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Brasilia, March 11 (RHC)-- Brazil has once again recorded a single-day record for deaths linked to the novel coronavirus, as the head of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) warned that nearly all

states across the country are seeing a rise in infections.

The Brazilian Health Ministry said on Wednesday that 2,286 people had died in the previous 24 hours – up from 1,972 deaths reported a day earlier. More than 268,000 people have died in Brazil since the start of the pandemic, according to Johns Hopkins University data – the second-highest fatality rate in the world after the United States.

The country also reported 79,876 new cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, increasing its total to over 11.1 million infections.

During a news briefing, PAHO Director Carissa Etienne warned that “cases are on the rise in nearly every Brazilian state, and over the last week, the country reported its second-highest rate of infections and its deadliest day since the pandemic began.”

She pointed to the state of Amazonas, which earlier this year experienced a shortage of oxygen and other supplies needed to treat COVID-19 patients amid a surge in infections and hospitalisations. The state is also where a more easily transmissible variant of the virus was first discovered, fuelling the spread of infection.

“We are concerned about the situation in Brazil. It provides a sober reminder of the threat of resurgence: areas hit hard by the virus in the past are still vulnerable to infection today,” said Etienne.

Brazil’s far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, a COVID-19 sceptic who has downplayed the threat of the virus and need to enact public health restrictions, has faced mounting criticism for his government’s handling of the pandemic. Earlier on Wednesday, Bolsonaro signed a bill to accelerate vaccine purchases, as the country has failed to administer many jabs due to delivery delays and inefficiencies.

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