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Efforts to contain MERS

> 41 in contact with infected man under home isolation

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PUTRAJAYA: Forty-one people believed to be in direct contact with the 55-year-old who was infected with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) recently have been placed under home isolation by the Health Ministry in an effort to contain its possible spread.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, said 70 people comprising family members, relatives, friends, fellow pilgrims during the umrah trip and medical personnel who had handled the patient were initially detected and screened.

"Sixty-one of them were discovered to have no symptoms, while nine presented light symptoms such as fever, and have since been admitted to the isolation ward.

"Results for the nine people when tested for MERS-CoV turned out negative, and they have since been discharged," he said at

a press conference yesterday.

The remaining 20 were released immediately after screening.

He said those under home isolation will be held for two weeks from the last day they had contact with the patient.

"They will be visited or contacted by medical personnel from time to time in an effort to monitor their health status."

The MERS-CoV patient, he said, is presently in stable condition at the Sungai Buloh Hospital.

Subsequently, Subramaniam advised pilgrims heading to Saudi Arabi for umrah to not visit camel farms as well as consume camel's milk or meat.

"The problem is that those farm visits are part of the umrah tour package.

"I have spoken to my counterparts during the cabinet meeting on this matter and they have taken it positively," he said.

Subramaniam's response came after the ministry confirmed the return of the disease following investigations and diagnosis on a umrah pilgrim, who returned home on Dec 23 with symptoms and admitted to visiting a camel farm.