

WHO calls for moratorium on booster shots as China curbs travel

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The WHO called Wednesday for a moratorium on COVID-19 vaccine booster shots as China tightened overseas travel curbs after recording its highest number of infections in months, while Tokyo reported the

Olympic Games' first cluster.

The World Health Organization said halting booster shots until at least the end of September would help ease the drastic inequity in dose distribution between rich and poor nations.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the move would help towards the goal of enabling "at least 10 percent of the population of every country to be vaccinated".

The coronavirus pandemic has killed at least 4,247,231 people worldwide since the virus first emerged in late 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data.

The US is the worst-affected country with 614,295 deaths, followed by Brazil with 558,432 and India with 425,757.

First Olympic cluster

The Olympic Games, which went ahead despite a rise in cases in Japan, reported that all 12 members of the Greek artistic swimming team had entered isolation after five tested positive for coronavirus.

The team have withdrawn from remaining competition and the seven members who have so far tested negative have agreed to move to a facility for "close contacts" of positive cases, Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya said.

"We pray for their swift recovery," Takaya said, adding that it was the first "cluster" discovered at the Games.

So far, Tokyo 2020 has reported 322 positive virus cases among its "stakeholders" including athletes, officials and media. Most of the

positive cases have been among Japanese residents working as employees or contractors.

The movement of people is coming under more restrictions inside China—with localised transport closures and stay-at-home orders in places in some cities—as well as beyond China's borders.

China's immigration authority on Wednesday announced it would stop issuing ordinary passports and other documents needed for exiting the country in "non-essential and non-emergency" cases.

However the authorities have pulled back from issuing a blanket ban on overseas travel.

Immigration official Liu Haitao told a press briefing that those who "have real needs for studying abroad, employment and business" will still have their documents issued upon verification.

China had previously boasted of its success in crushing COVID-19, with hard lockdowns in the early stages mixed with tight controls of its borders, but mass testing campaigns have uncovered Delta variant infections across the country.

The latest outbreak is threatening to undo the country's economic rebound and return to normal life, with nearly 500 domestic cases reported since mid-July.

Iran infections surge

COVID infections in Iran have surged, hitting a new one-day record for a third straight day Wednesday and taking total cases to more than four million.

Iran registered 39,357 new cases in the 24 hours, taking it total to 4,019,084, the health ministry said.

It recorded 409 deaths over the same period, taking the country's total to 92,194.

The official figures are widely believed to underestimate the real toll but even they make Iran the Middle East country worst hit by the pandemic.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Monday ordered that "necessary measures" be taken to contain what the government warns is a "fifth wave" of the country's outbreak.

Indonesia toll rising

Indonesia's coronavirus death toll topped 100,000 on Wednesday as the country struggles to control the spread of the Delta variant.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy has now detected Delta in dozens of regions since it was first found in the archipelago in June.

Scores of Indonesians are dying at home, unable to access [hospital care](#) or medical oxygen supplies as [health care facilities](#) are stretched to the limit.

More than 3.5 million infections have been recorded to date though official figures are widely believed to be an underestimate.

"The deaths happened... mainly because of lateness to recognise the severity of the symptoms and to refer patients," said COVID-19 taskforce spokeswoman Siti Nadia Tarmizi.

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