Medical Xpress

South Africa reports second coronavirus case

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South Africa on Saturday confirmed a second case of the novel coronavirus, a 39-year-old woman who had travelled to Italy as part of a group with the first confirmed case.

The South African authorities said the woman had come into direct contact with the first case when they travelled back in a group of 10 from Italy on March 1.

On Thursday, the authorities said a man who was part of that group was the first case in the country.

"The second patient who has now tested positive for COV-19 will now be immediately admitted to a public health facility... that the government has identified as one of the hospitals that are ready to receive COVID-19 positive patients," the health ministry said in a statement.

Health Minister Zweli Mkize told national broadcaster SABC that the patient was being isolated at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital in Johannesburg.

The ministry assured the public it had managed to secure information on the whereabouts of all the other people in the group that had travelled to Italy.

It also confirmed that a 39-year-old South African man working in Daegu, South Korea, has also tested positive for COVID-19.

Authorities said the man, who was due to return to South Africa, would remain where he was until details of his treatment in South Korea were verified.

The African continent now has more than 30 confirmed cases, including in Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

South Africa is meanwhile preparing to repatriate 184 of its citizens—comprising students, teachers and other professionals working in China's Wuhan, the epicentre of the epidemic.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has urged South Africans not to panic but also cautioned about the potential impact of the outbreak on the country's struggling economy.

"The important thing here is to avoid fake news... We must be responsible because we are dealing with a matter that can cause a lot of panic in society and we don't want to do that," Ramaphosa told journalists on Saturday.

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