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FEATURED Q&A

What Factors Are Fueling the Dengue Outbreak in Peru?



Peru has been experiencing its worst outbreak of dengue on record. The disease is spread by mosquitoes including *Aedes aegypti*, which is pictured. // File Photo: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Q Peru is suffering its worst-ever recorded outbreak of dengue, which has claimed at least 273 lives in the country and has sickened more than 156,000, according to health authorities. In mid-June, Peru's health minister, Rosa Gutiérrez, resigned amid criticism over her handling of the outbreak. What are the major factors that have caused the outbreak? How well is Peru currently handling it, and what are the main challenges it faces? To what extent have officials in Peru, which has the world's highest per capita death rate from Covid-19, learned and employed lessons from the pandemic?

A Rolf Erik Hönger, area head for Latin America at Roche Pharma: "The recent dengue outbreak in Peru, as before the pandemic, highlights the inadequacy of the health care systems in many countries. Chronic underinvestment and a lack of proper health planning have left Peru ill-prepared to handle the growing demand for emergencies as well as for the future, considering the changing disease burdens with the aging population. With public health expenditure at a mere 3 percent of GDP, well below the 6 percent that the Pan American Health Organization recommends, Peru has fewer doctors and fewer health professionals per 1,000 inhabitants as compared to its South American peers and OECD countries. The frequent turnover of health ministers, who last an average of just four months, further hampers the development of a strategic and data-driven health care system. To improve the situation, Peru must focus on: 1.) Ensuring stability within the ministry; 2.) Establishing a strategic vision to allocate

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TODAY'S NEWS

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Venezuela Bans Opposition's Machado From Public Office

María Corina Machado, a front-runner in Venezuelan opposition's nomination for president, was barred from holding public office for 15 years, the country's controller general said in a letter.

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Colombia Maintains Interest Rate Steady

Colombia's aggressive money tightening cycle ended on Friday when its central bank board unanimously held the benchmark interest rate steady.

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POLITICAL

Bolsonaro Barred From Public Office Until 2030

Brazil's federal electoral court on Friday voted to bar former President Jair Bolsonaro from running for office until 2030 because of his conduct during last year's presidential election campaign.

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Bolsonaro // Photo: Brazilian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Brazil's Bolsonaro Barred From Seeking Office Until 2030

A panel of judges at Brazil's electoral court, or TSE, on Friday voted to bar former President Jair Bolsonaro from running for office until 2030 because of his conduct during last year's presidential election campaign, Reuters reported. Five of the court's seven judges ruled that Bolsonaro abused his power and misused the media on July 18, 2022 when he used government staff members, the state television channel and the presidential palace in Brasília for a meeting in which he insisted to foreign ambassadors that the country's election system was rigged, the Associated Press reported. Two judges on the panel sided with Bolsonaro. Justice Benedito Gonçalves wrote the majority opinion for the court, Reuters reported. Gonçalves said Bolsonaro used the meeting with the ambassadors to "spread doubts and incite conspiracy theories." Despite repeated statements during the cam-

SUBSCRIBER NOTICE

The Latin America Advisor will not be published on Tuesday, July 4 in observance of the Independence Day holiday in the United States. We will resume publishing on Wednesday, July 5.

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health expenditures based on evolving health priorities; 3.) Recognizing health as an investment priority, not just an expense; 4.) Increasing financing for the health care sector to achieve the PAHO recommended 6 percent; 5.) Creating a well-designed budget that aligns with strategic priorities; and 6.) Reforming the inflexible budget law. Peru now has the opportunity to learn from past failures and strive for a health care system that truly meets the needs of its population."

paign about the election system being rigged, Bolsonaro has not presented any evidence to back up that claim. Friday's decision by the electoral court bars Bolsonaro from running in the municipal elections in 2024 and 2028 and the general elections in 2026. "This decision will end Bolsonaro's chances of being president again, and he knows it," Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in São Paulo, told the AP. "After this, he will try to stay out of jail, elect some of his allies to keep his political capital, but it is very unlikely he will ever return to the presidency," he added. Melo added that the ruling is "very unlikely" to be overturned. Speaking to reporters in Minas Gerais, Bolsonaro called the trial unfair and politically motivated. "We're going to talk with the lawyers. Life goes on," he said when asked about his next steps, the AP reported. "It's a rather difficult moment," said Bolsonaro, calling the ruling an attack on Brazil's democracy.

