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# Afghanistan confirms first coronavirus case in province bordering Iran

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KABUL/HERAT (Reuters) - Afghanistan confirmed its first case of the coronavirus in the western province of Herat on Monday, declaring a state of emergency in a territory bordering Iran which itself reported a sharp rise in cases.

Dozens of cases of the virus, which originated in the central Chinese province of Hubei in December, have been confirmed in Iran where 12 people have died, the highest death toll outside of China.

"I ask people to try to stay at home and restrict their movements," Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz told reporters, referring to Herat, the gateway to Iran.

Three suspected patients in Herat had recently returned from Iran, Dr Sayed Attaullah Sayedzai, head of the disease surveillance department at ministry of public health, said on Sunday.

The confirmed case was a 35-year-old who had recently returned from the city of Qom, home to the majority of Iran's coronavirus cases, and had now been placed in quarantine, Feroz said.

Afghanistan suspended all air and land movement to and from Iran

over the weekend.

“The thing that makes us worried about coronavirus in Afghanistan is that our people, due to weak economy, are already suffering from different diseases and they have weak immune system,” Feroz said.

Millions of Afghans live in Iran, often coming back and forth by car and bus across the border to see family and seeking works.

On Monday, taxi driver Aziz Ahmad told Reuters he saw more than 100 cars with passengers on the Iranian side of the border blocked from reaching Afghanistan.

“Some passengers said that their visas are expiring and they do not have enough money to stay in Iran,” he said. “They say the Afghan government is responsible for its own nationals and should seek a solution to these problems.”

The coronavirus has infected nearly 77,000 people and killed more than 2,500 in China, mostly in Wuhan, capital of Hubei. Outside mainland China, the outbreak has spread to about 28 countries and territories, with a death toll of around two dozen, according to a Reuters tally.

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