach Alerts

The City of London's banks and asset managers notified the UK's financial regulator of more than 700 incidents of non-financial misconduct by senior staff during the pandemic, including more than 600 breaches of Covid restrictions. The Financial Conduct Authority was notified of 194 incidents of non-financial misconduct by bankers belonging to its senior managers and certification regime, and another 552 by staff at fund managers from the start of 2020 to September 2021, according to a Freedom of Information request by Following the Rules, a financial regulation podcast. Those included 646 episodes tied to Covid breaches as well as 44 counts of bullying and 66 linked to racism. The FCA has disclosed it has opened five investigations into non-financial misconduct in 2019 and none in 2020.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-19/top-city-of-london-staff-triggered-646-covid-misconduct-alerts>

Most Popular U.S. Cities Amid the Pandemic Now Have the Highest Inflation Rates

U.S. cities that have seen the largest influx of new residents over the course of the pandemic now also have the highest inflation rates, according to a report from Redfin released Tuesday. "A place's popularity has a big impact on how much its local prices go up," Redfin deputy chief economist Taylor Marr wrote in the report. "An influx of people moving into a place like Phoenix or Tampa [Florida] pushes up demand for everything from housing to food to fuel, which pushes up prices in all those areas and ultimately contributes to overall inflation."

<https://www.barrons.com/articles/most-popular-u-s-cities-amid-the-pandemic-now-have-the-highest-inflation-rates-01658334063>

Scars of COVID persist for sickest survivors, their families

Freddy Fernandez almost wasn't here, on his couch in his Missouri home, his baby on his lap, gnawing on the pulse oximeter that he uses to check his oxygen levels after a months-long bout with COVID-19. Months after being warned that her partner might never hold his daughter, Vanessa smiles as the girl works to cut two teeth on the device that Freddy wears like a necklace, a blue ribbon tied around it. Freddy spent five months hospitalized a four-hour drive away from the couple's home in the southwest Missouri town of Carthage on the most intense life support available. The 41-year-old father of six nearly died repeatedly and now he — like so many who survived COVID-19 hospitalizations — has returned home changed.

<https://apnews.com/article/ScarsofCOVIDlongrecovery-2909285039504ab5c61de4fd193ac11a>

Partisan Exits

Bring Covid curbs back AGAIN, say top medical journals: Editorial calls for new clampdown on Britons

No10 has batted away calls to bring back pandemic-era curbs in response to soaring infections. Surveillance models suggest 3.5million people in the UK (one in 20) people were infected in week to July 6. But editors of two health publications accused Government of 'gaslighting' public about threat Covid poses. They say it is time to face the fact that attempt to 'live with Covid' is 'straw that is breaking the NHS's back'. Authors blame 'failure to recognise that the pandemic is far from over' and call for return of virus curbs. Face masks, free Covid tests for all, WFH guidance and restrictions

on social gathering should return, they say

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-11024137/Bring-Covid-curbs-say-medical-journals-Editorial-calls-new-clamp-down-Britons.html>

S.Africa arrests 13 police officers over lockdown violence

South Africa's police watchdog said Tuesday it arrested 13 officers over the death of a man in custody, the first major breakthrough in several cases of alleged brutality during the Covid lockdown. The man, who has not been named, was held along with three others in April 2020 in a Johannesburg suburb for breaching lockdown rules, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) said in a statement. He was then allegedly assaulted by the police officers and members of a private security firm, before being taken to a police station, where he complained about stomach pains, it said. "An ambulance was called in, the paramedics declared the one civilian dead," the police watchdog said in a statement, adding that a murder investigation was subsequently opened.

