Bhutan confirms first coronavirus case, bans tourist entry for 2 weeks

THIMPHU/NEW DELHI (REUTERS, AFP) - Bhutan said on Friday (March 6) that it had banned the entry of tourists for two weeks after it confirmed its first case of the coronavirus in a tourist who arrived from neighbouring India.

The tiny Himalayan kingdom, which is heavily reliant on high-end tourism for foreign exchange, said a 79-year-old American who entered by air from India on March 2 had tested positive for the virus.

He was admitted to hospital on Thursday with a fever, where he tested positive for Covid-19, the office of Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said in a Facebook post.

The health ministry said the patient had been put in quarantine in the hospital in the capital Thimpu.
“The government will impose two weeks restriction on all incoming tourists with immediate effect,” the ministry said in a statement. “This is to enable rigorous monitoring, source assessment of infection and mitigate the situation.”

Health officials say they have traced roughly 90 people whom the tourist came into contact with in Bhutan, with his 59-year-old partner, driver and guide all being placed in quarantine. None is currently showing symptoms.

Eight Indian nationals who were on the same flight to Bhutan have also been quarantined.

The government also announced the closure of several schools and the postponement of international conferences and seminars for two weeks. Schools in three areas - including Thimphu - will be closed for two weeks from Friday.

India’s total number of confirmed cases rose to 31, after a person from New Delhi with a history of travel from Thailand and Malaysia tested positive, its health ministry said.

The coronavirus, which can cause respiratory illness that can lead to pneumonia, is believed to have emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Globally, there have been more than 98,000 cases and more than 3,300 deaths, according to a Reuters tally. Most of the cases and deaths have been in China but the virus is now spreading in numerous countries.

RELATED STORIES:

Costa Fortuna ship passengers with travel history to northern Italy and symptoms to be taken to hospital

10 new Covid-19 cases; short-term visitors must now pay for treatment

Covid-19 likely to last till end-2020 at least: Experts
Bhutan confirms first coronavirus case, bans tourist entry for 2 weeks, South Asia News & Top Stories - The Straits Times

Have a question on the coronavirus outbreak? E-mail us at askst@sph.com.sg

To get alerts and updates, follow us on Telegram.