

South Korea reports 60 new coronavirus cases, total 893

February 25 2020



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South Korea reported 60 more novel coronavirus cases on Tuesday, the smallest increase for four days in the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's morning updates.

The country now has 893 cases, the KCDC said—the largest national total anywhere outside China—adding one more person had died, taking the toll to eight.

For the previous three days, KCDC had reported triple-digit increases each morning as the outbreak took hold in South Korea, the world's 12th-largest economy.

The country has an advanced medical system, a free press and a strong culture of public accountability, and observers say that its [health statistics](#) can be treated with confidence.

But despite the smaller number of infections, authorities urged the public to exercise extra caution, advising citizens to stay home if they have a fever or [respiratory symptoms](#).

"The government will put highest priority on the people's health and lives and put all its efforts in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 in the community," said vice health minister Kim Gang-lip.

Of the latest cases, 49 are in the southern city of Daegu and the neighbouring North Gyeongsang province, KCDC said.

The streets of Daegu—the country's fourth-largest city, with a population of 2.5 million—have been largely deserted for days, apart from long queues at the few shops with masks for sale.

Mask manufacturers have increased their total output to around 10 million a day, but availability remains limited and the government said it will ban people from exporting face coverings.

Masks have become standard wear throughout the country, and scores of events have been cancelled or postponed, from K-pop concerts to the

start of the K-league football season.

The Korean Basketball League became the latest to take action on Tuesday, saying it would hold matches behind closed doors "until the situation improves".

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised travellers to "avoid all nonessential travel" to South Korea.

Hong Kong has said it will not allow arrivals from South Korea other than returning residents, while a Mongolian ban on flights to and from the South came into force Tuesday.

'Quite serious'

Most of the country's infections are linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in Daegu, an entity often accused of being a cult.

A 61-year-old female member developed a fever on February 10, but attended at least four church services before being diagnosed.

With public criticism growing, Shincheonji's founder Lee Man-hee said in a statement Tuesday that the group would provide the government a list of all its members to have them tested for the virus.

"It will be done under the premise that the government will protect the privacy of our members," he added.

The organisation has previously called its members the "biggest victims" of the coronavirus.

South Korea's parliament cancelled sessions Tuesday as it closed for cleaning after confirmation a person with the coronavirus had attended a

meeting last week. It is set to reopen Wednesday morning.

The leader of the main opposition United Future party Hwang Kyo-ahn had to be tested along with other senior party officials as they had come into contact with the patient, but all tested negative.

With the surge in infection numbers, the United States hinted at scaling back joint military exercises.

US and South Korea militaries were "looking at scaling back the command post training due to concerns about the coronavirus", US Defence Secretary Mark Esper told reporters in Washington.

His South Korean counterpart Jeong Kyeong-doo added that 13 South Korean servicemen had been infected and all leave for the military cancelled to limit soldiers' movements.

"The situation is quite serious," Jeong said.

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