

WHO concerned by rapid escalation of coronavirus infections



Geneva, April 2 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed deep concern about the “rapid escalation” of the new coronavirus pandemic, as the number of infections nears one million across the globe.

“I’m deeply concerned about the rapid escalation and global spread of infection. In the past five weeks, there has been a near-exponential growth in the number of new cases, and the number of deaths has more than doubled in the past week,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference at the organization’s Geneva headquarters on Wednesday. “In the next few days, we will reach one million confirmed cases and 50,000 deaths worldwide,” he said.

The WHO chief urged people around the globe to stand together to fight COVID-19, which has killed 47,249 people worldwide and infected a total of 936,170 others in almost all countries and regions in the world since it first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan last December, according to worldometers.info.

Tedros also announced that his agency, along with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), backed debt relief to help developing countries cope with the social and economic consequences of the deadly virus outbreak.

The United Nations voiced similar concerns a day earlier, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres describing the coronavirus outbreak as the worst global crisis since World War II and warning that it could trigger conflicts around the world. Guterres added that the contagion was not only a threat to people across the world but also to the global economy.

The Chinese National Health Commission reported new infections on Thursday but said all of them, 35 cases, were arrivals from overseas, taking total infections in the country to more than 81,000. The commission for the first time on Wednesday offered a figure for asymptomatic cases, a total of 1,367 people that have contracted the virus but show no symptoms.

The Chinese National Health Commission also announced that the country had seen a COVID-19 cure rate of 93.5 percent, with more than 76,000 patients having been discharged from hospitals overall. China has so far confirmed 81,554 cases of coronavirus and a death toll of 3,312.

South Korea, where campaigning for this month's parliamentary elections has started, reported 89 new cases on Thursday, taking the national tally to 9,976. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said a total of 5,828 people had recovered from the disease, while 4,148 were still receiving treatment.

South Korean authorities said they would allow coronavirus patients to vote by mail or as an absentee voter in the elections on April 15, when voters are to elect 300 members of the country's National Assembly for the next four years.

In the latest updates released on Wednesday, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain reported the highest numbers of fatalities in a single day since the start of the coronavirus epidemics in the three countries.

The U.S. recorded 884 coronavirus deaths, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University. It also confirmed more than 213,000 cases of the disease.

In the UK, a further 563 people died of COVID-19, and the total death toll rose to 2,357, in what British Prime Minister Boris Johnson described as a "sad, sad day."

In Spain, the second worst-hit country in Europe after Italy, an additional 864 people died, bringing the number of fatalities to 9,387.

Egypt registered a total number of 710 cases while the total death toll from the disease in the country stands at 46. Egyptian authorities have temporarily suspended schools and universities, halted flights, closed entertainment places, stopped mass prayers in mosques and churches, and shut down museums and archeological sites nationwide as part of measures to curb the spread of the virus.

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