

Italy reports record daily virus death toll, cases fall

December 3 2020



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Italy on Thursday recorded its highest daily death toll from coronavirus with 993 fatalities in the last 24 hours, despite a downward trend in infection rates.

The previous grim record of 969 deaths was set on March 27, when Italy was under national lockdown after becoming the first European country to be hit by the global pandemic.

The country's COVID-19 death toll now stands at 58,038.

"A sombre day for Italy," a newspaper headline said.

The daily number of deaths reported had been below 800 for the past five days, while the number of new infections is falling.

The health ministry reported 23,225 new cases on Thursday, compared to 40,902 on November 13. The number of people currently infected has also been falling since the end of November.

"The situation is still very serious," Health Minister Roberto Speranza told parliament, adding that it was difficult to track the spread of the virus to possible new clusters.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte outlined new curbs during the holiday season, banning travel between different regions from December 21 to January 6 and imposing a night curfew from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am .

Restaurants can remain open in the least affected regions until 6:00 pm but only takeaways are allowed in other areas. Ski slopes will be closed until January 7.

"We must eliminate the risk of a third wave which could arrive in January and not less serious than the first and the second" ones, the prime minister told a news conference.

"We cannot let down our guard," Conte stressed.

The government imposed a nationwide shutdown when coronavirus first hit that brought infection rates under control, but had the effect of crippling the economy.

After cases began to rise again in October, bars and restaurants were shut in the early evening and a nationwide night curfew imposed, with tougher measures in the hardest-hit areas.

Ministers say this regional approach is working, but have warned Italians not to remain vigilant and follow the guidance to keep cases down.

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