

NEWS

UAE announces recovery of 17 patients, 241 new cases among various nationalities



4 Apr, 2020: The UAE Government has announced the detection of 241 new coronavirus cases among various nationalities, taking to 1,505 the number of infections in the country.

The UAE Government also announced the full recovery of 17 patients after receiving the necessary medical care, taking the total number of recoveries to 125 to date.

The announcement was made by the Ministry of Health and Prevention during a regular media briefing on Saturday, wherein Dr. Farida Al Hosani, the official spokesperson for the UAE health sector, highlighted the latest COVID-19 developments in the country and the measures taken by Emirati authorities to combat the spread of the pandemic.

"The newly diagnosed patients of various nationalities are in a stable condition and receiving the necessary medical care," Dr. Al Hosani affirmed.

She noted that the death of a 53-year-old Arab patient, who succumbed to health complications related to COVID-19, raised the number of fatalities to ten.

She expressed her sincere condolences to the family of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery for all patients.

The official spokesperson for the UAE health sector indicated that the increase in new cases was expected given the intensive proactive testing being conducted by health authorities among infected individuals and their contacts.

"Proactive surveillance and testing, along with the expansion in the isolation of contact cases, are critical in this stage, and therefore we expect to diagnose more cases," she added.

She stressed that the general public should maintain a safe physical distance and adhere to preventative measures, warning them of the possibility of being infected and later passing the virus to others when venturing out of the home unless absolutely necessary. She also called upon those currently under home quarantine to adhere to safety protocols and the full duration of the quarantine.

She advised members of the community to refrain from spreading false information and rumours and instead consume news and decisions from official sources only, saying: "We all have a responsibility toward ensuring the success of

national efforts to fight the novel coronavirus." On preventative measures, Dr. Al Hosani underscored that wearing face masks is imperative for all at this stage, especially when leaving home.

"Studies showed that wearing face masks in public places is typically limited to those suffering from respiratory ailments like coughing." However, she continued, "new studies and research, as well as international recommendations, suggest that the virus could infect people who do not show symptoms."

Speaking about the National Disinfection Programme, Dr. Al Hosani discussed the extension of the nation-wide sanitisation drive after the successful implementation of the first phase, describing it as an "important" step within the country's ongoing preventative measures to fight the virus. The programme will be subject to periodic assessment as per recommendations approved by the World Health Organisation and established international practices.

She underscored the importance of compliance from the public during the programme, as authorities in each emirate will implement disinfection plans that accommodate the requirements of local entities.

Discussing the economic impact of COVID-19, Rashid Al Muhairi, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said that the economic sector is the most affected by the virus given the fact that the UAE economy is competitive, flexible, and highly connected to international markets. "The UAE economy is not far away from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis," he noted.

"To ward off this negative impact, the Ministry of Economy has coordinated with other relevant authorities to ensure business sustainability, increase readiness, and set up central operations rooms and taskforces on retail outlets, suppliers, price controls, consumer protections, tourism, and foreign trade and investment to address the expected economic challenges," he added.

On measures taken so far, Al Muhairi explained that a database of more than 1,600 registered retail outlets across the country has been established and a plan has been developed to regularly assess the availability of basic commodities.

Al Muhairi referred to sustained coordination between the Ministry and its stakeholders, including suppliers and retail outlets, to ensure that these commodities are available at reasonable prices. Coordination with customs departments has also enabled the fast tracking and facilitation of the entry of food shipments from ports to storehouses. Customs and clearance procedures have been reduced from two days to a few hours, he explained.

Other measures, he continued, include cooperation with suppliers to diversify their sources of imports and identify alternative markets of basic commodities to meet the demands of local markets in the event that items are affected by measures taken in goods' countries of origin.

On price control measures, he added that the Ministry has set a profit cap of 5 percent that retail outlets should not exceed when selling face masks and sanitisers.

Al Muhairi affirmed, "UAE markets are not facing a shortage of any essential commodity, and supply and import operations are taking place as planned. Local production is continuing, and stockpiles are sufficient for long periods. Therefore, there is no need for consumer malpractices such as the excessive hoarding of commodities." He said that tourism is one of the sectors significantly affected by the coronavirus crisis due to travel bans and international traffic restrictions. However, he stressed, the UAE tourism sector is resilient. "The sector is expected to quickly rebound after the crisis," he concluded.