

Up to 15,000 German soldiers to support battle against pandemic

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany will deploy up to 15,000 soldiers to reinforce civilian authorities increasingly stretched in their battle against rising numbers of coronavirus infections that have reached the highest level since April, the Defence Ministry said on Monday.

The country has managed to suppress the pandemic more than many of its neighbours and keep the death toll lower but the daily number of new cases leapt above 4,000 last week, with cases surging in big cities like Berlin and Frankfurt.

The government has warned of the situation spiralling out of control as local staff charged with tracing the contacts of infected people by phone are stretched thin by the growing number of cases.

About 1,300 soldiers were already supporting the civilian administration, a Defence Ministry spokesman said. The Bundeswehr was ready to detach up to 15,000 soldiers for this job if they were needed, he added.

The ministry had received 1,000 requests from local authorities for support.

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