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Coronavirus: France announces first COVID-19 death in Europe | DW | 15.02.2020

Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com)

5-6 minutes

The French health minister has reported the first death from COVID-19 in Europe. It is thought to be the first death from the virus outside of Asia.

French health minister Agnes Buzyn reported the first death from COVID-19 in Europe on Saturday.

The victim, an 80-year-old Chinese tourist, and his daughter had been receiving treatment at Paris's Bichat hospital since January 25 and were subject to strict isolation measures, said Buzyn in a statement.

The daughter's health is not a cause for concern and she should be able to leave hospital soon, added the minister. Both individuals were from Hubei province, the epicenter of the outbreak.

World Health Organization (WHO) emergency chief Mike Ryan told DW on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference that the virus is still not spreading fast

internationally.

"The virus has been outside China now for a number of weeks and we still have only got just over 500 cases in 24 countries, and those countries are significantly containing the virus."

He added that countries may not be able to slow it down entirely and it may take the development of vaccines to finally stop the disease.

"But what we can do is save a lot of lives, what we can do is take care of our vulnerable populations and get them the treatments they need. So it's not time for white flags. This is the time for action," said Ryan.

Only three deaths had been recorded from the virus outside of China — in the Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan. France has 11 cases of the virus.

Beijing announces strict COVID-19 measures

Beijing, meanwhile, announced new strict rules for returnees in the capital's latest bid to contain the virus. Anyone returning to the city will be subject to a 14-day quarantine or risk punishment, ordered its virus prevention working group late on Friday.

The working group warned there will be legal consequences for those who do not comply with the self-imposed 14-day quarantine. It did not elaborate on how the isolation will be enforced or what the punishment would be.

Chinese officials are concerned that COVID-19 may spread further as migrants return to their jobs in cities or other

provinces after a prolonged [Lunar New Year](#) holiday.

Death toll reaches 1,500

The latest attempt to stop the spread of the virus came as the global death toll on Saturday reached 1,527 and China reported that 143 more people had died.

Beijing reported 2,461 new infections of the COVID-19 strain, a sharp drop from the 5,090 new cases reported the previous day.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the Munich Security Conference on Saturday that the outbreak was still an emergency for China and it was impossible to predict where it may spread.

He said he was encouraged by China's containment measures but that the increasing number of cases was still a cause for concern.

Read more: [Coronavirus containment in Europe working 'so far,' says Germany's Spahn](#)

Revisions to diagnosis see figures surge

This week saw the scale of the epidemic increase significantly after authorities in Hubei province changed their criteria for qualifying cases.

Patients "clinically diagnosed" through lung imaging are now included, in addition to those that have shown up positive after laboratory analysis, adding thousands of new patients to Hubei's infection figures.

Cause for celebration on Cambodia cruise ship

More than half the passengers on a luxury cruise finally got to disembark on Saturday at a Cambodian port after the ship was turned away from the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Thailand due to fears about the virus.

A Cambodian official announced the development, saying that the decision was made after tests on 20 people came back negative. The official added that the people had been tested "out of an abundance of caution."

An 83-year-old American passenger later tested positive to the virus after undergoing a test in Malaysia. The Malaysian Health Ministry said the woman was in a stable condition, and that her husband had also shown symptoms but had tested negative. The ministry added that the couple were the only individuals among the 145 passengers who flew onward to Malaysia to show symptoms,

Most of the 1,200 people who disembarked from the ship at the Sihanoukville port were intending to head to the capital for further travel, said a government spokesperson.

German ship docks in Thailand

Meanwhile, the German cruise ship "Aidavita" docked at Laem Chabang port in Thailand on Saturday morning, after being turned away from Vietnam due to fears that those on board may have the virus. The 1,100 passengers, mostly from Germany, and 400 crew members are expected to be able to leave the ship on Sunday morning.

There were no suspicious cases aboard the ship, the ship's

company spokesman said in a statement. No guest or crew member on board had been to China within the last 14 days.

kmm,jsi/mm (AFP, AP, Reuters, dpa)

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