

# Philippines confirms second MERS case (Update)

July 6 2015

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A foreigner who flew to the Philippines from the Middle East has become the second confirmed case of MERS in the country, the health department said Monday, as a deadly outbreak in South Korea spreads alarm across Asia.

The 36-year-old male patient, whose nationality was not disclosed, has been put in isolation at a government facility to contain the virus, Health Secretary Janette Garin said.

"We can see he is getting better," Garin told a news conference, adding the man had a "low viral load" indicating his infection was not extremely serious.

"There is no reason to panic and we appeal to the public to respect the privacy of the patient."

The man fell ill on July 2, having earlier arrived in the country from Saudi Arabia by way of Dubai, she said, declining to give more details.

A Filipina nurse who returned from Saudi Arabia in February became the first person in the Philippines to test positive for MERS but she later recovered.

Although Garin stressed that there had been no cases of MERS infection through casual contact in the Philippines, the health department was tracing people who may have had contact with the patient.

They include all those who were on the same flight as the infected man, Garin said.

In South Korea, which is suffering the worst outbreak of MERS outside Saudi Arabia, 185 people have been diagnosed with the disease with 33 fatalities, the government there said.

Of those infected, 41 remain hospitalised, with 11 in a critical condition.

The Philippine health department has been on alert in recent weeks for the possible entry of the virus that causes the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, particularly among the 88,000 South Koreans living in the country.

Health authorities earlier examined three South Korean expatriates who developed respiratory ailments, but all tested negative for MERS, department spokesman Lyndon Lee Suy said.

Elsewhere in Asia, Malaysia reported a case before the South Korean outbreak in May, while China reported a person with MERS who had travelled there after recent exposure in South Korea, according to the World Health Organization.

A 75-year-old Omani man who became Thailand's first case of the virus was discharged from hospital on July 3.

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