

Ukraine to close borders, stop flights over coronavirus

March 13 2020

Ukraine said Friday it would close its borders to foreigners for at least two weeks and stop all flights to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, as it reported its first COVID-19 fatality.

"Ukraine's borders will be closed to foreign citizens for two weeks," Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the country's Security and Defence Council, told reporters, adding that the measure will take effect in 48 hours.

The news was announced minutes before the country reported its first death from the virus.

Later Friday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Facebook: "In three days, we will suspend all regular flights" for at least two weeks.

He also asked Ukrainians who were on vacation or work abroad to return home by that time.

Zelensky asked elderly people to remain at home and asked employers to let workers work from home, wherever possible.

The ex-Soviet country, which has a population of 42 million, has so far reported three confirmed cases of the COVID-19 infection.

Danilov said that all Ukrainians would be allowed to return to the country, and those coming back from the nations most affected by the

pandemic will have to be quarantined.

The ban on foreigners would only be waived for diplomatic workers, he said.

Ukraine's deputy health minister, Viktor Lyashko, speaking alongside Danilov, said a woman who was diagnosed with the coronavirus on Thursday has died.

He added the woman who lived in north-west Zhytomyr region was in her seventies and was suffering from double pneumonia after she returned from a trip to neighbouring Poland.

"Doctors, unfortunately, could not save her life," Lyashko said.

On Thursday Ukraine closed schools and universities nationwide and banned all major public events as part of containment measures, while Ukraine's Orthodox Church told worshippers they could avoid kissing icons.

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