

## NEWS

# 41 new COVID-19 cases, three recoveries in UAE, distance learning extended until end of school year



**30 Mar, 2020:** The UAE Government has announced the detection of 41 new coronavirus cases among various nationalities, taking to 611 the number of infections in the country.

The government also announced the full recovery of three patients and the death of two patients due to health complications. A 48-year-old Arab national died while suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, while an Asian national who died at age 42 also suffered from heart disease. COVID-19 fatalities have now reached five in the UAE.

The announcement was made by the Ministry of Health and Prevention during a regular media briefing on Monday, 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.

Dr. Al Hosani affirmed that "The 41 patients are receiving the necessary healthcare. Two of them are under intensive care, while the others are in a stable condition."

The new cases belong to various nationalities, including one each from China, Syria, the Philippines, Australia, the UAE, Sudan, Poland, and Malaysia; two each from Brazil, Bangladesh, Ireland, Egypt, and Britain; three from Italy, and 20 from India.

During the media briefing, the government announced the full recovery of an additional three patients—two Indians and a Sri Lankan—taking the total recoveries to 61.

Dr. Al Hosani explained that the increase in cases announced in recent days was connected to travel and direct contact with people arriving from abroad. However, some diagnosed cases were related to contact and human-to-human transmission inside the country, which is expected and common in other countries.

The disease, she stressed, is not confined to a specific geographic area, noting that a previously monitored and confirmed case had come in contact with others, infecting 36 people.

Dr. Al Hosani also referred to directives by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, to the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi to set up

drive-through centres across the UAE to test for the coronavirus following the launch of the first such centre in Abu Dhabi.

The test centres will open in Dubai, Sharjah (which will also serve Ajman and Umm al Qaiwain), Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Al Ain, and Al Dhafra to provide rapid testing for citizens and residents across the UAE using the latest medical technology. Priority will be given to people suffering from respiratory and chronic diseases, senior citizens, and pregnant women.

"These drive-through COVID-19 test centres contain a safe environment, which reduces contact and can offer a five-minute, in-vehicle test for COVID-19 to 600 people per day," she added.

Elaborating on preventive measures, Dr. Al Hosani explained that face masks are compulsory for people suffering from respiratory symptoms such as coughing, flu, and fever, in crowded and closed places.

She called upon retail outlets not to oblige all customers to wear face masks except for select groups. She stressed that sharing face masks is unhealthy and can spread the virus.

"Used masks should be disposed of in a safe, healthy way and thrown in closed containers," she concluded.

Dr. Amna Al Dahak, spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, addressed the latest developments in the education sector, announcing that as per Federal Cabinet directives, the distance learning system will continue until the end of the 2019-2020 academic year for all government and private schools and higher education institutions across the country.

"Education is a priority for the country's leadership, which is closely following up on the learning process to ensure a better future for students under these exceptional circumstances and simultaneously uphold the safety and wellbeing of students and the educational community," she affirmed.

She described the ongoing distance learning phase as "important and enriching."

"We treasure the cooperation and interaction shown by all stakeholders, including parents, students, and the media, in the first phase of e-learning," she added.

She said that the Ministry of Education polled more than 185,000 parents and students for their feedback so as to improve the process.

According to poll findings, she noted, the Ministry has re-scheduled the distance learning study plan, which will start next Wednesday, to sustain the learning process.

"We are also currently updating the assessment and examination mechanisms for general and higher education," she remarked.

The Ministry, she continued, has added smart solutions and interactive applications to improve e-learning and its outcomes.