

Saudi Arabia passes 200,000 virus cases

July 3 2020



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Saudi Arabia passed the grim milestone of 200,000 confirmed novel coronavirus cases, the health ministry said Friday, weeks ahead of an annual hajj pilgrimage drastically cut back because of the pandemic.

The Gulf's worst-hit country has now 201,801 confirmed infections

including 4,193 new cases on Friday alone, and 1,802 deaths.

Over 140,000 of those infected have recovered.

Amid tight restrictions to rein in the pandemic, the kingdom has said it would only allow around 1,000 worshippers already present in the kingdom to take part in the annual hajj pilgrimage later this month.

In 2019, the rite attracted over 2.5 million Muslim pilgrims from around the world.

This year's hajj will take place under strict hygiene protocols, with access restricted to pilgrims under 65 years old and without any [chronic illnesses](#).

Pilgrims will be tested on their arrival in the holy city of Mecca, and following the ritual they will go into quarantine in their homes.

Saudi Arabia has seen an uptick in both confirmed infections and deaths from the COVID-19 illness since easing movement restrictions in late May.

It has yet to restore international air links.

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