Traditional markets to be controlled

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A police officer standing at the entrance to a traditional market in Taipei yesterday holds a sign urging people to follow disease prevention measures.

Photo: CNA

The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) yesterday announced five crowd control measures for traditional and night markets as it reported 335 locally transmitted COVID-19 infections, eight backlogged cases and 36 deaths.

Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (□□□), who heads the center, said that the 335 new local cases are 189 males and 146 females, adding that they developed symptoms from May 24 to Saturday.

The eight backlogged cases are three men and five women aged 20 to 70. Chen said.

They began experiencing symptoms on Tuesday and Wednesday, he said.

As most of the pending cases due to delayed test results or reporting have been cleared, the center would no longer report backlogged cases, he added.

Of the 343 local infections reported yesterday, 160 live in New Taipei City, followed by Miaoli County with 75, Taipei with 64 and Taoyuan with 16, he said, adding that the high case count in Miaoli is mainly due to cluster infections at electronics companies there.

Yilan County reported nine cases; Kaohsiung, as well as Hsinchu, Changhua and Yunlin counties, reported three new cases each; Keelung, Taichung and Tainan reported two cases each; and Chiayi City reported one new case.

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The dead are 22 men and 14 women, aged 50 to 100, Chen said.

They began experiencing symptoms from May 7 to Tuesday and died from May 27 to Wednesday, he said.

Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs Lin Chuan-neng (□□□) said his ministry has been negotiating with local governments on how to tighten crowd controls at traditional or night markets, adding that they agreed on five measures.

"The first would be expanding crowd controls to include roadside vendors around the markets," he said, adding that business hours and traffic control sections would be clearly designated inside and near the markets.

"We also encourage people to change their shopping habits, prepare a shopping list before heading to the market and finish shopping in less than an hour," Lin said. "Do not stay too long and do not form a crowd."

Entrances and exits would be controlled, and shoppers would be required to provide contact information at entry and exit points, he said, adding that on-site measures would be taken to limit the number of shoppers and ensure social distancing.

Local district or township offices should dispatch more personnel to help implement the measures and conduct inspections at the markets, while local governments would ask police officers to fine illegal street vendors, Lin said.

Chen said that about 70,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine would be distributed to local governments after examinations are completed this week, adding that they would be offered to high-risk healthcare professionals in the first priority group, of which about 30 percent, or about 70,000 people, have not received a vaccine shot.

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A batch of 1.24 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine donated by Japan, which is undergoing examination, would first be offered to frontline workers in the first to third priority groups who are at risk of being directly exposed to the virus, he said.

Priority would next be given to people aged 75 or above and people on dialysis, followed by essential personnel at critical facilities, and in critical industries and national defense, Chen said.

The examination is expected to be completed by Friday and the shots might be ready to be administered on Wednesday next week, he said.

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