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Wuhan pneumonia: Thailand confirms first case of virus outside China

Woman, 61, in hospital since last Wednesday and now recovering

World Health Organisation says it is working with Chinese and Thai officials on case

Topic | Coronavirus pandemic



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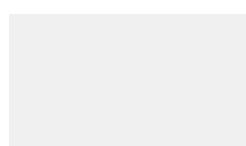
Thai authorities on Monday confirmed the first case outside China of a patient infected with the new virus behind the Wuhan pneumonia outbreak.

The woman, 61, identified as a Chinese tourist from the city in central Hubei province, has been receiving treatment in a hospital in Nonthaburi near Bangkok since January 8, but is now recovering, according to Bloomberg and Thai media outlets.

An expert said if further investigation found she had not been to Huanan Seafood Market, associated with the outbreak in Wuhan, it would suggest that the virus had spread to other parts of the city.

With genetic details, Hong Kong to rush new test for Wuhan virus

22 Jan 2020



The news came as Hong Kong health officials on Monday arrived in Wuhan to gain first-hand knowledge of the disease, now known to be a new strain of coronavirus, which has infected at least 41 people in Wuhan and killed one.

Wuhan outbreak: Thailand confirms first case of virus outside China



Thailand's Ministry of Public Health said in a press statement that the Chinese woman's infection was confirmed on Sunday.

The woman now exhibited "no fever and is ready to return to her country", the statement added.

Calling for calm, Thai public health minister Anutin Charnvirakul said: "We are confident we can control the situation."

Sixteen other people seated near the woman on the same flight were examined and their results were negative.

Wuhan pneumonia: how search for source unfolded

The World Health Organisation on Monday confirmed on their Twitter account that they were aware of the woman's diagnosis and working with Thai and Chinese officials on the case.

In another press statement released later on Monday evening, WHO said there was a possibility that the virus could spread beyond China.

"The possibility of cases being identified in other countries is not unexpected, and reinforces why WHO calls for ongoing active monitoring and preparedness in other countries," the global watchdog said. It has issued guidelines on how to detect and treat patients.

In Thailand's case, the woman was found to be suffering from a fever on arrival at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport on January 8, and was initially diagnosed with mild pneumonia in hospital, according to WHO.

China identifies new coronavirus behind Wuhan pneumonia outbreak



China's health authorities over the weekend revealed the genetic sequence of the virus, found to be nearly 80 per cent similar to that of the deadly severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars). The information was shared with WHO, and has been uploaded onto an online gene bank.

The organisation also called for investigations to continue in China to identify the source of the outbreak, adding that director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus could call for a meeting of the Emergency Committee on short notice.

Wuhan pneumonia ‘bears close similarity to Sars’, analysis finds

Professor David Hui Shu-cheong, a respiratory medicine expert from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said there should be an investigation on whether the woman had visited the Wuhan seafood market first identified as ground zero of the outbreak.

“If she has not, it would be a big problem as it means game meat in other markets in Wuhan could also be infected with the virus, which then spread to people,” Hui said, pointing out that there was no clear evidence so far of transmission among humans.



If she has not [been to the Wuhan seafood market in question], it would be a big problem as it means game meat in other markets could also be infected with the virus
Professor David Hui, CUHK



The development in Thailand came as Hong Kong on Monday reported one more suspected case involving a woman, 38, who fell ill after returning from Wuhan. She was later found to be infected with other virus strains not related to the one in question.

Of a total of 68 suspected cases reported so far in the city, 56 have been cleared and discharged.

Wuhan coronavirus: Asia battens down for Lunar New Year rush

Meanwhile, a group of Hong Kong health officials, including undersecretary for food and health Dr Chui Tak-yi, arrived in Wuhan on Monday for a two-day trip to be briefed by local authorities on control and treatment measures.

Details of the trip were not disclosed to the public.

Mystery illness outbreak in Wuhan, China



Chinese University's Hui said he hoped the team would be able to obtain more information of patients in Wuhan.

"Now we don't know the age range of patients, and the routes of transmission," Hui said. "What are the factors causing severe conditions ... Could they be old age or [several] illnesses?"

"By knowing these, we can predict the outcome [of the disease in general]," he added.

Professor Leo Poon Lit-man from the University of Hong Kong's school of public health, who is familiar with the development of diagnostic tools for infectious diseases, said he expected specific tests for the virus to be ready "in a few days' time".

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