

Virus cases surge in US, India, but slow in China, Korea

June 22 2020, by Emily Schmall and Elaine Kurtenbach



People wearing face masks to help protect against the spread of the new coronavirus pray while maintaining social distancing during a service at the Chogyesa temple in South Korea, Monday, June 22, 2020. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

The world saw the largest daily increases yet in coronavirus cases, with

infections soaring in India's rural villages after migrant workers fled major cities.

India's coronavirus caseload climbed by nearly 15,000 as of Monday to 425,282, with more than 13,000 deaths, the health ministry reported.

After easing the nationwide lockdown, the Indian government has run special trains to return thousands of migrant workers to their natal villages in recent weeks. Nearly 90% of India's poorest districts have cases, though the outbreak remains centered in Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu states, which are home to major cities.

Infections slowed in China and South Korea, suggesting some progress in stemming their newest outbreaks. But despite clear headway in containing the virus in regions that suffered early outbreaks, globally the number of new virus cases has soared in recent days. In Brazil, Iraq, India and the United States, hospitals are scrambling to cope.

Nearly 9 million people have been infected by the new coronavirus and more than 468,000 people have died, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the actual numbers are much higher, given limits to testing and the presumed large share of asymptomatic cases.



A woman wearing a protective face mask to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus waits for a delivery worker sorting out her parcel at a collection point outside an apartment in Beijing, Sunday, June 21, 2020. According to state media reports, nearly one hundred thousand delivery workers have to accept the nucleic acid testing, a countermeasure to prevent the spread of the virus in the capital city. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

In a grim reminder of the pandemic's ubiquitous reach, Philippine officials said Saudi Arabia's king had asked that the remains of 282 Filipino workers who perished in recent months in the oil-rich kingdom be repatriated within three days. They died of varied causes, but virus restrictions delayed repatriations.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said the Philippine government asked

that the deadline be extended and that the bodies of about 50 Filipinos who died of COVID-19 be buried in Saudi Arabia.

The Philippines has reported more than 30,000 infections and 1,169 deaths, among the highest in Southeast Asia. It is struggling to help bring home tens of thousands of Filipinos who have lost their work abroad.

In Pakistan, infections are accelerating and hospitals are having to turn away patients, with new cases up to 6,800 a day in mid-June. The government has relaxed pandemic restrictions, hoping to salvage a near-collapsed economy as the number of people living in poverty has risen to 40%, up from 30% of the population of 220 million people.



A food delivery worker wearing a protective face mask to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus rides on a street in Beijing, Sunday, June 21, 2020.

According to state media reports, nearly one hundred thousand delivery workers have to accept the nucleic acid testing, a countermeasure to prevent the spread of the virus in the capital city. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

In Iraq, masked workers were setting up makeshift coronavirus wards in Baghdad's vast exhibition grounds as a long-dreaded spike in infections strained its overstretched hospitals, battered by years of conflict and poor infrastructure.

Late Sunday, the World Health Organization reported the largest single-day increase in coronavirus cases by its count, at more than 183,000 new cases in the latest 24 hours. Brazil tallied 54,771 and the U.S. was next at 36,617, the UN health agency said. India reported more than 15,400.

Experts say rising case counts reflect multiple factors including more testing and spreading infections. More than two-thirds of the new deaths were reported in the Americas.

Still, in East Asia there were signs of progress, as South Korea reported 17 new cases, the first time its daily increase fell to under 20 in nearly a month.



Elijah Herring, right, plays the sax while performing with keyboardist Kenny Barron, center, and bassist Dan Loomis, during Make Music-New York in Brooklyn's Ditmas Park neighborhood during the coronavirus outbreak, Sunday, June 21, 2020, in New York. The concert was one of seven simultaneously performed live jazz, classical and rock performances offered from the driveways, porches and balconies of Victorian homes in the neighborhood. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

The recent outbreak has been centered around Seoul, the capital, where the mayor warned stronger social distancing measures may be reimposed if the daily new cases don't fall below an average of 30 in the next three days.

"If Seoul gets penetrated (by the virus), the entire Republic of Korea gets

penetrated," Mayor Park Won-soon said, using the country's formal name. He said the basic reproduction number of virus carriers, or number of infections caused by an individual, rose to nearly 1.8 between April 30 and June 11. Any number above 1 indicates a growing epidemic.

A rise in cases among people arriving from South Asia prompted a halt to new visas for travelers from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Elsewhere in Asia, Beijing's increase was in single digits for the first time in eight days. It reported nine cases.



Children stand through a sunroof while attending a drive-thru classic and custom car show on the arena floor at Pacific Coliseum, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Sunday, June 21, 2020. The car show was hosted by the Pacific

National Exhibition as part of a drive-thru barbecue event in support of food vendors unable to sell at the fair this year due to the cancellation of the annual event because of the coronavirus. (Darryl Dyck/The Canadian Press via AP)

But Australia's Victoria state reported 16 new cases of the coronavirus as it tries to bring an outbreak there under control. The number of cases there is the highest in two months, accounting for more than 80% of Australia's new cases over the past week.

In the United States, experts say the resurgence in infections there is not a so-called "second wave" but a continuation of the first wave of outbreaks as the number of cases plateaus.

New cases are dipping in some parts of the country while rising mainly in the the South, West and Midwest, swamping hospitals in some areas.

The coronavirus has killed about 120,000 people nationwide. More than 30,000 cases were reported on Friday and Saturday, with the daily totals their highest since May 1.

In New York City, the worst affected area so far, efforts to stop the pandemic's spread through contact tracing are being hampered by the reluctance of many people to provide information to tracers.



Unmasked daily wage workers wait to be hired by customers in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, June 12, 2020. Pakistan ranks among countries hardest hit by the coronavirus with infections soaring beyond 18,000, while the government, which has opened up the country hoping to salvage a near collapsed economy, warns a stunning 1.2 million Pakistanis could be infected by the end of August. (AP Photo/B.K. Bangash)

The New York Times reported only 35% of the 5,347 city residents who tested positive or were presumed positive for COVID-19 in the first two weeks of the contact tracing program gave information about their close contacts.

But Dr. Ted Long, head of New York City's new Test and Trace Corps, defended the program, saying 69% of the people who complete an

interview provide contacts.

The city will hit a turning point Monday: allowing New Yorkers to dine out for the first time in three months, though only at outdoor tables. Shoppers can browse, shaggy heads get haircuts and kids climb playground monkey bars, instead of their apartment walls.

Office workers will be allowed to resume their commutes, though many won't yet.

Larry Silverstein, the 89-year-old World Trade Center developer, said he couldn't wait.



A private delivery company's courier wearing a protective face mask to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus rides his delivery cart passes by a

residential area in Beijing, Sunday, June 21, 2020. According to state media reports, nearly one hundred thousand delivery workers have to accept the nucleic acid testing, a countermeasure to prevent the spread of the virus in the capital city. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Returning to office life and in-person teamwork brings "a joy, a fulfillment, such a sense of being able to function," he said.

"I went through 9/11. I remember people telling me we were never going to be able to get people to come back to lower Manhattan," said Silverstein, who leased the twin towers six weeks before the 2001 terror attacks destroyed them. "Never bet against New York, because New York always comes back, bigger and better than ever before."

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Citation: Virus cases surge in US, India, but slow in China, Korea (2020, June 22) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-virus-cases-surge-india-china.html>

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