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କୃତ୍ସଂହାରଦ୍ଵାରା
ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ : ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

Prime Minister's Office
Gyalong Tshogkhang
Thimphu: Bhutan

March 6, 2020

Press Release

First confirmed COVID-19 case in Bhutan

We would like to inform the general public that one positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed at 11pm on March 5. The result was validated at 12.30 am today.

The patient is a 76-year-old from the United States of America, who had come to Bhutan as a tourist. He had entered the country from Paro International Airport, after embarking Drukair flight KB241 from Guwahati, India on March 2.

Adhering to the National Preparedness and Response Plan, and the operating procedures in place, all follow-up actions were initiated immediately. His Majesty The King personally oversaw implementation of the response strategy, as teams operated from Ministry of Health all through the night.

The patient was touring India from February 21 to March 1. He had started his travel from Washington DC on February 18. The patient was travelling with his partner, aged 59. There were 10 passengers on board, of which eight others were Indian nationals.

At the Paro International Airport, the patient's health declaration form was assessed. He had indicated "negative" against all conditions. He did not have a sign of fever.

However, upon reaching Thimphu, around 3pm, he visited the medical OPD at JDWNRH, complaining of bloated abdomen (dyspeptic symptoms) and nausea. The patient suffers from chronic hypertension and is on medication. However, even at that time, he did not have any flu symptoms.

The patient and his partner stayed at Le Meridien on the first night. The following day, he stayed indoor most of the time and went to the hospital again around 3.30pm for stomach upset and diarrhea.



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The next day, he travelled to Punakha, with two stops on the way for tea and lunch. He had stayed at Densa Boutique Resort. That evening, he had walked until the Bazam next to Punakha Dzong, and returned to the room.

Yesterday, upon returning to Thimphu, he visited JDWNRH again. He was found to have fever, sore throat, cough and shortness of breath. He was kept under observation at the flu clinic (designated COVID-19 hospital) and samples were collected and sent to Royal Centre for Disease Control (RCDC).

Upon confirmation, he has been isolated in the COVID-19 hospital. Considering his age and underlying conditions, the patient is on oxygen support.

Contact tracing

At the time of the press release, over 90 contacts have been traced. Health officials and other relevant agencies are in the process of carrying out primary disease management and contact tracing.

Contact tracings were launched as per the patient's itinerary. It included people he associated with at all the points and stops along the way, starting from Paro airport to Thimphu, to Punakha and back. It included tea stops at Druk Wangyal Café, and lunch at Punakha High School park.

The close contacts were his partner, the driver and the guide. While all three are asymptomatic for now, they have been quarantined at the designated COVID-19 hospital.

The eight Indian passengers have also been quarantined. The government is closely working with the Indian Embassy.

Health ministry has asked the four crew members of the particular flight, and the hotel staff at both Le Meridien and Densa Boutique Resort to "home quarantine". Which means they should stay home and maintain distance from people, including



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family members. Until all suspicions are ruled out, health officials will closely monitor and provide all services at respective homes.

Response Plan

As per the National Preparedness and Response Plan, with the detection of first confirmed case of COVID-19, the country stepped into “Orange” zone. The zone is defined as having one or more isolated confirmed cases without secondary transmission.

It is described as “moderate disruption”, according to which the government has to isolate confirmed cases, quarantine suspects, carry out closure of schools, institutions and public gatherings in the affected localities.

Schools and institutes closure in three Dzongkhags

Conforming with the response plan, the government announces closure of schools and institutes in Thimphu, Paro and Punakha for two weeks with effect from March 6.

The duration is specified in keeping with the health advisory, which states that people who would have contracted infection from the primary source would develop full-blown infection by then.

Parents are advised to closely monitor the health of the child. Should there be any concern, parents are asked to contact health officials.

Temporary restriction of tourist

The government will impose two weeks restriction on all incoming tourists with immediate effect. This is to enable rigorous monitoring, source assessment of



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infection and mitigate the situation. In addition, all international conferences and seminars to be held in the country in the two weeks are also postponed.

The government will assess the situation after two weeks and accordingly decide on the restrictions.

Advice to public

The Ministry of Health will provide regular updates on the situation. People are advised to maintain good personal hygiene, avoid gatherings, comply with quarantine and other control measures.

Prime Minister will also be on Bhutan Broadcasting Service today to update the people on the situation.

Contact details of health officials

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1	Dr Chencho Dorji	17296890
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3	Dr Kesang Dorji	77232566
4	Dr Dorji Tshering	17517821
5	Dr Phub Tshering	17280808
6	Dr Tandin Zangpo	17828860
7	Dr Ugyen Wangdi	17733500
8	Dr Tshokey	17589485
9	Dr Thinley Pelzang	77391619
10	Dr Pelden Wangchuk	17827843