

WHO CALLS FOR VIGILANCE ON WUHAN VIRUS

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The WHO also maintained that the outbreak had not spread and that the seafood market in Wuhan — a major domestic and international transport hub — is now closed and no cases have been reported elsewhere in China or internationally. | Photo Credit: [Reuters](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has cautioned that though there is no evidence currently of human-to-human transmission of the Wuhan pneumonia that has killed one person in China and infected 40 others, there is a “need to remain vigilant.”

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Poonam Khetrapal, regional director, of WHO (South-East Asia) said on Monday, “We have shared technical guidelines on surveillance, testing as well as infection prevention and control practices for suspected cases.”

She added that the world body is in close contact with national authorities in the region and will extend all possible support to ensure core capacities are geared up for addressing potential cases that may come to countries.

Senior Health Ministry officials added that they were keeping a “close watch on the developments but so far the outbreak has been reported in a single seafood market in the central city of Wuhan and has not, so far, spread beyond there. We have been told that the virus is the same family that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).”

The WHO also maintained that the outbreak had not spread and that the seafood market in Wuhan — a major domestic and international transport hub — is now closed and no cases have been reported elsewhere in China or internationally.

“WHO stands ready to provide all possible technical support to countries to ensure core capacities are geared up and have advised against travel or trade restrictions on China based on the information currently available on this event,” added Dr. Khetrapal.

WHO has noted that the Chinese authorities have made a preliminary determination of a novel (or new) coronavirus, identified in a hospitalised person with pneumonia in Wuhan. Chinese investigators conducted gene sequencing of the virus, using an isolate from one positive patient sample.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses and according to Chinese authorities, the virus in question can cause severe illness in some patients but does not transmit readily between people.

“In the coming weeks, more comprehensive information is required to understand the current status and epidemiology of the outbreak, and the clinical picture. Further investigations are also required to determine the source, modes of transmission, extent of infection and countermeasures implemented. WHO continues to monitor the situation closely and, together with its partners, is ready to provide technical support to China to investigate and respond to this outbreak,” the organisation added.

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