

Philippines detects country's 1st omicron cases

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The Philippines said Wednesday it has detected its first cases of the omicron strain in two travelers who arrived recently from Japan and Nigeria.

The Department of Health said the omicron variant was detected in a Filipino man, who flew back home from Japan on a Philippine Airlines flight on Dec. 1. The second case was detected in a Nigerian national, who arrived in Manila from his country via Oman Air on Nov. 30.

Both travelers tested positive for the coronavirus after arrival and the results of additional tests showed on Tuesday that they were infected by the [omicron](#) strain, the department said.

The two are confined in a government-run isolation facility without any symptoms, the [health](#) department said, adding it was checking whether any of their fellow passengers in their flights to the Philippines had been infected too.

Health officials renewed their call for Filipinos to wear protective masks properly, wash and disinfect their hands frequently and stay safely away from people and big crowds.

"We continue to remind the public not to let their guard down, to religiously observe minimum public health standards and call upon all those unvaccinated to get their jabs as soon as possible," presidential spokesman Karlo Nograles told a televised news conference.

The Philippines imposed one of the strictest and longest lockdowns in the world after the pandemic hit in March last year, causing its economy to plummet by 9.5% last year in the country's worst recession since World War II.

Health officials reported just 237 confirmed infections with 100 deaths Wednesday.

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