<https://www.macaubusiness.com/s-africa-arrests-13-police-officers-over-lockdown-violence/>

Cyprus president tests positive for COVID-19, mild symptoms

The president of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, has tested positive for the coronavirus, a government official said Tuesday. Government spokesman Marios Pelekanos said Anastasiades tested positive during routine testing. Pelekanos said Anastasiades has exhibited mild symptoms and his condition is considered very good. In line with existing protocols, the president cleared his schedule, including commemorations of the 48th anniversary of Turkey's invasion of Cyprus, an event that cleaved the east Mediterranean island nation along ethnic lines. According to Health Ministry figures, Cyprus had a 12.6% coronavirus infection rate between July 8 and July 14. The country reported 7 COVID-19-related deaths during the same period for an overall death toll of 1,086 since the start of the pandemic.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-cyprus-nicos-anastasiades-12926109761bd41e7a9f733adf1a536d>

Jan. 6 panel chairman has COVID, prime-time hearing still on

Rep. Bennie Thompson, chairman of the House Jan. 6 committee, has tested positive for COVID-19, but the panel will still hold its prime-time hearing on Thursday, according to a spokesman for the panel. Thompson, D-Miss., announced Tuesday that he tested positive for the virus on Monday and is experiencing mild symptoms. Thompson, 74, said he will be isolating for the next several days, but Jan. 6 committee spokesman Tim Mulvey said the committee's eighth hearing this summer will proceed. He did not say if Thompson will participate virtually. The news of Thompson's diagnosis comes as the nine-member panel is preparing for the hearing, which is expected to focus on what President Donald Trump was doing in the White House on Jan. 6, 2021 for several hours as his supporters were breaking into the Capitol and interrupting the certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory.

<https://apnews.com/article/capitol-siege-biden-covid-health-donald-trump-2e5ee329104f7c13a383423e56625f3d>

Authorities in south China city apologise over COVID-19 break-ins

Authorities in southern China have apologised for breaking into the homes of people who had been taken to a quarantine hotel in the latest example of heavy-handed virus-prevention measures that have sparked a rare public backlash. State media said that officers had forced their way into 84 homes in an apartment complex in Guangzhou city's Liwan district in an effort to find any "close contacts" hiding inside and disinfect the rooms. The front doors were later sealed and new locks installed, according to the Global Times tabloid. The Liwan district government apologised on Monday for such "oversimplified and violent" behaviour, the paper said. An investigation has been launched and "relevant people" will be severely punished, it added. China's leadership has maintained its "zero-COVID" strategy despite the disruption to the lives of residents who are subjected to regular testing and quarantines, and mounting economic costs.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/20/authorities-in-south-china-city-apologise-over-covid-19-break-ins>

Faulty Covid Gear May Cost UK Taxpayer £2.7 Billion, Report Says

The UK has made little progress in settling disputes with suppliers of personal-protective gear that turned out to be of little use in the pandemic, potentially wasting as much as £2.7 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) in taxpayers' money. The country's department of health and social care is left with "billions of items that are unusable or not needed," some of which will just have to be incinerated, according to a parliamentary report released Wednesday. Meantime, these products cost £7 million a month to store. The quality issues, lack of supervision and fraud by some suppliers is coming under scrutiny as lawmakers investigate how Boris Johnson's government handled the pandemic.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-19/faulty-covid-gear-may-cost-uk-taxpayer-2-7-billion-report-says>

GOP senator declares 'pandemic is over' despite rise in cases across US from dangerous Covid variant BA.5

Tennessee senator Marsha Blackburn has been rebuked online after she claimed Covid-19 was "over" amid a new spike in cases. "What we know is the pandemic is over," she told Fox News on Tuesday morning. "You can get on a plane, you can go without a mask, people are back to work". The Republican continued her Fox News appearance by attacking the Biden administration for continuing to oversee the pandemic response at the federal level and added: "This White House wants to declare the pandemic in effect against our US military." It was unclear what her comments were specifically in response to, although Republicans have long complained about military members being mandated to be vaccinated against Covid.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/gop-senator-declares-e2-80-98pandemic-is-over-e2-80-99-despite-rise-in-cases-across-us-from-dangerous-covid-variant-ba5/ar-AAZuQbH>

Scientific Viewpoint

With COVID and influenza on the rise, how worried should pregnant women be?

