

'Exponential' rise in virus cases in DR Congo capital: WHO

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The UN's health agency on Thursday said it had detected a surge late last month in coronavirus cases in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"An exponential rise in the spread of SARS-Cov-2 virus has been recorded in Kinshasa," the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a

weekly report.

The rise mirrored a "clear deterioration" in the wider province of Kinshasa, it said.

A DRC health ministry official confirmed "the third wave of COVID-19 is already there—it's the Indian (Delta) and South African (Beta) variants."

"This wave could be deadlier than the previous ones," the official said, blaming lax adherence to social distancing and [face masks](#).

The WHO said that the mortality rate across the country was currently unchanged at 2.5 percent, but noted concern about the presence of the Delta variant in Kinshasa.

Professor Jean-Marie Kayembe, a member of the DRC's anti-coronavirus task force, told the UN's Radio Okapi, "we are in the third (wave) at the moment"—a conclusion, he said, that stemmed from rising numbers of cases and "saturation" of healthcare centres.

Kinshasa has a population of around 15 million people, many of whom live in poor, crowded conditions.

So far, the city—and the DRC itself—have been relatively spared from the impact of coronavirus compared to South Africa, the worst-hit country in Africa, and states in other continents.

However, the daily national figures have risen from several dozen in past weeks to 243 on Thursday.

As of Wednesday, the DRC had recorded 32,176 confirmed cases of the disease, of which 789 were fatal.

The capital accounted for 22,348 of these cases, many of them concentrated in the wealthy district of Gombe, home to prosperous Congolese and travelling expatriates.

Thirty-two legislators and several aides to President Felix Tshisekedi are among those who have died.

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