Malaysia shuts vaccination center after 204 staff infected

July 13 2021, by Eileen Ng

A nurse administers a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to an elderly woman in her house in rural Sabab Bernam, central Selangor state, Malaysia, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Medical teams are going house to house in rural villages to reach out to elderly citizens as the government seeks to ramp up its vaccination program. Despite a strict lockdown, the pandemic has worsened with more than 844,000 confirmed cases nationwide and over 6,200 deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Thian

Malaysia shut down a mass vaccination center in its worst-hit state Tuesday after more than 200 medical staff and volunteers tested positive for the coronavirus.

The closure was the first of a vaccination center and came as the country's new confirmed infections breached five figures Tuesday, hitting a record 11,079.

Science Minister Khairy Jamaluddin stressed that swift government action had contained the cluster at the Ideal Convention Center in central Selangor state.

Khairy, who is in charge of the national immunization program, said he ordered the testing of all 453 workers at the center after two volunteers were confirmed to have the virus. Khairy said the 204 whose results were positive had low viral loads, meaning the amount of virus in their bodies was small.

This could be because 88% or 400 of the workers have already been vaccinated, he said.

The center was shut for deep sanitization and all its workers are being isolated. Khairy said it will reopen Wednesday with a new team of medical workers.

He urged people who were vaccinated at the center since Friday to isolate themselves for 10 days and be tested if they develop symptoms. He declined to say how many people had visited the center since Friday. It has the capacity to deliver up to 6,000 shots a day.

A nurse administers a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to an durian fruit vendor at his house in rural Sabab Bernam, central Selangor state, Malaysia, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Medical teams are going house to house in rural villages to reach out to elderly citizens as the government seeks to ramp up its vaccination program. Despite a strict lockdown, the pandemic has worsened with more than 844,000 confirmed cases nationwide and over 6,200 deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Thian

"This is the first time we had to shut down a (vaccination center) because of positive cases but we acted fast. By shutting it down today and by taking corrective measures ... we hope the disruption is only one day and that this will not hamper the vaccination process," Khairy said.

He said it would be safe to visit the center starting Wednesday for

vaccinations.

Khairy said health measures at all other vaccination centers will be tightened, but didn't order other workers to be tested.

Selangor, the country's richest state bordering Kuala Lumpur, is the worst hit by the pandemic. It accounted for nearly half of Tuesday's new cases, partly because of increased virus screening amid a tight lockdown.

The government has struggled to contain the pandemic, which has worsened despite a lockdown since June 1. Total confirmed cases have soared by 50% since June 1 to 855,949, while deaths have more than doubled to over 6,200.

A nurse registers vaccines for rural residents in Sabab Bernam, central Selangor state, Malaysia, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Medical teams are going house to house in rural villages to reach out to elderly citizens as the government seeks to ramp up its vaccination program. Despite a strict lockdown, the pandemic has worsened with more than 844,000 confirmed cases nationwide and over 6,200 deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Thian

A Malaysian nurse vaccinates a Sinovac COVID-19 vaccines to an elderly woman in her house in Sabab Bernam, central Selangor state, Malaysia, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Medical teams are going house to house in rural villages to reach out to elderly citizens as the government seeks to ramp up its vaccination program. Despite a strict lockdown, the pandemic has worsened with more than 844,000 confirmed cases nationwide and over 6,200 deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Thian

A nurse prepares to administer a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to an elderly woman in her house in rural Sabab Bernam, central Selangor state, Malaysia, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Medical teams are going house to house in rural villages to reach out to elderly citizens as the government seeks to ramp up its vaccination program. Despite a strict lockdown, the pandemic has worsened with more than 844,000 confirmed cases nationwide and over 6,200 deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Thian

Hospitals especially in Selangor have been overwhelmed, with some patients reportedly being treated on the floor due to a lack of beds, and corpses piling up in mortuaries.

Vaccinations have picked up, with 11% of the population now fully

inoculated. At least a quarter of the country's 32 million people have received at least one dose of [vaccine](#).

The daily vaccination rate surpassed 420,000 doses on Monday, the national Bernama news agency quoted Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin as saying,

He expressed confidence that the fast pace of vaccination would help stem the outbreak.