When Alix Mellor fell ill with COVID, she cycled through the full gambit of symptoms: coughing throughout the night, soaring temperatures and unforgiving physical fatigue. But it was the thing she couldn't feel that really made her worry. Days into the infection and 34 weeks pregnant, she noticed her baby was uncharacteristically still. "I called the midwives and they said to come into the hospital and they did some fetal monitoring to make sure the baby is OK," the Melbourne mother says. "It was in my mind that it's not just about me, it's about the baby." It was the second time in three weeks the Melbourne mother had found herself at the hospital with a respiratory illness. The first was with a nasty bout of influenza which saw her hospitalised for four days with a "really high pulse rate". Women who test positive for COVID while pregnant have a higher risk of hospitalisation and ventilation than those who aren't pregnant and are also at greater risk of premature birth and stillbirth. It's a similar situation for the flu, which can be deadly for expectant mothers.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-21/influenza-covid-risk-to-pregnant-women/101246872>

CDC endorses more traditional Novavax COVID shot for adults

U.S. adults who haven't gotten any COVID-19 shots yet should consider a new option from Novavax - a more traditional kind of vaccine, health officials said Tuesday. Regulators authorized the nation's first so-called protein vaccine against COVID-19 last week, but the final hurdle was a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "If you have been waiting for a COVID-19 vaccine built on a different technology than those previously available, now is the time to join the millions of Americans who have been vaccinated," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, CDC's director, said in a statement, endorsing an earlier decision from an influential advisory panel.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-29202c59952b4454079c36ce589eaa7b>

Weekly tests dropped for unvaccinated state employees

Minnesota state government employees who are unvaccinated for COVID-19 are no longer required to take weekly tests for the virus in order to stay in the workplace. The requirement that went into effect in September 2021 meant thousands of employees took tests each week. Those that didn't comply were subjected to suspensions or other discipline. A state official said the requirement was rescinded because of the evolving nature of the virus. "Whereas it was common to have broad, uniform precautionary measures earlier in the pandemic, the pandemic is at a point where public health COVID-19 risk assessments and precautions are now more dependent upon the specific circumstances of individuals and communities," said Patrick Hogan, Department of Minnesota Management and Budget spokesman.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-state-governments-minnesota-government-f830bc457b54d83a710224fbbdf1ce24>

As BA.5 Spreads, How Long Will a Prior Covid-19 Infection Protect You?

If you have had Covid-19, how long can you expect to be protected from another infection? Doctors say the window between infections might be shrinking, fueled in part by the immune-evading Omicron BA.5 subvariant, although researchers are still gathering data. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has long set 90 days as its window for what counts as a new Covid-19 infection—meaning that symptoms or positive Covid tests within 90 days of a prior infection have been considered the same infection. Getting reinfected sooner has always been possible but uncommon. Now, reinfections are happening more often and can occur closer in time, say infectious-disease specialists and epidemiologists. They cite the march of new subvariants emerging and circulating simultaneously as well as BA.5's ability to evade immune protections. In addition, doctors note, people are taking fewer precautions, such as masking indoors or avoiding large gatherings.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-ba-5-spreads-how-long-will-a-prior-covid-19-infection-protect-you-11658229461>

Novavax Covid Shot for Adults Gains CDC Advisers' Backing

Novavax Inc.'s shares surged after its Covid-19 vaccine won backing from a panel of US public health advisers, a crucial step in providing officials with another tool against the virus as cases start to rise again. The 12-member panel of outside experts convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention voted unanimously to recommend the shots for adults. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky signed off on the advice from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which allows the shot to finally go into arms. The stock gained 12% at the close of New York trading Tuesday.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-19/novavax-covid-shot-for-adults-gains-cdc-advisers-backing>

