

There're more new virus cases outside of China than in, says WHO



Workers in protective suits spray disinfectant at an indoor gymnasium in Seoul on Feb 25. (AP pic)

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said Monday (March 2, 2020) that the number of new coronavirus cases registered in the past day in China was far lower than in the rest of the world.

“In the last 24 hours, there were almost nine times more Covid-19 cases reported outside China than inside China,” World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva.

To date, more than 3,000 people have died from the new virus, while nearly 90,000 have been infected around the world, according to AFP’s latest toll based on official sources.

In China, where the deadly new virus first appeared last December 2019, the number of new cases being registered each day is continuing to decline, with only 206 new cases reported to WHO on Sunday, (March 1, 2020).

That marks the lowest number of daily cases reported since Jan 22, 2020 Tedros said, adding that all but eight of those cases were reported in Hubei province – the epicentre of the outbreak.

Outside of China, however, 8,739 cases have now been registered across 61 countries, including 127 deaths, according to WHO’s latest count.

Tedros said a “window of opportunity” remains to contain the outbreak, noting that “more than 130 countries have not detected any cases yet”.

In the countries that are seeing cases, he said the situations in South Korea, Iran, Italy and Japan are currently “our greatest concern”.

Iran reported 12 more deaths on Monday (March 2, 2020), raising the country’s toll to 66, the second biggest after China.

A WHO mission to support the Iranian response to the outbreak arrived in the country on Monday, bringing with it “protective equipment to support over 15,000 health care workers”.

The team also brought “laboratory kits enough to test and diagnose nearly 100,000 people,” WHO said.

South Korea, the biggest nest of infections outside China, reported nearly 500 new cases on Monday, raising its total past 4,000.

Half of South Korea’s cases are linked to a sect whose leader apologised Monday for the spread of the disease.

Tedros said he was encouraged to see that most of the South Korean cases were linked to “five known clusters”, indicating “that surveillance measures are working.” –AFP, Geneva, March 3, 2020