

Vietnam reports cases of Indian COVID variant, new community outbreak

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Vietnam has detected four cases of a COVID-19 variant believed to be behind a devastating surge of the virus in India, state media said Thursday.

Separately, the country also reported its first community outbreak in

weeks on Thursday.

Vietnam has so far kept case numbers low—reporting 2,910 of them and 35 deaths—thanks to mass quarantines and extensive contact tracing.

All four of those infected with the B.1.617 variant of COVID-19, which was first found in India, had recently traveled from the South Asian country and were quarantined upon arrival in Vietnam.

"The genetic sequencing results of four out of five COVID-19 patients arriving from India showed that the patients have been infected with the Indian strain of the virus," Lao Dong newspaper said Thursday.

The results of a fifth person tested will be known on Friday.

The discovery of the variant came as more than 1,000 people in a village in Ha Nam province, close to Hanoi, were put under lockdown Thursday.

A man who returned home to the area from Japan tested positive for COVID-19 this week after a 14-day quarantine and gave the virus to his family, according to the ministry of health.

A total of six people in the area, including the man who returned from Japan, have tested positive, the ministry said.

Media reports said infections had also been found in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and northern Hung Yen province.

The last community outbreak, centred around the northern city of Hai Duong, was successfully contained last month.

But the country has been on high alert after a spiralling outbreak in parts of Southeast Asia including Cambodia and Laos, which both share a

border with Vietnam.

Vietnam begins a four-day public holiday on Friday and holiday hotspots are expected to be packed.

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