

Catastrophic situation as Brazil hits record-high daily COVID deaths

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?Last weekend, at least five COVID patients reportedly died while waiting for hospital beds the state of Santa Catarina

Brasilia, March 3 (RHC)-- Brazil on Tuesday posted its highest number of deaths from COVID-19 in a single day as political infighting exacerbated the country's health crisis and the pace of its vaccination roll-out faltered.

Some 1,641 people died from COVID-19 on Tuesday, according to Health Ministry data, surpassing the previous single-day high of 1,595 deaths recorded in late July 2020.

More than 257,000 people have died of the disease in Brazil, making it the deadliest outbreak in the world after the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed Brazil's hospital system to the brink of collapse, and state governors are now joining together to buy vaccines and bypass the federal government, which has been slow to roll out its vaccine program.

Brazil has continued to have a piecemeal response to the deadly disease, with individual cities and states setting their own policies in the face of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro's repeated attacks on restrictive measures and face masks.

Last week, Bolsonaro disparaged the use of face masks, saying they could lead to headaches and a "decreased perception of happiness." He had also threatened to cut funding to cities and states that adopt stricter lockdowns.

Roughly 10.6 million people of the country's 212 million population have been diagnosed with COVID-19 since the pandemic began, according to the Health Ministry, with 59,925 new cases reported on Tuesday.

Several cities and states last week began imposing a new round of restrictions in a bid to avoid overwhelming their already stretched hospitals.

In Sao Paulo, Sergio Stampar, an associate professor at the city's state university, said that he had colleagues suffering from COVID-19 and that some were in intensive care. "Every day more scary and desperate," Stampar wrote on social media.

Experts have warned that if Brazil is unable to control the spread of the COVID-19, it could become the epicentre of the mutation of the virus, which could potentially be more infectious and lethal. The coronavirus variant that was first identified in Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon towards the end of last year triggered a renewed wave of cases that left the city's hospitals without oxygen in January.

Research is currently underway to test the efficacy of the coronavirus vaccines against the variant, which has prompted countries to close their borders to people travelling from Brazil.

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