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# Taiwan reports first death from coronavirus infection (update) - Focus Taiwan

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Taipei, Feb. 16 (CNA) Taiwan on Sunday reported the nation's first death from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a 61-year-old male living in central Taiwan, according to the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC).

The patient, who had Hepatitis B and diabetes, had not traveled overseas recently and no known contact with COVID-19 patients, according to Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), who heads the CECC. The authorities are still working to determine how the man became infected.

"This could be Taiwan's first community transmitted case," Chen noted. The man is the nation's 19th confirmed coronavirus patient.

CNA has learned the unidentified man was a taxi driver who had many customers that regularly travel to and from China, Hong Kong and Macau.

The health authorities are now checking the man's phone records, medical records and CCTV footage of his travel history within the country in order to determine how he was infected with the deadly

virus.

According to Chen, the patient first developed a cough on Jan. 27 and was admitted to hospital on Feb. 3 due to shortness of breath where he was diagnosed as having pneumonia.

He passed away in the hospital's isolation ward due to pneumonia and sepsis on Feb. 15, after being diagnosed as having contracted COVID-19 shortly before his death, according to Chen.

Chen said Taiwan previously only conducted COVID-19 tests on those patients with suspected symptoms who had recently traveled to countries with coronavirus outbreaks or had contact with coronavirus patients.

However, as more than half the recent cases in Singapore have no recent overseas travel, Chen said Taiwan on Feb. 12 decided to expand its COVID-19 tests to all patients who have severe flu-like symptoms, dating back to Jan. 31.

As of Feb. 15, health authorities have completed inspections of all 113 samples collected and the patient who died on Feb. 15 is the only one to test positive for the coronavirus infection, Chen said.

Meanwhile, Chen also announced the 20th confirmed coronavirus patient in Taiwan as the younger brother of the 19th patient with whom he lived.

The 51-year-old patient is currently in an isolation ward even though he has so far shown no symptoms of having contracted the virus, Chen added.

Chen also said health authorities have called on anyone who had close contact with the deceased man to undergo screening to see if they have contracted the coronavirus.

Initial screenings have ruled out 60 of the 79 individuals identified as having contact with the patient, while the rest are still waiting for their test results, Chen said.

Despite the suspected community transmission, Chen reiterated the CECC's position that people who are healthy do not need to wear a surgical face mask, adding that everyone should frequently wash their hands and remain calm.