

Spain seeks to calm nerves as virus cases jump

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Spain on Wednesday issued assurances that a cluster of new coronavirus infections did not risk a broader spread, after ten cases were detected since Monday evening.

Hundreds of tourists remained confined to a Tenerife hotel Wednesday for a second straight day as a precaution after an Italian man and his wife tested positive for the disease, which has so far killed 12 people in Italy.

The Tenerife couple are in quarantine at a local hospital. Two other Italians, who were part of the same group of holidaymakers that flew to the island and were staying at the hotel, have also tested positive and are in hospital, health authorities on the Canary Islands said.

Five other cases have been detected in mainland Spain in the last 24 hours—one in the Valencia region, two in the Madrid region and another two in Catalonia, including that of a 22-year-old Spanish man who recently returned from Milan and who tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday, local health authorities said.

These were all "controlled situations" which did not increase the risk of the spread of the disease to the "general population", Fernando Simon, director of the Centre of Coordination of Health Emergencies at Spain's Health Ministry, told a news conference.

Health authorities in the southern region of Andalusia announced shortly after that a tenth case of coronavirus had been detected in a 62-year-old man who is in isolation at a Seville hospital.

Spain's Health Minister Salvador Illa late on Tuesday advised people not to travel to northern Italy and other global hotspots for the disease such as Wuhan in China, South Korea, Japan and Iran "unless it is essential".

All four Italians with coronavirus in Tenerife are in "good condition", the health minister with the regional government of the Canary Islands, Teresa Cruz, told a separate news conference.

All 723 guests at the hotel in Tenerife have been screened and those showing symptoms of coronavirus have been ordered to remain in their rooms while the rest can move around freely but cannot leave the hotel grounds, she added.

He also said all patients in Spanish hospitals with respiratory illnesses of "unknown causes" would undergo tests to see if they had coronavirus.

Spain welcomed 4.5 million visitors from Italy last year.

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