

U.K. SET FOR TOUGHER VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday he was “reconciled” to the prospect of tougher restrictions to combat spiralling coronavirus cases, as a row flared over whether schools should reopen.

“It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in many parts of the country,” Mr. Johnson told the BBC. “I’m fully, fully reconciled to that.”

Highest daily rise

Britain recorded 57,725 new cases on Saturday, its highest total of the entire pandemic.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer urged the Prime Minister to immediately impose national lockdown measures. “It’s no good the Prime Minister hinting that further restrictions are coming into place in a week or two or three,” he said, adding the virus was “clearly out of control”. “So I say bring in those restrictions now, national restrictions in the next 24 hours.”

Much of Britain is already under regional lockdown, although primary schools are set to reopen in most of the country when the Christmas holiday ends on Monday.

However, around one million four to 11-year-olds will learn remotely after the government announced primary schools in London, where case rates are particularly high, would remain closed.

Mr. Johnson told parents elsewhere that they should “absolutely” send their young children to school when term begins. “I understand people’s anxieties but there is no doubt in my mind that schools are safe and that education is a priority.

“We’ve really fought very hard throughout this pandemic across the country to keep schools open,” he added.

But Jerry Glazier, national executive member of the National Education Union, said on Sunday that “schools are now playing a significant part in the spreading of the infection” and called for them all to be closed for at least two weeks. “Schools are unsafe for the kids and unsafe for the education workers... Many teachers are very anxious about going back into the workplace.”

Mr. Johnson said that public health experts had highlighted the long term health and social costs of children being kept out of school.

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