

S. Korea reports fourth death from MERS outbreak

4 June 2015

South Korea Friday reported its fourth death from an outbreak of the MERS virus that has infected dozens of people, seen hundreds of schools closed and caused thousands to cancel travel plans.

The health ministry had also confirmed five new cases, Yonhap news agency reported, bringing the total number of people diagnosed with the potentially deadly [virus](#) in South Korea to 41, the largest outbreak outside Saudi Arabia.

The latest fatality was a 76-year-old patient who died Thursday after testing positive for the virus on May 21, Yonhap said.

That case comes shortly after the country's third MERS death was confirmed Thursday, that of an 82-year-old man who was diagnosed after he died in hospital on Wednesday night.

He was originally being treated for asthma and pneumonia but was placed under quarantine after other patients in his ward tested positive for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

More than 900 schools, from kindergartens to colleges, have now shut their gates and the government's MERS hotline took more than 3,000 calls on Wednesday as public fears have grown.

Before Thursday only two people—a 58-year-old woman and a 71-year-old man—had died in South Korea from the disease, which has no cure or vaccine.

The first case, reported on May 20, was of a 68-year-old man diagnosed after a trip to Saudi Arabia.

Since then, more than 1,660 people who may have been exposed to the virus have been placed under varying levels of quarantine.

While around 160 were isolated at state-designated facilities, most were told to stay home and strictly limit their interactions with other people.

MERS has now infected more than 1,100 people globally, with 437 deaths. More than 20 countries have been affected, with most cases in Saudi Arabia.

The virus is considered a deadlier but less infectious cousin of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed hundreds of people when it appeared in Asia in 2003.

The World Health Organization said it expected more infections in South Korea, but stressed that there was "no evidence of sustained transmission in the community".

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