

ADVISORY FOR THE FILIPINO COMMUNITIES IN THE MIDDLE EASTON MERS-COV

19 April 2014, Manila - The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Department of Health (DOH) of the Philippines are advising Filipinos staying and residing in the Middle East, especially in the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to take the following precautionary measures against the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome – Corona Virus (MERS-CoV). Currently the World Health Organization has not declared any outbreak or epidemic of MERS CoV in the Middle East. There are no travel restrictions to and from the Arabian Peninsula. Despite these, we are encouraging Filipinos in the Middle East to practice the precautions below for their own protection.

1. Practice proper hand hygiene always, by washing your hands with soap or hand rubs with alcohol before and after eating; before and after handling, cooking and preparing food; after coughing, sneezing and using the toilets; and before and after touching animals.
2. Practice proper cough etiquette by covering your mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing. Use a facial tissue when coughing or sneezing and cover your mouth and nose with it. Dispose the tissue in a waste basket.
3. Avoid contact with farm and domesticated animals, including camels.
4. Avoid contact with sick or infected with MERS CoV. If you have respiratory illness stay home and wear a surgical mask to protect your family members
5. If you are a health worker, strictly follow infection control protocols in your work.
6. Visit your doctor, a hospital or health facility immediately if symptoms of MERS-CoV manifest itself, including, persistent coughing, and other .
7. if you were in close contact with a confirmed MERS CoV patient, comply with local health regulations and postpone any trip abroad until after test results are negative.
8. Practice healthy habits such as regular exercise, balanced and nutritional diet, and adequate sleep of at least 8 hours, as it would help strengthen the body's immunity.

The DFA and DOH also advised Filipinos in the Middle East not to panic and be taken in by false claims and rumours. One rumour alleges that "UAE health authorities" have warned people to stay away for 72 hours from places such as malls, beaches, hospitals, parks and other

8/01

locations that are believed to be "hotspots for the new killing virus." The Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD) subsequently denied issuing this statement.

To date, the World health Organization (WHO) has recorded 243 confirmed cases of MERS-CoV worldwide, including 93 deaths since March, 2012.

There is no vaccine for the virus, and its source is not yet known, although camels and bats have been pointed as possible sources. END

Approved for release by:



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