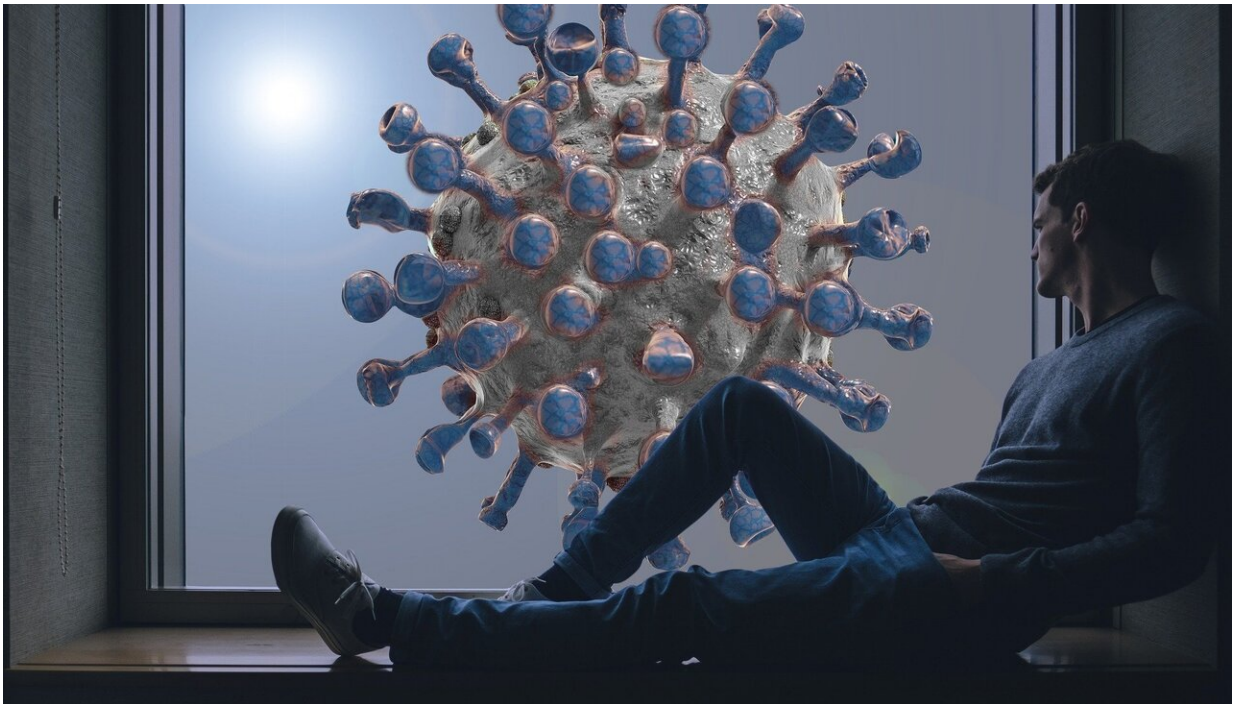


Rwanda locks down capital as COVID cases surge

July 15 2021



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Rwanda will put the capital Kigali and eight other districts across the country under lockdown from Saturday to rein in surging coronavirus cases and deaths, officials said.

The restrictions will last until July 26, the office of Prime Minister

Edouard Ngirente said in a statement late Wednesday.

"Citizens are urged to significantly reduce social interactions and limit movements only to essential services," it said.

Both public and private offices, except for those providing key services, were ordered closed.

Other measures due to come into force include a ban on outdoor sport and [recreational activities](#), while schools will be closed and the number of people attending funerals is capped at 15.

International arrivals and tourism will however continue.

A dusk to dawn curfew introduced in June across the country remains in force.

Rwanda has up until now avoided the worst of the pandemic by enforcing some of the strictest containment measures on the continent and implementing a rigorous regime of testing and contact tracing.

But in recent weeks, cases have skyrocketed as the East African nation battles more virulent variants of the virus, including delta.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed, with a critical shortage of beds and desperately needed medicines.

The country of 13 million people has registered nearly 51,000 cases of COVID-19 of which 607 have been fatal.

But like other countries on the continent, vaccine uptake has been slow due in part to a lack of doses and public apathy.

A nationwide campaign aimed at vaccinating 60 percent of the population by next year has so far reached just 401,160 people, according to latest government statistics.

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