Venezuela Bans Machado From Holding Public Office

María Corina Machado, a front-runner in Venezuelan opposition's nomination for president, was barred from holding public office for 15 years, the country's controller general said in a letter, Reuters reported on Friday. Machado, a former lawmaker, was leading in the polls against a dozen candidates in the opposition's primary to nominate a challenger to President

A Katherine E. Bliss, senior fellow at the CSIS Global Health Policy Center: "The record-breaking outbreak in Peru is notable within a region that has already reported more than two million dengue cases in the first half of 2023. The four viral strains that cause the flu-like illness are transmitted by the aedes aegypti mosquito, which breeds in freestanding water, thrives in urban environments and transmits the viruses that cause

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NEWS BRIEFS

Guatemala's top Court Orders Review of First-Round Election Votes

Guatemala's top court on Saturday ordered tallies from the first-round of the country's presidential elections to be reviewed after 10 parties challenged the results, suspending election processes, Reuters reported. Sandra Torres and Bernardo Arévalo are set to face off in the decisive second-round slated for Aug. 20. Torres took 15.8 percent of the vote in the June 25 elections, while Arévalo garnered 11.8 percent. Neither candidate reached the 50 percent threshold needed to secure a victory.

Argentina's Economy Slumps by 4.2%, Exacerbated by Drought

Drought in Argentina has contributed to an economic downturn of 4.2 percent in April as compared to the previous year, the country's official statistics agency said on Friday, Reuters reported. The 1.5 percent decline, the worst drop since October 2020, is lower than what analysts had expected. Argentina is usually the world's number one exporter of processed soy, the third top exporter for corn and a key supplier of wheat, but the current drought—one of the worst in the country's history—pummeled the most recent harvest.

Russia's Putin Receives Invitation to Visit Cuba

Russia's ambassador to Cuba said President Vladimir Putin received an invitation to visit the Communist-run island, though details on when it would take place were not discussed, the state RIA news agency said, Reuters reported. "Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] has an invitation, but I don't know how his plans will be lined up," Ambassador Viktor Koronelli told RIA. "The president of Cuba was in Moscow not long ago, in November of last year, so no real time has passed," Koronelli added.

Nicolás Maduro in the 2024 elections. In 2015, Machado was barred from holding office for 12 months. The ban has been extended by 15 years over corruption allegations, according to the letter, the Financial Times reported. The letter also accused Machado of supporting former opposition leader Juan Guaidó and U.S. sanctions against Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA. At a campaign event on Friday, Machado said the ban was "rubbish" and would not affect her campaign. "It only shows one thing: they know they're defeated," she said, the Financial Times reported. The ban does not prevent Machado from running in the opposition's primary, but it disqualifies her from registering with electoral authorities to appear on the ballot in the presidential race. "Today's decision to disqualify Maria Corina Machado from participating in the electoral process deprives the Venezuelan people of basic political rights. Venezuelans deserve the right to select a candidate to participate in presidential elections in 2024 without interference," a U.S. State Department spokesman said in a statement. "There are many hurdles ahead of a primary and presidential contest—some created by the opposition themselves, and others coming from the Maduro government—principally disqualification of candidates and lack of any concessions to 'free and fair' electoral conditions," Julia Buxton, a British Academy Global Professor at the University of Manchester told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published June 22.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Colombia's Central Bank Maintains Interest Rate Steady

Colombia's aggressive money tightening cycle came to an end on Friday when, for the first time in two years, its central bank board unanimously held the benchmark interest rate steady, Bloomberg News reported. The seven-member board voted to maintain the benchmark interest rate steady at 13.25 percent for the first time in nearly two years, Governor Leonardo Villar told reporters in

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

What Do Europe & Latin America Need From Each Other?

Q **European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen last month visited Latin America to bolster political and economic ties with the region. The trip included meetings between Von der Leyen and the presidents of Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico. E.U. foreign policy chief Josep Borrell previously said the partnerships had been "taken for granted, or even neglected." In July, Brussels will host a summit with more than 30 leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean to further strengthen relations. What did Von der Leyen accomplish on her trip to the region, and what were the most important issues under discussion? What kind of political and economic cooperation could develop, and how would it benefit both parties?**

A **Mariano Machado, principal analyst for the Americas at Verisk Maplecroft:** "Ursula von der Leyen's visit to Latin America showcased the strategic importance of the E.U.-Latin America partnership in this volatile geopolitical landscape. Most importantly, the timing indicates how resource competition will dominate the biregional agenda in the coming years, as U.S.-China competition is pushing the European Union to pick up the pace of its own resource and food security strategies. After the stagnation of the 2019 Mercosur-E.U deal, bilateral

