This epidemiological bulletin aims to provide the situation of key infectious diseases in the WHO South-East Asia region to inform risk assessment and response by countries. The bulletin uses information from publicly available sources and will be published every two weeks. For feedback or suggestions, please write to seoutbreak@who.int.

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Key events

Dengue in the WHO South-East Asia Region

**Bangladesh:** A total of 99,994 dengue cases including 476 deaths have been cumulatively reported between 1 January and 20 August 2023 with a case fatality rate of 0.48%. Between 1 and 20 August 2023, a total of 48,162 cases and 225 deaths have been reported, which are reaching the highest level of the monthly number, compared with the available historical data from 2019 to 2022. A total of 15,354 cases of dengue were reported in Bangladesh during epidemiological week (EW) 33 (13 to 19 August 2023), a 17.2% decrease compared to the number of cases reported in during EW 32 (6 to 12 August 2023). (n=18,538). While the number of cases showed decline in Dhaka city, the cases continue to increase in the rest of Bangladesh – 61% of new cases are now reported outside the Dhaka city. The overall CFR was higher in females than in males (0.72% vs 0.32%) and differed by age with those aged over 60 years having the highest CFR (1.86%) followed by those aged 41 to 60 years (0.77%), 21 to 40 years (0.37%) and 20 years and younger (0.29%).

**Nepal:** Between 1 January and 21 August 2023, 16,993 cases of dengue including 12 confirmed deaths have been reported from 75 districts in Nepal. Cases from Koshi province account for 73.9% of the cases (n=12,021) with Sunsari district reporting the highest number of cases in the province (52.0%, n=8,452). This is 10.5 times higher than the 1,543 cases reported between 1 January and 20 August 2022.

**Thailand:** A total of 60,025 dengue cases and 54 dengue deaths were reported in Thailand from January to July 2023. This is the second highest number of cases for this period since 2018 when 70,541 were reported in 2019 and the third highest number of deaths (n=64 in 2018 and n=87 in 2019). As of 23 August, a total of 73,979 cases and 70 deaths have been reported in 2023.

mpox in Thailand

As per a press release by the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, as of 8 August 2023, a total of 189 cases of mpox have been reported in Thailand, including 161 Thai nationals and 28 foreigners. The majority of cases were men who have sex with men and 82 (43%) were living with HIV.

On 14 August 2023, the death of one mpox case was reported. The case was a 34-year-old male, living with HIV, who developed a widespread rash. He was reported to have later developed necrosis of the nose and throat in addition to pneumonia and encephalitis.
Designation of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron sub-lineage BA.2.86 as a variant under monitoring\textsuperscript{10} \textsuperscript{11}

On 17 August 2023, WHO designated a new SARS-CoV-2 variant, the scientific name (Pango lineage designation) BA.2.86 as a variant under monitoring (VUM) due to the large number (>30) of spike gene mutations it carries. The potential impact of the BA.2.86 mutations are presently unknown and undergoing careful assessment.

WHO continues to call for better surveillance, sequencing and reporting of COVID-19 as the SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to circulate and evolve.

On 18 August 2023, the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published a risk assessment for BA.2.86. At this time there were six unrelated cases of BA.2.86 identified in four countries – Israel (n=1), Denmark (n=3), the United States of America (n=1) and the United Kingdom (n=1).

- The similarity of the sequences globally suggests that BA.2.86 has emerged recently and has grown rapidly. However, until further sequences are available, confidence remains low.
- The case in the United Kingdom had no recent travel history suggesting there is a degree of community transmission within the country.
- Currently, based on surveillance data, it is not possible to assess comparative severity by variant.

As of data downloaded from GISAID\textsuperscript{12} dated 19 August 2023, no sequences of BA.2.86 have been submitted from countries from the South-East Asia Region. Additionally, as of 21 August, there are no sequences of BA.2.86 shown on the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) dashboard.\textsuperscript{13}

Standing Recommendations for mpox\textsuperscript{14}

WHO Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued the standing recommendations for mpox on 22 August 2023, based on advice from the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) review committee. These standing recommendations are issued in accordance with provisions of Articles 16 to 18, and 50 to 53 of the IHR (2005).

