

Malaysia detects first omicron case in South African student

December 3 2021

Malaysia said Friday it has detected its first case of the new omicron strain of the coronavirus in a foreign student who returned to the country last month after visiting her family in South Africa.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the 19-year-old female transited in Singapore and arrived in Malaysia on Nov. 19, where she underwent a COVID-19 test upon arrival. She was then bussed to her university lodging in northern Perak state with four others and placed under quarantine, he said.

Results the next day confirmed the student was positive for COVID-19, he said. The bus driver and four others in the vehicle tested negative and were all quarantined, he added.

Khairy noted that the student arrived in Malaysia before South Africa reported its first omicron case to the World Health Organization.

Following the discovery of the omicron strain, the ministry conducted genomic tests on 74 positive samples at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport between November 11 and 28 to detect the [variant](#), Khairy said. Tests confirmed Thursday the student, who has since been released from a 10-day quarantine, had the [omicron](#) strain, he said.

"What is important is the individual fully complied with home quarantine... is fully vaccinated and was asymptomatic. We have done both automated and manual contact tracing and so far this case is

contained," Khairy tweeted.

Malaysia, like many other countries, has tightened restrictions following the discovery of the new variant. It has banned visitors from eight African nations and requires travelers flying in from high -risk countries to wear a digital tracker device throughout their quarantine.

Much remains unknown about the new variant, including whether it is more contagious, as some health authorities suspect, whether it makes people more seriously ill, and whether it can thwart vaccines.

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