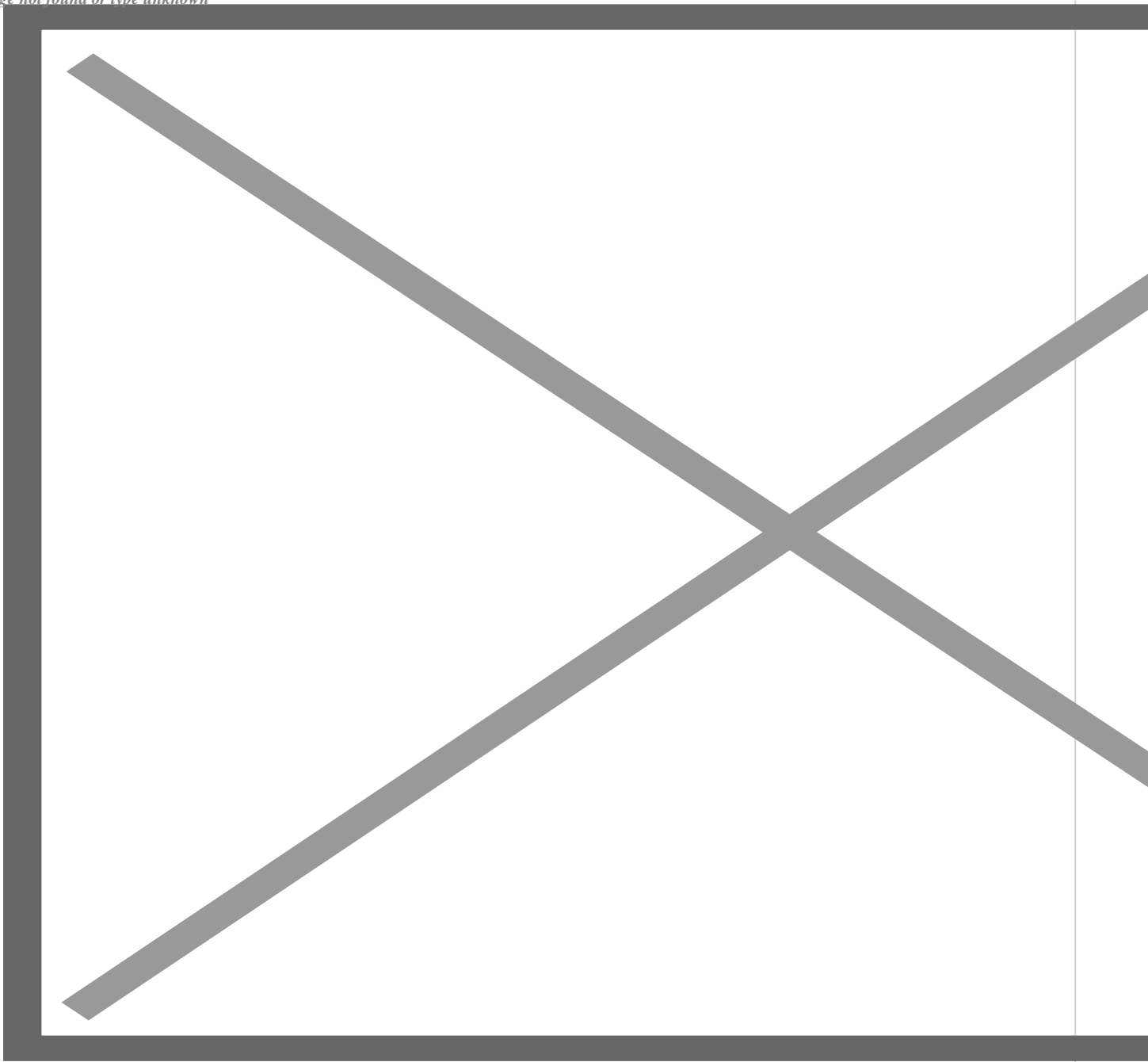


Moscow declares Non-Working Week as COVID-19 cases jump

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Moscow registered 6,701 daily infections, the highest number since December last year [Denis Grishkin/Moscow News Agency via Reuters]

Moscow, June 13 (RHC)-- The mayor of Moscow has announced a “non-working” week in the Russian capital, with non-essential workers told to stay home as coronavirus cases hit a six-month high. Sergei Sobyenin’s decision came over the weekend and is being seen as an attempt to limit the spread of the deadly virus.

“During the past week the situation with the spread of the coronavirus infection has sharply deteriorated,” Sobyenin said on his website as the city registered 6,701 daily infections, the highest number since December last year. He added that “thousands” of hospital beds have been repurposed for coronavirus patients.

“We cannot not react to such a situation,” he said. “To stop the growth of infections and to save people’s lives, today I signed a decree providing for non-working days between June 15-19.” The order affects all employees in Moscow, a city of 12 million, except for essential workers. Non-essential workers are not required to work from home during the period, but will still retain their salaries.

Together with the weekends and a public holiday on June 14, it means most Moscow workers will not return to their offices until June 20. Sobyenin also announced the closure of food courts and playgrounds while restaurants, bars and clubs will be banned from serving customers between 23:00 and 06:00.

The mayor called on employers to transfer at least 30 percent of non-vaccinated employees to working from home after the week-long shutdown. Moscow Deputy Mayor Anastasia Rakova said on Saturday that 78 percent of the 14,000 hospital beds for virus patients in the city were currently occupied.

“In Moscow hospitals working with coronavirus patients there are currently 498 people on ventilators, that’s almost 30 percent more than a week ago,” Rakova said. She added over the past two months there had been a “significant” increase in the number of young patients aged between 18 and 35.

Earlier this week, Sobyenin said Moscow would be opening several field hospitals to accommodate the influx of patients. Cases have been on the rise across the country in recent weeks as Russia struggles to inoculate its citizens despite domestic vaccines being widely available to the public.

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