Throughout the declared public health emergency of International concern (PHEIC) associated with the multi-country outbreak of mpox from July 2022 to May 2023 and following the end of the PHEIC on 11 May 2023, countries’ response efforts were guided by temporary recommendations issued under the IHR (2005).\textsuperscript{15}

The standing recommendations are now in effect for all State Parties from 21 August 2023 until 20 August 2024. The standing recommendations covers following seven major areas:

1) Planning
2) Surveillance and diagnostic capacities
3) Community protection
4) Research to generate evidence
5) Measures for international travel
6) Integrated clinical care
7) Equitable access to safe, effective and quality-assured countermeasures

\textsuperscript{10} https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---17-august-2023


\textsuperscript{12} https://gisaid.org/

\textsuperscript{13} https://inda.rcb.ac.in/insacog/statisticsinsacog


\textsuperscript{15} https://www.who.int/news/item/11-05-2023-fifth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-%282005%29-%28ihr%29-emergency-committee-on-the-multi-country-outbreak-of-monkeypox-%28mpox%29
COVID-19

Status as of 20 August 2023

The WHO South-East Asia Region has recorded a cumulative total of 61,200,991 COVID-19 cases, including 806,652 deaths. In the WHO South-East Asia Region, from 14 to 20 August 2023, 907 new cases (an increase of 2.5%) while 13 new deaths (an increase of 8.3%) were reported compared to the previous week.

Between 14 August and 20 August 2023, Thailand (389 new cases, +22.3%), India (325 new cases, +10.5%) and Nepal (12 new cases, +71.4%) reported an increase in the number of new cases, while Bangladesh (162 new cases, -25.7%), Myanmar (17 new cases, -58.5%) and Sri Lanka (two new case, -50.0%) reported a decrease in the number of new cases compared to the previous week. Bhutan have reported no new case in the same period. Data of Indonesia, Maldives and Timor-Leste were not available for this period.

For the same period, India (four new deaths, +33.3%) and Thailand (nine new deaths, +28.6%) reported an increase in the number of new deaths compared to the previous week. The remaining countries reported no new death in the same period. Data of Indonesia, Maldives and Timor-Leste were not available for this period.

Please refer to the WHO SEARO COVID-19 dashboard for further information.

Table 1. COVID-19 cases, deaths, and the weekly change in countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region in the week from 14 August to 20 August 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cumulative cases</th>
<th>New cases (last 7 days)</th>
<th>% change in new cases</th>
<th>New cases per 1M pop</th>
<th>Cumulative deaths</th>
<th>New deaths (last 7 days)</th>
<th>% change in new deaths</th>
<th>New deaths per 1M pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4,756,150</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>34,453</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>44,996,599</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>531,925</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2,045,159</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>-25.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>29,476</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>641,148</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-58.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>19,494</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1,003,417</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>12,031</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>672,575</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-50.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>16,682</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>62,694</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic People’s Republic of Korea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6,813,095</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>161,916</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>186,684</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>23,460</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAR total</td>
<td>61,200,991</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>806,652</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases/deaths in past seven days, compared to previous week. NA = data not available.

Thailand data were for the period from 13 to 19 August 2023 in comparison to the preceding week. DPR Kore has not reported confirmed COVID-19 case.
**Figure 1.** Weekly number of new COVID-19 cases reported during the previous eight weeks (26 June – 20 August 2023) in the WHO South-East Asia Region

![Graph showing weekly number of new COVID-19 cases](image)

**Figure 2.** Weekly number of SARS-CoV-2 positive samples and test positivity from integrated influenza-SARS-CoV-2 sentinel surveillance systems in the previous seven weeks (26 June – 13 August 2023) in selected counties* (as of 22 August 2023)

![Graph showing weekly number of SARS-CoV-2 positive samples and test positivity](image)

* Countries routinely conducting SARS-COV-2 testing of the samples collected through influenza sentinel surveillance sites (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Timor-Leste).
Figure 3. Number of weekly new COVID-19 cases per 100 000 population in the previous eight weeks (26 June – 20 August 2023) in countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region *

* DPR Korea has reported no confirmed COVID-19 case. Indonesia data as of 6 August 2023. Timor-Leste data as of 11 August 2023
Circulation of SARS-CoV-2 variants globally

Currently, WHO is closely tracking three variants of interest (VOI) and seven variants under monitoring (VUMs) and their descendent lineages (* includes their descendant lineages).

