

Saudi imposes 24-hour virus curfew in five cities

April 6 2020

Saudi Arabia extended the duration of daily curfews Monday in four governorates and five cities, including the capital, to 24 hours to combat coronavirus as confirmed deaths from the disease hit 38.

The kingdom imposed round-the-clock lockdowns on the cities of Riyadh, Tabuk, Dammam, Dhahran and Hofuf, the interior ministry said on Twitter.

The same measures were also imposed on the governorates of Jeddah, Taif, Qatif and Khobar, the ministry added.

Authorities had already sealed off the holy cities of Mecca and Medina along with Riyadh and Jeddah, barring people from entering and exiting as well as prohibiting movement between all provinces.

Saudi Arabia, which has reported the highest number of infections in the Gulf, is scrambling to limit the spread of the disease at home.

On Monday the [health ministry](#) said deaths from the respiratory illness had risen to 38, while confirmed current infections rose to 2,523 and 551 people had recovered from the illness.

Last month, Saudi Arabia suspended the year-round "umrah" pilgrimage over fears of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic spreading to Islam's holiest cities.

Authorities are yet to announce whether they will proceed with this year's hajj, scheduled for the end of July. Authorities last week urged Muslims to temporarily defer preparations for the annual pilgrimage.

Last year, some 2.5 million faithful travelled to Saudi Arabia from across the world to take part in the hajj, which all Muslims must perform at least once in their lives if able.

The Arab world's biggest economy has also closed down cinemas, malls and restaurants and halted flights as it steps up efforts to contain the virus.

King Salman has warned of a "more difficult" fight ahead against the virus, as the kingdom faces the economic double blow of virus-led shutdowns and crashing oil prices.

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