

Sri Lanka extends virus lockdown

April 26 2020



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Sri Lanka reversed plans to end its virus lockdown on Monday, extending it for another week after a spike in coronavirus infections led to a recall of military personnel on leave.

Within hours of announcing on Saturday that the nationwide restrictions

imposed on March 20 would be lifted, the government revoked the order and extended them to May 4.

Army chief Shavendra Silva said on behalf of the army, navy and air force that the leave of all military personnel was cancelled.

He ordered them to report back to work immediately.

The move came as the number of sailors infected with new coronavirus from a single naval base near the capital Colombo jumped to 95 out of a nationwide total of 477 reported cases.

Silva said 68 sailors at Welisara naval base were found to be infected with the coronavirus, up from 30 late last week.

Another 27 who had gone on leave from the base also tested positive, he said, adding that an additional 400 sailors had been tested but their results were not yet available.

The entire base—home to 4,000 sailors and their families—was placed under quarantine after the first cases emerged.

One officer at the camp died late Saturday night but the cause of death was leptospirosis or "rat fever", said navy spokesman Isuru Suriyabandara.

His body was nonetheless immediately cremated under quarantine rules for coronavirus victims.

Health officials said there had been a jump in cases elsewhere, including in a densely populated area of the capital Colombo where 81 people tested positive.

The island nation has reported a total of seven deaths.

The health ministry on Sunday asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide Sri Lanka with 1,000 body bags, saying they feared more deaths from the virus.

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