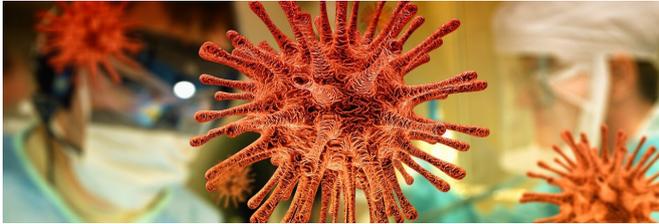


Indonesia reports record 2,069 virus deaths in 24 hours

27 July 2021



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Indonesia reported a record 2,069 coronavirus deaths in 24 hours Tuesday as it faces its deadliest COVID-19 surge since the pandemic began.

The grim tally was nearly 600 deaths higher than the previous day and topped last week's daily record of 1,566 deaths, the health ministry said.

New infections also shot up to just over 45,000, from about 28,000 on Monday.

The eye-watering data comes after the Southeast Asian nation this week loosened virus curbs by allowing small shops, streetside restaurants and some shopping malls to reopen after a three-week partial lockdown.

Health experts had warned that could trigger a fresh wave of cases, as the highly infectious Delta variant rips across the vast archipelago, which has overtaken India and Brazil to become the global pandemic epicentre.

Shopping malls and mosques in less affected parts of the Muslim-majority nation also got the green light to open their doors from Monday, to limited crowds and with shorter hours.

Offices were still under shutdown orders.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation where tens of millions live hand to mouth, has avoided strict lockdowns seen in some other countries.

But the government has been widely criticised for its handling of the pandemic and policies that critics say prioritised Southeast Asia's largest economy over public health.

President Joko Widodo has pointed to falling daily infection and hospital occupancy rates, including in the hard-hit capital Jakarta, as justification for the easing.

But the Delta variant has been detected in about a dozen regions outside Jakarta, densely populated Java and Bali, where infections have also soared in recent weeks.

Nearly 19,000 foreign nationals have left Indonesia through Jakarta's main international airport since early July, an exodus led by Japanese and Chinese expatriates, with 2,962 and 2,219 departures respectively, the immigration department said Tuesday.

Indonesia is a major market for Japanese firms, and hosts many business projects backed by companies in China, its biggest trading partner.

Indonesia's vaccination levels remain well below the government's one-million-a-day target for July. Less than seven percent of its 270 million people have been fully inoculated with two jabs.

The country has reported a total of more than 3.2 million cases and 86,835 virus deaths, but those official figures are widely believed to be a severe undercount, due to low testing and tracing rates.

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