

Covid-19 death toll surges to 2,000

By AFP



A medical worker checks on a patient's condition at a hospital in Wuhan on Feb 16.
(AP pic)

BEIJING: The death toll from China's new coronavirus epidemic jumped to 2,000 on Wednesday (February 19, 2020) after 132 more people died in Hubei province, the hard-hit epicentre of the outbreak.

In its daily update, the province's health commission also reported 1,693 new cases of people infected with the virus.

This brings the total number of cases in mainland China past 74,000.

Most of the cases are in Hubei, where the virus first emerged in December before spiralling into a nationwide epidemic.

Wednesday's jump in the death toll was an increase on Tuesday's figures, although the number of new cases reported in Hubei were the lowest for a week.

A study released by Chinese officials claimed most patients have mild cases of the illness.

Outside of hardest-hit Hubei, which has been effectively locked down to try to contain the virus, the number of new cases has been slowing and China's national health authority has said this is a sign the outbreak is under control.

President Xi Jinping, in a phone call with the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said China's measures were achieving "visible progress", according to state media Tuesday.

However, the World Health Organisation has cautioned that it was too early to tell if the decline would continue.

On Tuesday (February 18, 2020) the director of a hospital in the central Hubei city of Wuhan became the seventh medical worker to succumb to the Covid-19 illness. – AFP, Beijing, February 19, 2020