

Cyprus forest fire leaves four people dead as it rages on for second day



Four people were found dead as a huge fire raged for a second day in Cyprus, raising fears of forest as a blaze once official called the worst on record.

The blaze, fueled by strong winds, affected at least 10 communities over an area of 170 square kilometers (10 square miles) in the foothills of the Troodos mountain range, an area of pine forest and densely vegetated hillside.

The victims, thought to be Cypriot nationals, were found

Covid-19: Compelling health argument for easing lockdown - Javid



There is a compelling argument that easing Covid restrictions is needed for the country's health, said Javid says.

The health secretary said that while the steps taken had saved countless lives, they had caused a shocking rise in domestic violence and a terrible impact on mental health.

We need to learn to live with Covid, he added, acknowledging that "cases are going to rise significantly".

All legal restrictions are expected to be lifted in England on 19 July.

The government is expected to set out how it intends to move forward in the coming days, which is thought to be a shift away from rules towards the idea of

personal responsibility.

Mr Javid's comments come after doctors warned that some measures should be kept beyond July, with the British Medical Association (BMA) calling the rise in infections alarming.

How much will life actually change on 19 July?

Writing in the Mail on Sunday, Mr Javid said: "The economic argument for opening up are well known, but for me, the health arguments are equally compelling.

"Rules that we have had to put in place have caused a shocking rise in domestic violence and a terrible impact on so many people's mental health," he added.

He said England was on track to meet the fourth and final stage of lockdown lifting - but the gov-

ernment had to be honest with people about the fact that "we cannot eliminate Covid".

"We do need to be clear that cases are going to rise significantly. I know many people will be cautious about the easing of restrictions - that's completely understandable."

But the date we choose will ever come without risk, so we have to take a bold and balanced view. We are going to have to learn to accept the existence of Covid risk."

Mr Javid warned the backing of the NHS would get "the worse before it gets better", as millions of people had avoided coming forward for healthcare during the pandemic.

Russia's COVID death toll hits record high for fifth day

Commensurate deaths in Russia hit a record on Saturday for the fifth straight day, with the authorities reporting 197 fatalities as the country faces a rapid surge of infections.

Russia's state coronavirus task force on Saturday reported 24,439 new cases - the highest daily tally since January and 1,200 more than the day before. Moscow, its outlying region and St Petersburg accounted for nearly half of Saturday's new cases.

Officials blame the surge on the highly infectious Delta variant and rapid demand for vaccinations.

The Kremlin insisted on Friday that the authorities are not discussing another lockdown. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stressed that the situation with the coronavirus remains "stable" in a number of regions,



Philippines military plane crashes with at least 85 on board

A Philippines military transport aircraft with at least 85 people on board has crashed in the south of the country, the armed forces say.

More than 40 people have been rescued and have been taken to hospital, armed forces chief Gen. Salazar said.

The plane, a C-130 Hercules, was flying to land in Jolo island in Sulu province when it crashed on the runway.

Seventeen bodies are said to have been recovered from the crash site at Pankaj.

Flames and smoke were seen rising from the wreckage.

The plane, which crashed at an 11:30 local time (07:30 GMT), was carrying troops from Cagayan de Oro, on the southern island of Mindanao. It missed the runway.

Meanwhile, a psychologist warned that falling into a vacuum of people avoid measures such as self-isolation, risked a "loss of compliance" among generally.

Prof Robert West said the "loss" - which matters are said to be considered after returning home and the country's health authorities and encouraging those without jobs who ignore the rules.

Mr Javid replaced Matt Hancock as health secretary last week.

Mr Hancock resigned after his breach of social distancing guidelines by kissing an aide.

BBC

Egypt's President Sisi opens strategic Mediterranean naval base

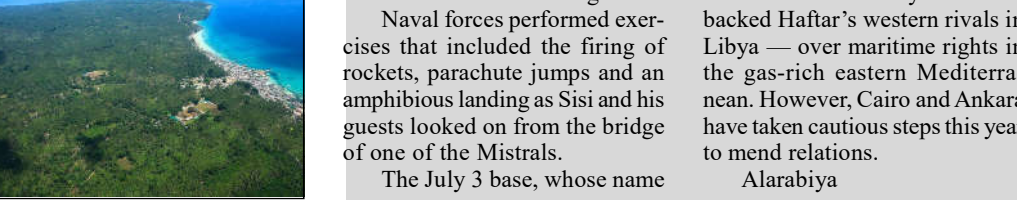
Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi inaugurated a naval base on Saturday (15 July) that the country's navy will use to counter the rise of Libya, flanked by close ally, the United Arab Emirates. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Libya's army president.

Egypt says the July 5 base will help it project strategic and economic interests as well as helping guard against regular migration of its workers to boost its naval presence on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

At the inauguration, two military helicopters crashed, according from France were on display alongside German-made submarines and two recently destroyed Russian submarines.

PRIME-Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the lifting of the ban on the use of the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea will be a "great victory" for the Mediterranean.

The July 5 base, whose name



in Moscow, which has not had a strict lockdown since last summer, officials have now banned people from going to malls, bars and restaurants unless they can show proof of vaccination, immunity or a negative test.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin told residents that more than 2.7 million people have now received at least one vaccine dose. He said 60,000 to 70,000 people were being vaccinated on a daily basis and said he hoped that the number of people who have had a first dose would reach three million next week.

At one site in the capital, 21-year-old student Svetlana Supereva told the AFP news agency she had been waiting to get the COVID-19 vaccine shot for about two hours.

"I want to go to a job and feel safe," she said. *Aljazeera*