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WUHAN VIRUS/School opening postponed to Feb. 25 due to coronavirus

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Taipei, Feb. 2 (CNA) The reopening of schools in Taiwan at the high school level and lower following the winter break has been postponed to Feb. 25 due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) announced Sunday.

Schools were scheduled to open Feb. 11, but Education Minister Pan Wen-chung (潘文忠) said the winter break will be extended for another two weeks to prevent the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Taiwan.

That means the second semester will not begin until Feb. 25, Pan said.

To make up for the missed two weeks, the semester will not conclude until July 14.

Employers will be required to allow employees who are parents of students aged 12 or

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below to take time off during the two weeks to look after their children if necessary, but only one parent is eligible to take time off, Labor Minister Hsu Ming-chun (許銘春) said.

The only exception will be kindergartens. Many private kindergartens have already reopened or will start again on Monday, while public kindergartens will stay closed.

The Education Ministry said it expects to deliver an estimated 500,000 children's masks to private kindergartens Monday, mainly for the use of children who feel unwell.

Taiwan has been relatively unscathed by the virus, with only 10 confirmed cases to date, but the coronavirus has been declared a global public health emergency and local authorities are trying to keep the respiratory illness at bay.

One of its recently announced measures to contain the spread of the virus is denying entry to Chinese nationals from Guangdong province. Travelers who have recently visited the province will be subject to a mandatory 14-day home quarantine.

Another step is the electronic monitoring of about 2,400 people already under home quarantine around Taiwan.

Currently, 2,000 of them have been given electronic devices for them to report back to health departments daily. Those who do not follow the regulations could face mandatory isolation, Health and Welfare Minister Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) said at the press briefing.

(By Phoenix Hsu, Chang Ming-hsuan and Evelyn Kao)
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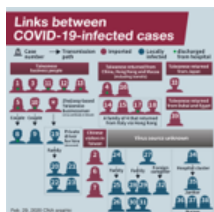


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