

Indonesia reports 54,000 virus cases, becomes Asian hotspot

July 14 2021, by Edna Tarigan



Workers in protective suits carry a coffin containing the body of a COVID-19 victim to a grave for a burial at Cipenjo cemetery in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The world's fourth most populous country has been hit hard by an explosion of COVID-19 cases that have strained hospitals on the main island of Java. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim

Indonesia reported more than 54,000 new coronavirus cases for the first time Wednesday, surpassing recent daily infections in India, whose disastrous outbreak is declining, and becoming Asia's new virus hotspot.

Officials fear that the more highly transmissible delta variant is now spreading from the islands of Java and Bali, where outbreaks prompted a partial lockdown that closed places of worship, malls, parks and restaurants.

"I predict the outbreak will increase continuously in July as we are not able yet to prevent the spread of infections," epidemiology expert Pandu Riono at the University of Indonesia said Wednesday. "Emergency social restrictions are still inadequate. They should be twice as stringent since we are facing the delta variant, which is two times more contagious."

The Health Ministry reported 54,517 new cases and 991 deaths on Wednesday, bringing the number of confirmed cases since the pandemic began above 2.6 million and the number of confirmed fatalities to more than 69,000.

A month ago, daily cases were running at about 8,000.

Reported daily cases in Indonesia are now higher than in India, despite Indonesia having far less testing by population.

India reported fewer than 39,000 cases on Wednesday, far below its peak of more than 400,000 daily cases in May, following lockdowns in its worst-hit areas and a stepped-up vaccination drive.



Workers in protective suits prepare to lower a coffin containing the body of a COVID-19 victim into a grave at Cipenjo cemetery in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The world's fourth most populous country has been hit hard by an explosion of COVID-19 cases that have strained hospitals on the main island of Java. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim

Indonesian Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said the government has identified the spread of the delta variant in some regions outside Java and Bali.

He told lawmakers on Tuesday that across the country, more than 90,000 of the 120,000 hospital beds for COVID-19 patients are occupied.

"Nationally, we still have some room. But the bed occupancy rate is very

high in some provinces where the explosion of the delta variant is concentrated," Sadikin said.

With the increase in deaths over the past month, some residents near Jakarta have begun helping overburdened gravediggers.

"As the diggers are too tired and do not have enough resources to dig, the residents in my neighborhood decided to help," said Jaya Abidin, who lives in Bogor on the outskirts of the capital. "Because if we do not do this, we will have to wait in turn a long time for a burial in the middle of the night."



A gravedigger prepares a grave for a COVID-19 victim at Cipenjo cemetery in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The world's fourth most populous country has been hit hard by an explosion of COVID-19 cases that

have strained hospitals on the main island of Java.Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim

The government is struggling to acquire enough vaccines to reach its target of inoculating more than 181 million of its 270 million people by March 2022. So far, only 15.6 million people have been fully vaccinated.

So far, the world's fourth-most populous country has secured 137.6 million doses of Sinovac, AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines, enough for about 69 million people.

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