

## South Korea reports fewer than 150 new coronavirus cases

March 10 2020

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South Korea, one of the worst-affected countries in the coronavirus epidemic outside China, on Tuesday reported fewer than 150 new cases for the first time in two weeks.

A total of 131 infections were confirmed on Monday, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said, taking the total to 7,513.

Three more people died, it added, with the toll rising to 54.

Each morning the South announces how many cases were diagnosed the previous day, with Monday's figure the lowest for a single day since late February and marking the fourth consecutive daily fall.

"The number of new COVID-19 cases has been declining, so we can assess the rate of increase is coming to a standstill," said Yoon Tae-ho at the Central Disaster Management Headquarters.

But the outbreak was still spreading, he added, warning against any relaxation of containment efforts.

At least 50 people working at a call centre in Seoul or their relatives have tested positive for the virus, becoming the largest cluster in the capital, KCDC said, with officials urging individuals to maintain social distancing.

Park Sung-jae, 26, who works on a different floor of the same building, told AFP: "It's really startling to see infections spread here as most other infections were in Daegu and Gyeongbuk region. I'm really scared."

The Korea Baseball Organisation said it will postpone the March 28 start of the season to "sometime in April", joining several other sports leagues that have suspended play over the virus.

The emergency board meeting decision was taken "in consideration of the safety and health of the fans and players", the KBO said in a statement.

Scores of events—from K-pop concerts to sports matches—have been cancelled or postponed over the contagion, with school and kindergarten breaks extended by three weeks nationwide.

The South was the first country to report significant coronavirus numbers outside China, where the disease first emerged, although the focus of global concern has been moving towards Italy and Iran in recent days.

Authorities say the risk of small cluster infections continues and the public have been urged to refrain from group events such as protests or religious services.

More than 60 percent of the country's cases are linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a religious sect often condemned as a cult.

One of its members attended at least four services before being diagnosed.

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