

Indonesia posts record virus infections as restrictions eased

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Indonesia posted a record number of coronavirus infections Wednesday, sparking calls from health experts for the world's fourth most populous country to slam the brakes on easing restrictions.

Last week, the capital Jakarta opened mosques for the first time in nearly three months, as its governor announced the gradual reopening of shuttered offices, restaurants, shopping malls and [tourist attractions](#).

Similar easing measures are happening across the vast archipelago, home to nearly 270 million people, as the government rolled out a "new normal" policy aimed at heading off a collapse in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

But the moves come as Indonesia records a surge in [coronavirus](#) cases, with the one-day toll jumping to a new record of 1,241 infections on Wednesday.

The country's COVID-19 task force chalked up the rise to more effective monitoring.

"The increase in new infections is the result of aggressive tracing," task force spokesman Achmad Yurianto told reporters.

"This proves that (tracing) is revealing more [confirmed cases](#)," he added.

Officially, Indonesia has more than 34,000 cases of COVID-19 and 1,959 deaths. But with one of the world's lowest testing rates, the country's real toll is widely believed to be much higher.

The surge in infections comes after authorities in Muslim majority Indonesia struggled to contain a mass movement of travellers at the end of Ramadan last month.

Health experts warned that the country could see a spike in infections after the holy fasting month, and called for a reversal of easing policies.

"Regions that are planning to lift restrictions, or are already doing so,

should revisit that decision," said Panji Fortuna Hadisoemarto, an epidemiologist at Padjadjaran University.

"If the number of cases keep increasing in Jakarta for the next few days, I think the administration has to pull the emergency brake and bring back restrictions," he added.

Henry Surendra, a Jakarta-based epidemiologist, acknowledged that better monitoring could be playing a role in the rise of confirmed cases.

But Indonesia had yet to meet WHO guidelines on prerequisites for easing measures, including getting infections under control, Surendra said.

"It's a bit premature to lift restrictions," he said.

"Indonesia should wait a little longer."

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