

“Fake news” laws are failing to stem Covid-19 misinformation in Southeast Asia | Rest of World

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As the drummer of the Indonesian punk band Superman Is Dead, I Gede Ari Astina, better known as Jerinx, always relished making headlines for rebellious acts. His most recent, and most controversial: becoming one of Indonesia’s leading anti-vaxxers.

“Those who don’t believe that this covid is just a business scheme may still believe that America has landed on the moon and 9/11 is [initiated] by Muslims,” he wrote to his over 1 million Instagram followers in April 2020, as the country’s case count began to pick up speed.

Over the course of the pandemic, Jerinx has made a practice of sharing coronavirus conspiracy theories with his followers on Instagram and Twitter. Since last year, he has instructed them that the pandemic is an exaggeration: a plot by a cabal of global elites, including the Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates.

He is, said Indonesian misinformation analyst Ismail Fahmi, one of the two most influential people in spreading health misinformation in the country — the other being a former Indonesian health minister.

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