

WORLD NEWS FEBRUARY 21, 2020 / 9:50 AM / 3 DAYS AGO

Lebanon confirms first case of coronavirus, two more suspected

2 MIN READ



BEIRUT (Reuters) - Lebanon confirmed its first coronavirus case on Friday and said it was monitoring two other potential cases after a 45-year-old woman who returned from Iran tested positive.

Lebanon's Minister of Health, Hamad Hassan and Iman Shankiti, WHO representative in Lebanon, attend a news conference, after the country's first case of the novel coronavirus was confirmed, in Beirut, Lebanon February 21, 2020. REUTERS/Mohamed Azakir

Health Minister Hamad Hassan told a news conference the patient was taken directly to isolation from a plane arriving from the Iranian city of Qom on Thursday after exhibiting symptoms on the aircraft.

Two more people from the flight were suspected of carrying the virus on Friday and will be transferred to the same Beirut hospital for quarantine, Hassan said.

All other passengers were asked to stay isolated in their homes for 14 days, he said. Hassan told Reuters that the plane had around 150 passengers and that if any showed symptoms later, they would be tested and quarantined.

The plane was a Mahan Air flight that landed around 7.30 p.m. (1730 GMT) on Thursday. There was no decision so far to suspend flights coming from Tehran, a source at Beirut airport said.

The window of opportunity to contain wider worldwide spread of the epidemic of the new coronavirus disease is closing, the World Health Organization warned on Friday.

A coronavirus outbreak in Iran, which has so far seen four people die, began in the Shi'ite Muslim holy city of Qom, authorities in Iran said.

An Iranian health ministry official said the likely source was Chinese workers in Qom who had recently travelled to China, where the epidemic originated.

More than 2,100 people have died in China and new research suggesting the virus is more contagious than previously thought has heightened international alarm over the outbreak.

Hassan said all precautions in line with World Health Organization advice were being taken and offered Lebanese a hotline to call if they experience or witnessed symptoms.

“There is no need for excessive panic at this time...The patient is in a good state,” said Hassan.

Authorities are following up on arrivals to Lebanon from the past 10 days for potential cases, he said.

Reporting by Ellen Francis and Laila Bassam,; Writing by Eric Knecht and Ellen Francis Editing by Mark Heinrich

Our Standards: [*The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.*](#)

[Apps](#) [Newsletters](#) [Advertise with Us](#) [Advertising Guidelines](#) [Cookies](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy](#)



All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See [here](#) for a complete list of exchanges and delays.

© 2020 Reuters. All Rights Reserved.