Medical Xpress

Indonesia's capital under virus order, hospitals nearly full

September 14 2020, by Edna Tarigan

People, wearing a face mask as a precaution against the new coronavirus outbreak, walk on a pedestrian crossing at the main business district in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

Main streets were less crowded as Indonesia's capital began two weeks of social restrictions Monday to curb a rise of coronavirus infections that has pushed its critical-care hospital capacity to unsafe levels.

Police at checkpoints imposed sanctions on bikers that did not wear their masks. But business owners were confused, and workers said supporting the health care system, strained by COVID-19 patients, should be the priority.

Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan announced the restrictions Sunday, to last from Monday to Sept. 27, in what he described as an emergency decision to control a rapid expansion in coronavirus cases in Jakarta.

Social, economic, religious, cultural and academic activities will be restricted, with 11 essential sectors, like food, construction and banking, allowed to operate with health protocols and 50% of usual staffing levels.

Schools, parks, recreation sites and wedding reception venues must close entirely. Restaurants and cafes are limited to takeaway and delivery service. Shopping centers must limit the number of visitors and their hours. Only religious places at residential areas are able to open.

Jakarta previously imposed large-scale social restrictions from April to June, then eased the gradually with businesses reopening and using health protocols.

People, wearing a face mask as a precaution against the new coronavirus outbreak, walk on a pedestrian crossing at the main business district in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

But the virus has spread significantly since June, and medical facilities are filling with sick patients. Seven of 67 COVID-19 referral hospitals in Jakarta are 100% occupied, while 46 are more than 60% occupied.

Baswedan said last week the hospital capacity for isolation and intensive-care rooms has exceeded the safe limit and is estimated to reach the maximum capacity on Thursday, after which Jakarta health facilities will collapse.

"From the death rate, the use of isolation beds, the use of the special ICU for COVID-19 shows that the outbreak situation in Jakarta is in an emergency situation," he added.

Indonesia's virus task force said more than 54,000 of the nation's 218,000 cases of COVID-19 are in Jakarta. The city also has recorded 1,391 deaths of the nation's toll of 8,723.

Task force spokesperson Wiku Adisasmito said Jakarta has had the most transmissions in the nation in the last five weeks.

Cars and motorcycles are seen on Sudirman street that is usually busy with traffic, at the main business district in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Tatan

Syuflana)

A woman, wearing a face mask as a precaution against the new coronavirus outbreak, talks on her mobile phone on the sidewalk of a street at the main business district in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

A man, wearing a face mask as a precaution against the new coronavirus outbreak, walks on a pedestrian bridge at the main business district in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

Officers stand guard at a police check point during the imposition of large-scale restriction to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

Officers stand guard at a police check point as the large-scale restriction is imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Indonesia's capital on Monday begins to reimpose large-scale social restrictions to control a rapid expansion in the virus cases. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

"We should do these restrictions earlier, so we can control the positive case numbers and the death rate," Adisasmito said.

While residents are hoping the restrictions reduce the spread of the virus, they are worrying about the financial impact.

Sumaidi, 50, who runs a printing business and photo studio in Jakarta, says the city needs social restrictions but he's confused whether to open his business or totally close it.

"We can see how effective it is so far, we need more self-awareness too. But, the economic activities cannot be stuck," Sumaidi said.

Sigit Ardianto, 31, an employee of a public company in Jakarta, said that besides imposing restrictions and sanctioning those who violate them, the government should fix medical facilities, in terms of more rooms and better service, "since the reason we have high case numbers is because of our health facility issues," Ardianto said.

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Citation: Indonesia's capital under virus order, hospitals nearly full (2020, September 14) retrieved 26 April 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-indonesia-capital-virus-hospitals-full.html

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