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*Global Health Security
COVID-19 & Its Impacts*

Indonesia's New Lockdown: Jokowi's Legacy?

By Alexander R Arifianto

SYNOPSIS

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 surge in Indonesia, President Joko Widodo has enacted the strictest lockdown policy since the pandemic began 18 months ago. Jokowi seems increasingly concerned that the surge could threaten his political legacy.

COMMENTARY

ON 1 JULY 2021, Indonesian president Joko Widodo ('Jokowi') [announced the enactment](#) of an Emergency Pandemic Mitigation Measure (*PPKM Darurat*), in response to the worst COVID-19 surge the nation has experienced since the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 [as a global pandemic](#) in March 2020.

The measure, with effect from 2 to 20 July 2021, puts the entire Java and Bali region under a strict lockdown. It is Indonesia's first strict lockdown since the virus was detected in the country in March. All non-essential businesses are required to be conducted entirely from home, all shopping malls located on the two islands are closed, and all dine-in service in restaurants and hawkers are suspended, with only take-home delivery allowed.

Mixed Vaccination Record

The new measure was enacted after Indonesia's confirmed COVID-19 cases grew exponentially during much of last month – from a low of 4,821 cases on 1 June to an

[all time high](#) of 40,427 cases on 12 July. It also reached a [record death toll](#) of 1,040 on 7 July.

The Jokowi administration states that the goal of *PPKM Darurat* is to reduce the number of daily cases to [less than 10,000 per day](#) and to reduce hospitalisation and death numbers. On 12 July, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati indicated that the government planned to extend the emergency measure by [up to six weeks](#), since there were no signs of a slowdown in the rise of new cases.

Over the past six months Indonesia had focused much of its COVID-19 mitigation effort to procuring enough vaccines for its nearly 270 million citizens and to vaccinate them as soon as possible.

So far Indonesia has largely relied on the Sinovac vaccine, which comprises [90 percent of jabs administered](#) since Indonesia's vaccination programme started last February. Due to concerns that [the vaccine is less effective](#) – especially against the Delta COVID-19 variant that currently is widespread in Indonesia – the government is rapidly diversifying its vaccine stock by procuring additional vaccines from other providers with scientifically-proven higher efficacy rate.

So far Indonesia has acquired 8.2 million doses of [Astra Zeneca vaccine](#) through the COVAX global collaboration scheme and plans to obtain an additional 10 million doses through the scheme. It has purchased 50 million doses of [the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#), which is scheduled to arrive in August 2021. The United States government recently announced it will donate four million doses of [Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine](#) in response to the ongoing surge in Indonesia.

However, Indonesia's vaccination programme is being rolled out at a very slow pace, with an [average daily vaccination rate](#) of 718,000 – far below the government's newly revised vaccination target of [two million vaccinations per day](#) by August 2021.

Managing Political Fallout: Jokowi's Legacy?

To further bolster vaccination take-up, the government has extended vaccine eligibility to all adults over 18 years old. It has also [removed the residency requirement](#) so citizens no longer have to obtain their vaccines in the same district or city which issues their national identity card. It was a factor which has contributed to the slow vaccination rate within the past few months.

Most importantly, [the government has mobilised](#) members of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) and the National Police (POLRI) to help extend the reach of its vaccination programme, particularly in remote Indonesian regions like [the Seribu Archipelago](#).

Sources consulted by the Indonesia Programme indicated that Jokowi is increasingly concerned the ongoing COVID-19 surge in Indonesia could threaten his political legacy after he leaves office in 2024.

The president's major policy moves during his second term, such as last year's enactment of [the Omnibus Law on Job Creation](#) and the construction of [Indonesia's](#)

[new capital](#) in East Kalimantan province, are potentially threatened if the country's citizens increasingly view his administration's COVID-19 response to be [largely chaotic, uncoordinated, and half-hearted](#).

Jokowi has [appointed Luhut Panjaitan](#), Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, as chairman of a new special task force to supervise the Emergency Pandemic Mitigation policy. This indicates that as the ongoing surge increasingly threatens his legacy, Jokowi is placing more trust on Luhut – his long-time political ally and confidant – more than on any other member of his cabinet.

Luhut's appointment is also perceived as a rebuke to the co-chairmen of the government's special task force on COVID-19 mitigation, respectively Airlangga Hartarto (Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs) and Erick Thohir (Minister of State-owned Enterprises), who have led the government's COVID-19 mitigation strategy since December 2020.

While both men were successful in procuring more vaccines for Indonesia's COVID-19 vaccination programme, neither paid much attention to dramatically scaling up the vaccination programme's testing and tracing system, and to establish an effective isolation and quarantine scheme. Altogether these have made Indonesia unprepared to deal with the ongoing virus surge.

Decisive Leader?

The ongoing COVID-19 surge in Indonesia is a consequence of the government's lackadaisical pandemic mitigation strategy over the past 16 months. Worsening it is the slow vaccination rollout, as well as the continuing mixed messaging on whether it prioritises public health or economic development.

Since the surge is threatening to further undermine his popularity, Jokowi has concluded that a short yet effective strict lockdown of Java and Bali, combined with a faster rollout of the vaccines, would be a fitting response while protecting his public image and political legitimacy.

If the emergency measure is successful to significantly reduce new COVID-19 cases and fatalities, it would showcase Jokowi as a decisive leader in the country's worst public health emergency. How his administration handles the pandemic and minimises its adverse impact on the Indonesian society is the most important legacy of his presidency.

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