Seychelles confirms first cases of coronavirus

15 March 2020

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The Seychelles has confirmed its first two cases of coronavirus, which has now hit 25 countries in Africa, largely spared by the pandemic until recently.

Public Health Commissioner Jude Gedeon announced late on Saturday that two citizens returning from Italy on March 11 had tested positive for the virus.

"As we learnt these two people had been in contact with a sick person, we decided to do the tests this morning and the results were positive," he said.

"We have now put in place the process to trace all people who were in contact with the patients, but as they are in an early stage the risk of spreading is weak."

The virus has rapidly spread across African countries in recent days with Rwanda, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Mauritania all announcing their first cases on Saturday.

East African hubs Ethiopia and Kenya have also recorded infections.

In the island nation of the Seychelles, normally empty supermarkets were besieged with panicked shoppers on Sunday. Nairobi has also seen panic-buying.

The Seychelles—a popular tourist destination—has blocked cruise ships and travellers coming from South Korea, Iran, China and Italy.

Rwanda has shut schools and churches for two weeks and banned concerts and large gatherings. Kenya has suspended international conferences and banned major public gatherings.

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