

**HEALTH, ASIA - PACIFIC, LATEST ON CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

## Fiji reports first case of novel coronavirus

Flight attendant reportedly contracts virus outside country, officials contacting passengers, crew on his flights

Riyaz ul Khaliq | 19.03.2020

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### ANKARA

Fiji authorities on Thursday confirmed the country's first case of the novel coronavirus, local media reported.

The southern Pacific country's Head of Health Protection Dr. Alisha Sahukhan said a flight attendant of flag carrier Fiji Airways tested positive for COVID-19, in an imported case of the disease rather than a local transmission, reported news website "fijivillage".

The patient, who had recently been to the U.S. and New Zealand, showed symptoms on Tuesday evening after which he was admitted into a hospital in Lautoka city, said Sahukhan.

Noting that the patient was in a "stable" condition, Sahukhan added that authorities were contacting passengers and crew on flights he served.

The patient had flown from San Francisco to Nadi, Fiji last Monday and from Nadi to Auckland, New Zealand on Tuesday, returning home on the same day.

Fiji has now banned gatherings of 20 people or more and has closed nightclubs, gyms, movie theaters and swimming pools with immediate effect. Also, recreational contact sports events have been asked to close.

Meanwhile, authorities in Papua New Guinea rushed to confirm that there were no cases of the virus in the island nation.

The country's Health Minister Jelta Wong said a "probable case" had emerged in the Morobe province during the week, the daily Post Courier reported.

Prime Minister James Marape said, however, that the test results of the case returned negative. "We are on high alert," he added.

Since first being detected in Wuhan, China in December, the novel coronavirus has claimed 8,810 lives globally, most in China, according to global data maintained by Johns Hopkins University (JHU).

At least 218,823 cases of the virus have been confirmed in at least 158 countries and territories, with Europe as the new epicenter of the pandemic, according to the World Health Organization.

Despite the rising number of cases, most people who get infected suffer mild symptoms and recover.

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