

UGM Epidemiology Expert: Reinforce New Normal Rules

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The number of Coronavirus infection in Indonesia exceed the record number of infections in China. According to Kompas.com, based on Indonesian government data until Saturday (7/18) at 12.00 West Indonesia Time, there are 1,752 new cases of Covid-19. Therefore, the total cases of infection in Indonesia amounted to 84,882 cases, starting from March 2, 2020.

The trend of the new addition cases in Indonesia occurred lately has always been above the number of 1,400, on July 16, 2020, were 1,574, July 17, 2020, were 1,462 and July 18, 2020, were 1,752. This occurrence makes Indonesia exceed the number of patients in China on Saturday (18/7), specifically, Indonesia has 84,882 cases and China as much as 83,644.

Based on this tremendous increase, an epidemiologist at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Bayu Satria Wiratama, said that there are many factors to make Indonesia become such this condition. Among the emergence of new cluster deployments in many areas, there is also an increase in the cases detected. This increase is also because of the increasing number on the test conducted.

"Also because of the mobility of the people from one area to another which also tends to increase, so it also increases transmission between regions, and this is not well balanced by inter-regional border surveillance," he said on Monday (7/20) at the UGM Campus.



According to Bayu Satria, the condition of New Normal or later rectified as an adaptation of new habits is most of all not accompanied by disciplinary behaviour related to health protocols by the community. On the other hand, the government does not provide a good and correct example for the discipline of health protocols.

"We often see officials, even the president wears a mask incorrectly," he explained.

Therefore, this kind of example from public officials will be very influential in the community. However, the community will always imitate what officials, artists and other public figures do.

Not to mention public opinion about the New Normal. Not a few of them assume New Normal as normal situations like the previous condition before Covid-19 appeared.


"This is one form of risk communication that is not quite sufficient from the government. Giving something but not explaining it properly and correctly will certainly have an effect because people will have mobile activity, as usual, eat as usual and others," he said.

According to him, the community did not understand from the beginning because the government did not explain in detail and set a good example. It seems that the New Normal issue seems not well designed, even though academics and experts have given advice and helped with education.

"We won't be tired always to convey and remind people about the importance of wearing masks, keeping a distance and cleanliness. But still if from the government itself, the appeal is not strong and not good enough so that it will make its means less effective," he explained.

Even so with the high rate of transmission at this time, the government began to open good communication with experts in universities, and make good and planned risk communication. Distinctive from before, the government is now acute to map the latest problems and conditions in each region, and strengthen the capacity of laboratories in the regions related to Covid-19 examination.

Besides, they also conducted a collaboration with private laboratories and tightened mobility between regions. They are by applying communities that enter an area and come from high-risk areas. It must be centralized quarantine for 14 days regardless of the results of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or rapid test before leaving.



"Because the PCR and rapid policies that are in effect for 14 days are now ineffective. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen mobility and border surveillance, especially in areas with many cases, strengthen case finding by involving additional personnel from outside the government to assist case finding and contact tracing, and others," he explained.

To re-impose restrictions, Bayu Satria conveyed that restrictions should be made only for open areas, such as Surabaya. Even so, this limitation does not have to be on a 1-city scale. It is enough to map areas in the city that are very high risk.

Bayu admitted that many parties were not ready with various facilities to support the health protocol in the New Normal era. Those who are not ready, especially the medium and small business sectors, such as food stalls, angkringan and others.

"The high number is also due to community misunderstanding, non-compliance because they are due to no strict supervision, and the unpreparedness of some public places," he said.

According to him, supervision does not need 24 hours, but it intended to prioritized in public places, restaurants and large spaces that are likely to be gathering places. This situation unquestionably also involves many related parties.

"Therefore, the rules in New Normal need to be enforced. I think it is effective if we all enforced it correctly and firmly, meaning that whoever breaks it, either they are officials, regents, or even governors are obliged to fines," he added.

Author: Agung Nugroho

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Translator: Natasa A

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