

Italy plans to impose national COVID lockdown over Easter

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Italy was the first Western country to enforce a national lockdown last year. (Photo: Guglielmo Mangiapane/Reuters)

Rome, March 13 (RHC)-- Italy will be placed under a nationwide lockdown for the Easter weekend, according to a draft law decree announced on Friday, as the government battles to stem a fresh surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalisations. Non-essential shops will be shuttered nationwide from April 3rd to April 5th. On those days, Italians will only be allowed to leave their homes for work, health or emergency reasons.

The draft decree also said that as of Monday, curbs will be tightened in the country's low-risk "yellow" regions, where movement between towns will be severely limited and restaurants and bars will be closed.

Along with nationwide measures, Italy calibrates restrictions in its 20 regions according to a four-tier colour-coded system (white, yellow, orange and red) based on infection levels and revised every week. In red zones, restaurants, bars and non-essential shops are closed. By comparison, in white areas, restaurants can open in the evening.

Italy was the first Western country to enforce a national lockdown last year, as the virus took hold and the nation became an epicentre of the pandemic.

This week, a grim milestone was reached as Italy recorded 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 – a "terrible threshold" said new Prime Minister Mario Draghi. The recent rise in cases in Italy comes amid global attempts to vaccinate populations against the virus.

Health Undersecretary Pierpaolo Sileri told Italian media on Thursday that he hopes two-thirds of the population will have received a first dose of a vaccine by the summer, and a second dose by October.

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