**Magufuli Tanzania s President Shuns Masks to Pursue Herd Immunity**

Politics

Fumbuka Ng'wanakilala

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Nation will reopen to foreign tourists from next week



Government has not released fresh data on cases since April 29



People walk on a pedestrian bridge in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on April 16.

Photographer: Ericky Boniphace/AFP via Getty Images

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Tanzanian President John Magufuli ordered the phased reopening of schools and resumption of foreign tourist flights, touting the controversial “herd immunity” strategy in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.  
  
“Experts say herd immunity increases when there is contact between people,” Magufuli said in a televised speech. “If you lock people inside, their immunity falls by 30%, according to the literature that I have seen.”

The strategy allows for more than 60% of the population to gain some resistance to the virus by becoming infected and recovering, resulting in less economic devastation and human suffering than with lockdowns designed to stop the spread, according to some experts.

Magufuli, who has rejected calls for a lockdown, spoke from the capital, Dodoma, flanked by ministers and senior government officials who were also not wearing masks. The fear of the virus was more harmful than the disease itself, he said.

“The trend shows that coronavirus infections are declining,” he said, but did not give an update on the number of cases, recoveries and fatalities in the East African nation. The state hasn’t updated infection numbers since April 29.

**Reliable Tests**

Foreign tourist will be welcome starting next week when the country reopens its airspace to international flights and will not be required to go into quarantine, Magufuli said. He also ordered resumption of university and A-level secondary school studies. Sporting activities can restart in June.

The government has scrapped plans to open a 1,000-bed Covid-19 facility in Dar es Salaam after a sharp decline in hospitalizations, Health Minister Ummy Mwalimu said, without giving supporting data.

Magufuli instructed authorities to test all coronavirus-related equipment donated to the country before distribution in the public health system. The leader in the past questioned the reliability of [test results](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-03/angered-by-virus-data-tanzanian-president-orders-probe) from the national laboratory and ordered an investigation, saying the outbreak isn’t as bad as the results suggest.

“We welcome aid, but we must be careful to ensure that the assistance is not tainted with the virus,” he said. “Anyone who donates test kits and other coronavirus fighting equipment that are contaminated with the virus will be charged with murder.”