

## Virus Outbreak: MAC to suspend the ‘big three links’

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Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung, left, speaks at a news conference in Taipei yesterday as Deputy Minister of the Interior Chen Tsung-yen looks on.

**Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times**

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) yesterday announced that the “big three links” are to be suspended, effective tomorrow, due to the threat of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

The decision came a day after the council announced that the “small three links” are to be suspended, also starting tomorrow.

The “small three links” are the ferry services connecting Penghu, Kinmen and Lienchiang counties with China’s Fujian Province, while the “big three links” refers to direct cross-strait maritime services between Taiwan proper and Chinese cities.

Ocean transportation for the “big three links” includes the Natchan Rera (海峽輪) the Hai Xia Hao (海峽輪) and the Cosco Star (長江輪), the council said.

Suspending links was a preventive measure and their resumption would depend on how the situation evolves, MAC Deputy Minister Lee Li-jane (李麗娟) said.

The number of people using direct cross-strait maritime services last year was 250,000, or 11 percent of all people traveling between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait via ship, the council said, adding that the other 89 percent used the “small three links.”

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The Central Epidemic Command Center said that China's Guangdong Province was also a primary epidemic area, along with Hubei Province's Wuhan, where the virus purportedly originated.

Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), the center's head, told a news conference that quarantine measures would be extended to people who arrive in Taiwan from the two provinces.

People who have visited Hubei or Guangdong within 14 days of arriving in Taiwan would be tested for 2019-nCoV and would only be allowed to leave quarantine after two tests show that they do not have the virus.

People who have visited the secondary epidemic area — other areas in China — would be required to remain under quarantine at home for 14 days, and if they develop a fever or respiratory symptoms, would be tested at a hospital before being allowed to return to home quarantine.

The 17th confirmed case of 2019-nCoV infection was reported in Taiwan yesterday.

Chen said the new case is a man in his 20s — the son of a married couple who on Thursday were confirmed to have the virus.

The man was interviewed after his parents were confirmed to be infected.

He had a cough while he was traveling in Italy on Jan. 27, but the symptoms had diminished, Chen said.

The family was in Italy from Jan. 22 to Friday last week and transited in Hong Kong on their

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way back to Taiwan on Saturday last week, he said. The son was hospitalized on Friday.

Centers for Disease Control Deputy Director-General Chuang Jen-hsiang (莊建人) said it was very likely that the family was infected during a flight.

The son did not have a fever and he reported having worn a mask to work after returning to Taiwan, but his 11 coworkers would be placed in home quarantine, while the local health department would survey the people he had direct contact with after returning, Chuang said.

Sixty-four cases of severe pneumonia with novel pathogens were reported on Friday, bringing the total to 1,399 people with symptoms, including the 17 confirmed to have 2019-nCoV, while 1,258 people who had symptoms have been ruled out as carriers of the virus, the CECC said, adding that the remainder are under quarantine and are being tested.

The first person in Taiwan confirmed to have 2019-nCoV has been discharged from hospital, while the other 16 are in stable condition, the CECC said, adding that as of yesterday, 172 people who have had direct contact with them are being monitored for symptoms.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/02/09](#)