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Crew members of the KD 'Lekiu' disembarking from the ship to undergo a health test at the Royal Malaysian Navy base in Lumut on Monday. PIC COURTESY OF DEFENCE MINISTRY

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KD 'LEKIU' CREW IS COVID-19-FREE

164 crew members pass second health screening, allowed to return home to be with families

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THE Health Ministry has given the all clear for the quarantined crew of the Royal Malaysian Navy's (RMN) KD *Lekiu* frigate.

The crew successfully underwent a second health screening for the deadly Covid-19 virus at the RMN base in Lumut, Perak, on Monday.

They went through an initial health screening at the RMN base in Kota Kinabalu upon arrival from South Korea on March 5.

Western Fleet commander Vice-Admiral Datuk Aris Adi Tan Abdullah said the health screening for the Covid-19 virus was carried out professionally by medical staff from the Health Ministry and armed forces.

"RMN is very concerned about the well-being and health of its personnel, especially when undertaking a mission.

"With the health clearance, all the crew are now free to return home to be with their families.

"We thank all concerned, especially the family members, for their patience while the health screening was undertaken as per the outlined procedures."

Six medical officers and 18 paramedics from the armed forces carried out the

health screening, along with three doctors and nine paramedics from the Health Ministry in Lumut.

"They checked the crew's body temperature and took mouth and nose swabs, the samples of which were sent to a public health laboratory in Ipoh, Perak.

"This second test was carried out as a precautionary measure to ensure none of the crew had contracted Covid-19," said an RMN official.

It was reported that all of KD *Lekiu*'s 164 crew members had tested negative for Covid-19 in the first health screening.

The samples were sent to Kota Kinabalu's Queen Elizabeth Hospital for analysis, which took four to 12 hours.

KD *Lekiu* had returned from a 16-day journey to the Samsung Heavy Industries jetty in Geoje-Do, Busan, where it had escorted a Petronas Floating Liquefied Natural Gas 2 tanker.

It had departed Kota Kinabalu on Feb 5 and arrived in Busan on Feb 12.

KD *Lekiu* left Busan on Feb 18 and returned to Kota Kinabalu for refuelling and replenishment of supplies en route to the RMN base in Lumut.

KD *Lekiu* is the second RMN vessel to have its crew screened for Covid-19.

On Jan 30, 57 RMN personnel involved in the construction and training for the second littoral mission ship (LMS) KD *Sundang* were also cleared of the virus.

The 57 include 12 who were the forward batch sent to monitor the construction of the vessel in Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the outbreak, since July 6, 2017.

The second batch of 45 personnel were sent to Qidong, Shanghai, on Nov 5 last year for familiarisation training and to sail KD *Sundang* to its home base in Kota Kinabalu by the middle of April.