Shionogi Covid Pill Xocova Fails to Win Japan's Panel Backing

Shionogi & Co.'s experimental Covid-19 treatment Xocova failed to win the backing of health experts in Japan who said there wasn't enough data to show the medicine's efficacy. The panel members didn't recommend that Japan's health ministry authorize emergency use of the therapy as there was a need to continue discussion on it, Hiroshi Kiyota, chairman of the expert committee said in a briefing Wednesday. The health ministry relies on the panel's decision to give the approval.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-20/shionogi-covid-pill-fails-to-win-japan-s-panel-backing>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Asia stepping up fight against more infectious Covid-19 variants

Governments across Asia are doubling down on efforts to protect their populations from the newer and more infectious strains of Covid-19 that have caused cases to surge in recent days. South Korea on Sunday (July 17) said infection numbers on Saturday doubled from a week ago, largely due to the highly contagious BA.5 Omicron sub-variant and waning immunity among its population. Data from the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency shows the daily Covid-19 cases during the 24

hours of Saturday was 40,342. Health experts anticipated daily infection numbers could increase more than the government expected, given the current pace of the spread. The discovery of a newer strain of Omicron, BA.2.75, also known as "centaurus", was also posing a threat.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/asia-stepping-up-fight-against-more-infectious-covid-19-variants>

Lockdown ruled out as Turkey faces less serious COVID-19 surge

Turkey will not go under a new lockdown or similar restrictions, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said after a Cabinet meeting, amid a dramatic climb in coronavirus cases, as he pointed out that they already have vaccines and drugs

<https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/lockdown-ruled-out-as-turkey-faces-less-serious-covid-19-surge/news>

2,886 new Covid cases, 19 more deaths

There were 19 more Covid-19 fatalities and 2,886 new cases admitted to hospitals on Tuesday, the Ministry of Public Health reported on Wednesday. This compared with 18 coronavirus-related deaths and 2,125 cases admitted to hospitals on Monday, as reported on Tuesday.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2349828/2-886-new-covid-cases-19-more-deaths>

Macau Casinos to Reopen Saturday After Covid-19 Shutdown

Casinos in the gambling hub of Macau will be allowed to reopen Saturday after a nearly two-week shutdown amid a Covid-19 outbreak, according to the government. The citywide lockdown that began July 11 was the first shutdown of casinos in Macau since the early days of the pandemic in 2020. The government said most nonessential industries, companies and venues will be allowed to reopen starting Saturday through July 30. Las Vegas Sands Corp which operates several casinos in Macau, is scheduled to report quarterly earnings Wednesday, the first of the three U.S.-based operators in Macau to update investors since the closures this month. Industry executives have continued to express confidence in a Macau comeback, but analysts have lowered gambling revenue forecasts for the Chinese territory this year, and some predict a full recovery won't come until 2024.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/macau-casinos-to-reopen-saturday-after-covid-19-shutdown-11658331404>

China Covid Cases Near 1,000 in Test of Zero Tolerance as Outbreak Spreads

New Covid-19 cases in China surged to almost 1,000, as social media posts showed residents in previously hard-hit areas literally climbing fences and running through the streets to try to escape renewed lockdowns. China reported 935 cases for Tuesday, up from 699 Monday, and the highest daily tally since May 21. While most of the outbreak is hitting beyond major cities, some neighborhoods in Shenzhen implemented new lockdowns and infections in Shanghai continue to spread -- spooking residents who endured previous isolation efforts.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-20/china-covid-19-cases-near-1-000-in-test-of-zero-tolerance-policy>

North Korea says nearing end of COVID crisis

North Korea is on the path to "finally defuse" a crisis stemming from its first acknowledged outbreak of COVID-19, the state news agency said on Monday, while Asian neighbours battle a new wave of infections driven by Omicron subvariants. The North says 99.98 percent of its 4.77 million fever patients since late April have fully recovered, but due to an apparent lack of testing, it has not released any figures for those who tested positive.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/18/north-korea-says-nearing-end-of-covid-crisis>