

# Top official rules out imminent return to emergency for Tokyo and Fukuoka

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The central government has no immediate plan to again place Tokyo and Fukuoka under a state of emergency despite both areas seeing an increase in the number of coronavirus infections in recent days, economy minister Yasutoshi Nishimura said Sunday.

Nishimura, the minister in charge of Japan's virus response, said he does not expect new infection numbers to increase rapidly, but will continue to carefully monitor the situation.

"We have not come to such a stage (reinstating a state of emergency)," Nishimura told a program on public broadcaster NHK.

He added, though, that fully stamping out the disease is difficult. "This virus is hiding somewhere," Nishimura said. "We can't make it zero."

On Saturday, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported 14 coronavirus infections, bringing the total in the capital to 5,231.

Although Saturday's figure halted a four-day streak of climbing COVID-19 infections that began on Tuesday — the day after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe completely lifted the nation's state of emergency — the daily infection rate in the capital has been in double digits since Tuesday.

Daily infections once fell to as low as two on May 23, the lowest since the government initially declared a state of emergency on April 7 for Tokyo and six other prefectures.

Another spot for concern has been Fukuoka Prefecture, where clusters are apparently developing in Kitakyushu. On Saturday, the city reported 16 new cases, the eighth straight day it confirmed new infections for a total of 85 cases, according to public broadcaster NHK. Out of these, the infection routes of 31 remain undetermined.

On Friday, the city reported a local record of 26 daily infections. Of those 26 cases, 19 were linked to a hospital and a nursing home.

Nishimura noted that many of the new infections were contracted at hospitals and that the people who came into close contact with the infected have been traced.

As of Saturday, a total of 741 cases have been confirmed in Fukuoka.

Businesses will fully reopen and schools will resume classes on Monday in many of Japan's 47 prefectures, while some business restrictions will remain in place in Tokyo, Fukuoka and five other prefectures.

Given that governors of Fukuoka and neighboring Yamaguchi have already asked residents to refrain from moving in and out of Kikakyushu, Nishimura said the government will end restrictions on travel between prefectures, except for five prefectures including Tokyo, on Monday as planned.