



AS IT IS

Tokyo Raises Coronavirus Warning System to Highest Level

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The city of Tokyo raised its coronavirus **alert** to the highest level on Wednesday. City officials acted after record-setting numbers of new infections were reported in the Japanese capital.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike described the situation in the city as “rather severe.”

The fast spread of the virus in Tokyo could add to growing pressure on Japanese policymakers to protect the world’s third-largest economy. Some observers expect Japan’s economy to shrink at its fastest rate in many years because of the health crisis.

The infection rate in Tokyo is at stage “red,” the highest of four levels in the city’s alert system, Koike said. She promised to increase testing for the coronavirus by using equipment at universities.

Tokyo has recorded 200 or more new cases of the virus in four of the past seven days. Infections among young people and among those who show no real signs of sickness are rising there, health experts have noted.

“We are in a situation where we should issue warnings to citizens and businesses,” Koike told reporters, urging city **residents** to avoid unnecessary travel.

Japan’s central government is preparing to launch a major “Go To” travel aid campaign that aims to increase **tourism** within the country.

But opposition lawmakers, local-level leaders and social media users have asked the government to suspend that campaign as daily new cases rise. Leaders of some rural towns say that travel in and out of high-risk areas like Tokyo may lead to widespread **transmission** of the coronavirus.

Japan's economy minister, Yasutoshi Nishimura, leads the government's policy on fighting the virus. He says the government will move forward slowly with the "Go To" campaign.

"Obviously we will consider the thoughts of many of our people, while **monitoring** the situation **ahead**," Nishimura told parliament.

The travel campaign is among the government's top efforts to increase economic activity. The program is set to start on July 22. It offers big savings on day and overnight trips, as well as on **shopping** and food purchases.

Koike urged the government on Wednesday to reconsider the timing for the campaign.

Coronavirus infections are not only rising in Tokyo. They are also rising in Osaka prefecture. The area reported 61 new cases on Wednesday. That marks the highest number of daily cases there since April 20.

I'm John Russell.

The Reuters news agency reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

Words in This Story

alert - n. something (such as a message or loud sound) that tells people there is some danger or problem : an alarm or signal of danger

shopping - n. the activity of visiting places where goods are sold in order to look at and buy things (such as food, clothing, etc.)

monitor - v. to watch, observe, listen to, or check (something) for a special purpose over a period of time

ahead - adv. in, into, or for the future

resident - n. someone who lives in a particular place

tourism - n. the activity of traveling to a place for pleasure

transmission - n. the act or process by which something is spread or passed from one person or thing to another
