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Berlin, December 15 (RHC)-- COVID-19 deaths around the world have topped 1.6 million, with 72 million confirmed cases, as many countries scramble to curb new waves of infections.

Germany is going into what's being called a "hard" national lockdown that will continue through the holiday period, after acknowledging existing coronavirus restrictions are not stringent enough to stem a surge in cases. Germany recorded over 20,000 new cases Sunday, a 10% jump over the previous week.

East Asian countries have reported record numbers in recent days, with Japan topping 3,000 daily cases for the first time ever. South Korea recorded over 1,000 new infections Saturday as President Moon Jae-in called for action to counter the country's wave of cases.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said: "It's a very serious and emergency situation. There is nowhere to back down. It is a desperate time to devote all efforts to stop the spread of corona by focusing all quarantine capabilities and administrative power."

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