

Over 160,000 coronavirus cases reported every day in past week, a record: WHO

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The global coronavirus pandemic is accelerating, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, with the number of daily cases surging beyond 160,000 every day in the past week, a record.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also told a virtual briefing that well over half of all cases recorded since the novel coronavirus first emerged in China late last year were registered in June.

"For the past week, the number of the new cases has exceeded 160,000 on every single day," he said, adding that "60 percent of all cases so far have been reported just in the past month."

Data provided by the UN health agency showed that the highest number of new daily COVID-19 cases ever recorded came on June 28, when more than 189,500 new cases were registered worldwide.

Prior to June 25, daily cases only surpassed 160,000 twice before, both in the preceding week, while daily cases did not pass the 100,000 mark until May 18, the data showed.

With over 511,000 deaths and more than 10.5 million known infections worldwide, the coronavirus pandemic is "not even close to being over", the WHO warned earlier this week.

Tedros reiterated that taking a "comprehensive approach" was the best way to rein in the virus.

"Find, isolate, test and care for every case, trace and quarantine every contact, equip and train health workers and educate and empower communities to protect themselves and others," he said.

"Not testing alone. Not physical distancing alone. Not contact tracing alone. Not masks alone. Do it all."

Countries that have implemented a wide range of measures, including contact tracing, isolation, physical distancing and mask wearing "have suppressed transmission and saved lives", he said.

'Fragmented approach'

The UN health agency was therefore very concerned, he said, to see that a number of countries "have not used all the tools at their disposal and have taken a fragmented approach.

"These countries face a long, hard road ahead," he said, stressing though that "no matter what situation a country is in, it can be turned around."

"It's never too late," he said, pointing for instance to how Italy and Spain managed to rein in daunting outbreaks earlier this year.

Tedros also highlighted that more than 1,000 scientists from around the world were this week taking part in discussions on the vast array of COVID-19-related research, including on the development of potential vaccines and treatments.

He reiterated the call for equitable access for all, insisting that while the pandemic posed a scientific challenge, "it's also a test of character".

"We have a shared responsibility to ensure that all people have access to the tools to protect themselves, especially those who are most at risk."

Six months into the global pandemic, the WHO also said it is aiming next week to send two Geneva-based experts to China to lay the groundwork for an investigation into the virus source.

The organisation has been pressing China since early May to invite in its experts to help investigate the animal origins of the coronavirus.

"The planned mission is an advance mission... to make preparations with Chinese colleagues, essentially to set up the scope of the mission," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told Wednesday's briefing.

He added that the team would consist of one animal health expert and one epidemiologist.

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