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CORONAVIRUS/Taiwan to bar entry of foreign nationals to combat COVID-19 (update)

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Foreign Minister Joseph Wu

Taipei, March 18 (CNA) Taiwan will bar all foreign nationals from entering Taiwan starting Thursday, with some exceptions, as it intensifies efforts to contain the spread of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) said Wednesday.

Health Minister Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), who serves as the CECC head, announced the new restrictions at a CECC news conference Wednesday, and said it was necessary after seeing a spike in confirmed cases among Taiwanese who had traveled abroad recently.

Foreign Minister Joseph Wu (吳釗燮) said some foreign nationals will not be subject to the ban.

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Foreign nationals who hold Alien Resident Certificates (ARCs) or documents proving they are in Taiwan for diplomatic or other official purposes or to fulfill business contracts, as well as those who have received special permits, can enter the country, Wu said.

The restrictions on entry into Taiwan for foreign nationals will be subject to change based on CECC directives, Wu said.

Meanwhile, all Taiwanese citizens and foreign nationals with the necessary documentation who arrive in Taiwan from overseas will be required to be quarantined at home for 14 days, Chen said.

To track those who have already entered Taiwan from high-risk areas, Chen also announced Wednesday that people in Taiwan who have been in or transited through Europe, Turkey, Egypt or Dubai between March 5 and 14 will be required to quarantine themselves at home for 14 days, effective immediately.

Those required to undergo quarantine will receive NT\$1,000 (US\$33) in compensation per day from the government, Chen said, and he urged these travelers to immediately contact their local township offices and report their travel history to the authorities.

On Tuesday, a total of 10 new COVID-19 cases, all imported, were confirmed in Taiwan, bringing the total number in the country to 77. Out of the 77 cases, 50 were imported (meaning they were contracted outside of Taiwan).

Of all the imported cases, nine were from the same tour group to Turkey, two have visited Dubai, and 15 had traveled to at least one European country.

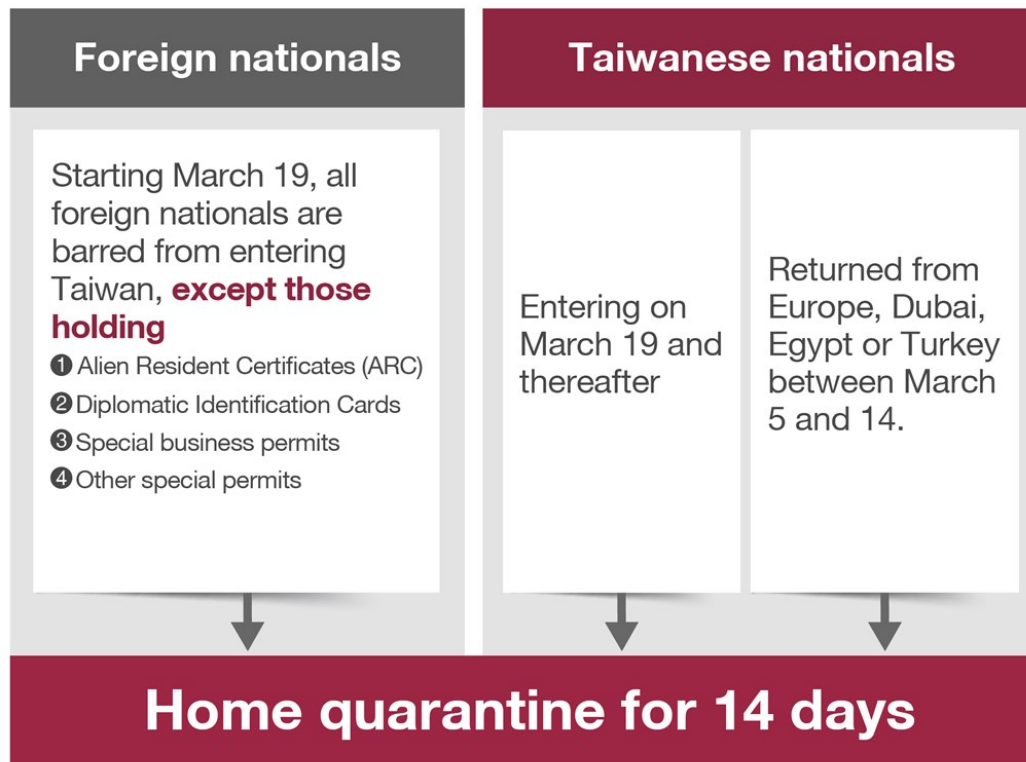
Currently, 22 of the 77 coronavirus patients in Taiwan have been released from quarantine, while one patient has died and the others are still in negative pressure hospital quarantine rooms, but they are all in relatively stable condition, according to the CECC.

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