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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Siberian Coronavirus Patients Hospitalized in Dilapidated Ward

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Health authorities in Barnaul were forced to reopen the previously shuttered ward “due to an urgent need” of beds. **Screenshot barnaul.insta / Instagram**

Coronavirus patients in southwestern Siberia have been placed in a dilapidated, out-of-use hospital ward with flaking paint and cracking walls due to severe bed shortages, regional health officials said Wednesday.

The Altai region’s health authorities said City Hospital No. 3 in Barnaul was forced to reopen a previously shuttered ward “due to an urgent need” after a patient shared video from inside the run-down building.

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Публикация от Новости События Барнаул (@barnaul.insta)

“The hospital building will not be used in the future,” the state-run TASS news agency quoted the regional health ministry as saying.

“It will be the first to be removed from the list of Covid-19 hospitals as soon as the epidemiological situation improves,” the ministry added, promising to shut down the ward as soon as the last patient is discharged.

The Altai region’s health ministry suspended non-coronavirus treatment and hospitalizations due to the surge in Covid-19 infections that started in late October. As of Thursday, the region with a population of 2.3 million has confirmed more than 25,000 coronavirus cases and over 1,000 coronavirus-related deaths.

The second wave of Russia's coronavirus outbreak has shifted from Moscow to far-flung regions less equipped to handle the strain placed on their healthcare systems.

The Altai region's health ministry estimates that around 600 out of 6,000 hospital beds are currently available.

"The number of ambulance calls and patient visits to clinics indicate that the situation has stabilized," the ministry said in a statement Wednesday.

Despite this, authorities banned mass holiday gatherings across the region between Dec. 15-Jan. 15.

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