- The VOIs are XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16 and EG.5*.
- The VUMs are BA.2.75*, BA.2.86*, CH.1.1*, XBB* (excluding XBB.1.5*, XBB.1.16*, XBB.1.9.1*, XBB.1.9.2* and XBB.2.3*), XBB.1.9.1*, XBB.1.9.2* and XBB.2.3*.

- Globally, XBB.1.16 and EG.5 are the most prevalent VOIs reported since their emergence from 101 and 50 countries, respectively. In epidemiological week 30 (24 to 30 July 2023), each VOI accounted for 21.1% of sequences. Among the VOIs, EG.5* has shown an increasing trend in prevalence from 10.2% in week 26 (26 June to 2 July 2023) to 21.1% by week 30. The prevalence of XBB.1.16 remained stable and XBB.1.5 declined in prevalence.
- Among the VUMs, the prevalence of BA.2.75*, CH.1.1*, XBB*, XBB.1.9.1* and XBB.2.3* remained stable while XBB.1.9.2* declined in prevalence. The prevalence of BA.2.86 could not be calculated due to the very small numbers of sequences.

SARS-CoV-2 variants in the South-East Asia Region

In the last 60 days, very few sequences have been submitted to GISAID from the Region and therefore the data should be interpreted with caution.

As of 19 August 2023, based on data downloaded from GISAID (Figures 4a and 4b):
- In India, XBB.1.16* accounted for 52.5% (n=31) of the 59 sequences submitted in the last 60 days. XBB.2.3* accounted for 42.4% (n=20).
- In Indonesia, EG and its sub-lineages (EG* and EG.5*) accounted for 42.2% (n=8) of the 14 sequences submitted in the last 60 days of which the majority (75%, n=6) were EG.2*. Two sequences of EG.5.1 were submitted.
- In Myanmar, two sequences were submitted, both of which were XBB.1.16*.
- In Thailand, in the last 60 days, XBB.1.16* remained predominant accounting for 46.9% (n=123) of 262 sequences submitted, with XBB.1.9.1* accounting for 15.3% (n=40) and XBB.2.3* for 12.2% (n=32). A total of 19 sequences of EG* (including EG.5*) were submitted of which six were EG.1*, six were EG.4*, four were EG.5.1 and three were EG.2*.
- Other countries have not submitted sequences recently to GISAID.
Figure 4a. Number of Omicron sub-lineage sequences submitted to GISAID within the past 30 and 31-60 days as of 19 August 2023 by date of collection (countries with recent submissions) ¹

Figure 4b. Proportion of Omicron sub-lineage sequences submitted to GISAID within the past 30 and 31-60 days as of 5 August 2023 by date of collection (countries with recent submissions) ²

*indicates the sub-lineage of each variant.
¹The date next to the country name indicates the latest date of sample collection for sequence submitted to GISAID.
²XBB* excludes XBB.1.16*, XBB.1.5*, XBB.1.9.1, XBB.1.9.2 and XBB.2.3*
³EG* is a sub-lineage of XBB.1.9.2 and excludes EG.5*

mpox
Status as of 20 August 2023

In the WHO South-East Asia Region, a total of 217 laboratory-confirmed mpox cases, including two deaths, have been verified since 14 July 2022 (Figure 5). Table 2 summarizes the basic epidemiological profile of the reported mpox cases in the Region.

Figure 5. Number of mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region by date of notification* (14 July 2022 – 20 August 2023)

Table 2. Profile of the 217 confirmed mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region since July 2022 (as of 20 August 2023)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cases (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>22 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>4 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>189 (87.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Cases (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>125 (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown*</td>
<td>70 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Cases (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>43 (19.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>64 (29.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 and over</td>
<td>39 (18.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown*</td>
<td>70 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual orientation</th>
<th>Cases (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>25 (11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men who have sex with men (MSM)</td>
<td>102 (47.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>2 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown*</td>
<td>86 (39.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information on the global situation of mpox outbreak, please visit the global dashboard.
Dengue

**Bangladesh**

Between 1 and 20 August 2023, a total of 48,162 cases and 225 deaths have been reported. This is 91.5% of the total number of cases reported in August 2019 (the highest monthly number of cases reported in 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023) and the highest monthly number of deaths for the same period. A total of 15,354 cases of dengue were reported in Bangladesh during epidemiological week (EW) 33 (13 to 19 August 2023), a 17.2% decrease compared to the number of cases reported in during EW 32 (6 to 12 August 2023). (n=18,538) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Number of new cases of, and deaths from dengue by month in Bangladesh from January 2019 to 20 August 2023**

