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First coronavirus cases confirmed in Indonesia amid fears nation is ill-prepared for outbreak

Rebecca Ratcliffe

4-6 minutes

Two Indonesian citizens have tested positive for the new coronavirus after being in contact with an infected Japanese national, the country's president said on Monday, the first cases to be reported in the world's fourth most populous country.

The confirmation follows mounting concern that the country is [failing to identify transmission of the virus](#).

The two had been hospitalised in Jakarta, Joko Widodo told reporters at the presidential palace in the capital. The president said a 64-year-old woman and her 31-year-old daughter had tested positive after being in contact with a Japanese national who lived in Malaysia and had tested positive after returning from a trip to Indonesia.

An Indonesian medical team had traced the movements of the Japanese visitor before uncovering the cases, he said.

"After checks, they were in a sick state. This morning I got a report that the mother and the daughter tested positive for coronavirus," said Widodo, who added they were being treated at Jakarta's

Sulianti Saroso infectious diseases hospital.

Health experts have warned that the lack of confirmed patients in Indonesia, a country of 272 million people, was surprising, especially given its close links to China. Indonesia, which receives significant Chinese investment, relies heavily on Chinese tourism and has a sizeable Chinese-Indonesian community, making up roughly [3% of the population](#).

Last month, researchers at Harvard University analysed air traffic from Wuhan, the Chinese city where the outbreak originated, and concluded case numbers were lower than expected. They also raised concerns about other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Cambodia. At the time, Indonesian health minister Terawan Agus Putranto [called the study](#) “insulting” and defended the country’s screening processes.

Further concerns were raised when New Zealand and Malaysia reported that patients who tested positive for the virus within their borders had recently traveled to Indonesia.

On Saturday, Ary Hermawan of the [Jakarta Post](#), questioned whether officials were being transparent, adding that the government appeared more worried “about the social and economic impact of a mass hysteria created by the virus outbreak than the outbreak itself”.

Indonesia’s Balitbangkes, the agency tasked with testing suspected cases, had only concluded around 140 lab tests, he wrote. “To put things in perspective, as of Feb. 26, the United Kingdom has conducted 7,132 tests, 13 of which have come back positive.”

Health minister Terawan Agus Putranto told reporters the

Japanese visitor was a friend of the two women's family and had visited their house. He said authorities were checking who else the Japanese visitor may have come into contact with.

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