



Malaysia's Covid deaths top 10,000, while most new cases asymptomatic

Malaysia's Health Ministry on Thursday reported 164 more coronavirus-related deaths, pushing the total to more than 10,000 as a months-long spike in infections continues unabated.

The ministry had already reported more than 20,000 virus cases in a day for the first time, bringing Malaysia's overall total to over 1.2 million since the country recorded its first case in January 2020.

The previous day saw a record 257 deaths due to Covid-19 and almost 20,000 cases.

Measured in deaths per million, Malaysia's fatalities amount to the second-highest in South-East Asia but remain far lower than most in Europe or North America, according to official numbers collated by the University of Oxford's Our World in Data.

The Health Ministry said also on Thursday that more than 98 per cent of people who had tested positive for the virus showed mild or no symptoms.

It was the second day in a row that the ministry said most people who test positive do not become unwell.

Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz said earlier on Thursday that Malaysia would restructure its pandemic curbs around the numbers of people who are hospitalized, rather than the daily case count.

"Once 40 per cent of adults have been vaccinated, the number of new cases becomes less relevant because most cases show little to no symptoms, hence reducing the burden on public infrastructure," he said.

Over 7.7 million of Malaysia's population of almost 33 million were fully vaccinated by Wednesday, Health Minister Adham Baba said.

However the ministry said on Thursday that 22.6 per cent of the cases reported in the past day were among vaccinated people.

The government earlier said the daily case count would have to fall below 4,000, roughly the number when the latest "total" lockdown was imposed in May, for restrictions to be eased.

The measures have hammered local businesses. The July Purchasing Managers' Index, based on a monthly survey of factories by IHS Markit, this week suggested a hefty fall in output in Malaysia, South-East Asia's third-wealthiest economy per capita, adding to pressure on Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to resign.

The Statistic Department said on Thursday that restrictions imposed last year caused wages to drop by 9 per cent, suggesting further falls during the current set of curbs, already by far the longest of Malaysia's three lockdowns.

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