![Graph showing cases and deaths from dengue by month in Bangladesh from January 2019 to 20 August 2023](https://old.dghs.gov.bd/index.php/bd/home/5200-daily-dengue-status-report)

Maldives

No new data have been uploaded since the Monthly Communicable Disease report for May 2023 in Maldives. Please refer to previous versions of the South-East Asia Epidemiological Bulletin for prior epidemiological information.

Nepal

In 2023, a total of 983 cases of dengue were reported in Nepal during week 32 (6 to 12 August 2023), a 12.2% increase compared to week 31 (30 July to 5 August, n=876) and 9.4 times higher than the mean number of cases reported during week 32 from 2018 to 2022 (n=105) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Number of new cases of dengue by week (1 to 53 (A) and 20 to 36 (B)) in Nepal from January 2018 to 20 August 2023

Sri Lanka

In 2023, a total of 1417 cases of dengue were reported in Sri Lanka in week 31 (29 July to 4 August 2023), a 5.5% decrease compared to week 30 (22 to 28 July, n=1500) and 62.0% of the mean number of cases reported during week 31 from 2017 to 2022 (n=2284) (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Number of new cases of dengue by week in Sri Lanka from January 2018 to 4 August 2023 (week 31)

Sources: Epidemiology Unit and National Dengue Control Unit, Ministry of Health.
Thailand

A total of 25,390 cases of dengue (inclusive of dengue fever, dengue haemorrhagic fever and dengue haemorrhagic fever shock syndrome) were reported in Thailand in July 2023, an 85.1% increase compared to June (n=13,717) and 2.1 times higher than the mean number of cases in July between 2018 and 2022 (n=12,148) (Figure 9). A total of 19 deaths due to dengue (inclusive of dengue fever, dengue haemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome) were reported in July 2023, an increase of 35.7% from the number reported in June (n=14) and 1.7 times higher than the mean number of deaths reported in July between 2018 and 2022 (n=11.4) (Figure 9). Between 1 and 23 August 2023, a total of 13,107 cases and 13 deaths have been reported.

Figure 9. Number of new dengue cases and deaths by month in Thailand from January 2018 to July 2023.

Influenza

Starting from 26th June, WHO’s South-East Asia (SE Asia) Region has been witnessing an increase in transmission of seasonal influenza. This increasing trend is corroborated by the percentage of specimens positive for influenza that increased from 8% to 26% in the region during the period from 26 June to 13 August 2023. This is contrast to global situation in which the percentage of specimens positive for influenza remained stable around 2.5% and started an increase (6.3%) only after 7 August 2023.

Increases in WHO SE Asia Region were primarily driven by Bangladesh and Thailand. During this period, in Bangladesh, the percentage of specimens positive for influenza increased from 15% (n=23) to 53% (n=112). In Thailand, the positivity of specimen increased from 6% (n=13) to 29% (n=51) in the same period.

The most frequently circulating strains in the region were influenza A/H3, A/H1N1pdm09 and influenza B Victoria (Figure 10). In Bangladesh, transmission was primarily driven by sub-type influenza B Victoria followed by influenza A/H3 and A/H1N1pdm09 (Figure 11), while in Thailand, it was due to sub-type Influenza A/H1N1 pdm09 and A/H3 (Figure 12).

Globally, on 21 August 2023, based on data reported up to 6 August 2023, more than 208 169 specimens were tested during the period from 24 July to 6 August 2023. In total, 5261 specimens were positive for influenza viruses, of which 3 827 (72.7%) were typed as influenza A and 1434 (27.3%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 1015 (37.6%) were influenza A/H1N1pdm09 and 1686 (62.42%) were influenza A/H3N2. Of the type B viruses for which the lineage was determined, all (480) belonged to the B/Victoria lineage.

**Figure 10. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in WHO South-East Asia Region (as of 13 August 2023)**
Figure 11. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in Bangladesh 2023 (as of 13 August 2023)

Data sources and information on influenza, please refer to the [WHO SEARO Influenza dashboard](https://www.who.int/).