

Global COVID-19 cases near 5 million mark, WHO warns of 2nd peak



Washington, May 27 (RHC)-- The number of confirmed coronavirus infections worldwide now stands at 5,495,061, with 346,232 cases having resulted in loss of life, according to the latest figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

The latest data also indicated that the United States continues to lead the world by far in the number of infections and deaths — 1,662,302 and 98,220 respectively — with Brazil overtaking Russia to become the country with the second-highest infections of 374,898.

Russia leads Europe in the number of cases, at 353,427, followed by the UK's 262,547. The UK holds the world's second-highest number of fatalities from the contagion, at the roughly 37,000 mark.

As a growing number of countries are loosening restrictions amid declining numbers of infections, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Monday that countries showing declining COVID-19 cases might face an "immediate second peak" if they let up too soon on the measures to stop the epidemic.

“When we speak about a second wave, classically what we often mean is there will be a first wave of the disease by itself, and then it recurs months later. And that may be a reality for many countries in a number of months’ time,” said WHO emergencies head Mike Ryan during an online briefing.

Ryan said the world was still in the middle of the first wave of the coronavirus outbreak. He said that, while cases were declining in many countries, they were still increasing in Central and South America, South Asia, and Africa.

“We need also to be cognizant of the fact that the disease can jump up at any time. We cannot make assumptions that just because the disease is on the way down now, it is going to keep going down,” the WHO official said.

The warning came as many European countries and US states have taken steps in recent weeks to lift lockdown measures that partially contained the spread of the virus but harshly impacted their economies.

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