

S. Korea reports 19 new cases of coronavirus infection

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- S. Korea reports 19 more cases of new coronavirus, total now at 11,037
- 2 additional virus death, death toll now at 262
- 30 more people released after full recovery from coronavirus, bringing total to 9,851

South Korea reported 19 more cases of the new coronavirus Saturday, the fewest in a week, as cluster infections linked to Seoul's nightlife district of Itaewon somewhat slowed down, according to health authorities.

Of the new COVID-19 cases detected Friday, nine were local infections, raising the total number in the country to 11,037, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

It marked the first time that the number of daily new infections fell below 20 since May 9 when the corresponding figure hit 18.

Itaewon has emerged as a hotbed for cluster infections, with the number of cases tied to bars and clubs in the multicultural district reaching at least 153 as of late Friday, according to the KCDC and the Seoul city government.

Health authorities viewed this weekend as a critical juncture for the country's battle against the coronavirus since a virus case tied to Itaewon was first reported early this month.

The country added 10 more imported cases, previously the biggest threat for South Korea's quarantine operations.

South Korea reported two more deaths, bringing the death toll to 262, according to the KCDC.

The total number of people released from quarantine after full recoveries stood at 9,851, up 30 from the previous day.

South Korea has flattened the infection curve with its massive testing and contact tracing since its first case on Jan. 20. The number of daily new infections, which once peaked at 909, fell to a single digit figure in the first week of May.

But the government is struggling to stem a potential second wave of infections as the country saw a sharp rise in Itaewon-linked cases reported following the latest holidays.

Following 45 days of stricter social distancing, South Korea switched an "everyday life quarantine" scheme on May 6 to enable citizens to carry out social and economic activities under quarantine rules.

The country planned to gradually reopen schools starting Wednesday, but decided to postpone the plan by a week amid a spike in virus cases traced to Itaewon. (Yonhap)