

Mauritius says battle 'won' as all virus patients discharged

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Coronavirus. Credit: European Centers for Disease Control

Mauritius on Wednesday declared wary victory in its first battle with coronavirus, saying it had "zero" active patients and had not documented a single new case in 17 days.

The Indian Ocean island nation initially surged ahead of other eastern

African countries in terms of caseload, hitting a peak of 332 just shy of six weeks into its outbreak. Ten people died.

It imposed one of the first and strictest lockdowns in Africa, going so far as to initially shut supermarkets for 10 days, a measure that has been extended until June 1.

"Today we are at 17 days without a new case. Mauritius now has zero active cases," Health Minister Kailesh Jagutpal said in an address on national television.

"We have won the battle thanks to the cooperation of the public, who understood that the government needed to take extreme measures, including complete confinement, and the closure of supermarkets and our borders. But we have not yet won the war. Let's remain vigilant."

From May 15, a limited selection of essential stores such as bakeries, butcheries and fishmongers will be allowed to re-open, but most businesses, bars, shopping centres and markets will stay shut.

Schools will remain closed until August 1, the island's famed beaches will remain off limits and no more than 10 people will be allowed to attend weddings and funerals.

Independent epidemiologist Deoraj Caussy told AFP Mauritius needed to remain on alert.

"It is imperative to use random sampling and continue to test... Zero active cases does not mean that it is over and life is returning to normal."

Meanwhile the government is busy debating two pieces of legislation, the Covid Bill and the Quarantine Bill, which will legislate aspects of the eventual lifting of the lockdown and planned return to normal of all

activity from June 2.

However the laws have come under fire from unions and [civil society](#) who say they weaken individual freedoms and workers rights.

Among the changes made will be those allowing employers to fire workers with one month salary and on short notice, while another change will allow police to enter a home without a warrant.

A statement from a collective of unions in the country warned that social discontent was currently confined but "could erupt like a social volcano at any moment".

"We still need to make sacrifices to return to a semblance of normalcy. We are counting on the understanding of the population to not let their guard down," said Justice Minister Maneesh Gobin.

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