Bogotá. In a press conference after the bank's announcement was made, Finance Minister Ricardo Bonilla said the bank will maintain a contractionary interest rate while it keeps an eye on the effect of fuel price increases on inflation, Bloomberg News reported. "We are tranquil now we've had two continuous months of reduction in the rate of inflation and we expect that trend to consolidate and after four or five months of review we will know at what

agreements have become the sole source of success for the European Union in a rather paralyzed biregional landscape. The pace of E.U.-Mercosur negotiations remains out of sync with a fast-moving geopolitical landscape, with domestic agendas continuing to block advancement on both sides of the Atlantic. This explains Brussels' new approach in relaunching biregional dynamics, with the newly adopted E.U.-Latin America Global Gateway Investment Agenda, which is intended to cater to innovative portions of Latin America's economy and mobilize investment into critical sectors at a much faster pace—a crucial trait in the fast-moving landscape of resource competition. Now, energy and securing the inputs for the green transition remain a key focus of bilateral agreements—as it occurred last December with the E.U.-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement. But the proof will be in the pudding, and Brussels will need to show during the summit between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in mid-July that it will put its money where its mouth is, if it is to give life to its pledges."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the [Q&A](#) published in the June 29 issue of the Advisor.

time it will be opportune to lower [the rate]," Bonilla, who represents the government on the board, told Reuters, adding that policymakers wanted to be cautious. Annual inflation stood at 12.4 percent in May. Colombia's economy is set to grow by 1 percent this year, down from 7.3 percent growth in 2022, Reuters reported. The interest rate is expected to close this year at 11.75 percent, in 2024 at 7 percent and in 2025 at 5 percent, the news wire reported.

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yellow fever, chikungunya and zika, as well. In the mid-20th century, eradication efforts nearly eliminated aedes aegypti from South America; however, the premature termination of those programs, coupled with warmer temperatures and increased flooding, have favored the mosquito population's resurgence and establishment in new geographic zones. Those conditions may intensify as the current El Niño Southern Oscillation fuels additional rainfall over the Pacific Ocean. President Dina Boluarte has declared states of emergency in the most affected regions, with officials working to prevent infections by eliminating standing water and spraying insecticide. Hospitals in northern Peru, where the outbreak is most acute, have been overwhelmed by the surge of patients seeking treatment. And despite recent progress toward universal health coverage, disease surveillance systems have been weakened, and the Peruvian health work force is poorly distributed, with an estimated two-thirds concentrated in the capital region. The Covid-19 pandemic in Peru provoked considerable public debate about rebuilding the health work force and improving equitable access to primary health care, but the ongoing political polarization makes prioritizing and financing health system strengthening, including preparing for future outbreaks of dengue and other infectious diseases, a challenge."

A **Ricardo Izurieta, professor and director for global communicable diseases at the University of South Florida:** "Not only in Peru but also in the Americas and globally, the control of dengue has failed because it is a neglected, non-profitable disease. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has provided us with valuable lessons: pandemics should be addressed with integrated, interdisciplinary and systematic strategies that begin with the first level of containment through community education and participation. This approach should address transmission

factors, vector control, clinical presentation and management, as well as the monitoring of non-severe cases by community health personnel. By managing non-hemorrhagic cases at the primary community level, we can prevent the movement of human reservoirs to other geographic areas where

“**The control of dengue has failed because it is a neglected, non-profitable disease.**”

– Ricardo Izurieta

outbreaks can emerge. At the second level of containment, well-trained specialists in tropical infectious diseases are needed. Unfortunately, the availability of schools for tropical infectious diseases and specialists is continuously diminishing. The governments of endemic countries, including Peru, have failed to ensure access to appropriate medical care, including supportive treatment and fluid management, for dengue patients in order to prevent severe complications. This forms part of the third level of control. The third level also entails providing comprehensive care and management for severe dengue cases. Additionally, post-recovery support should emphasize the importance of ongoing mosquito bite prevention by implementing reverse isolation measures, such as placing the patient under a bed net, as well as encouraging community engagement. Governments should also promote research initiatives like the discovery of antivirals and the development of safe and effective vaccines. Furthermore, the use of technologies such as artificial intelligence, geographic information systems and drones can be explored for effective control."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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