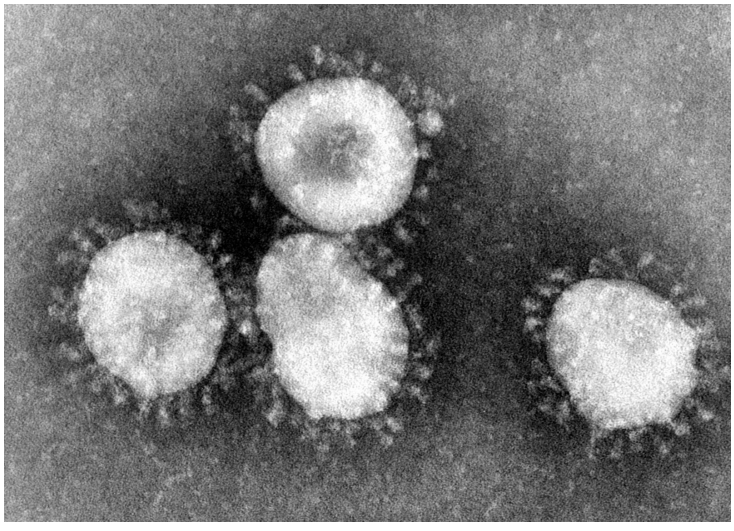
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Readiness is key to detect, combat spread of new coronavirus: WHO

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WHO is working with countries in the Region to roll out the guidelines



The World Health Organization South-East Asia has urged countries in the Region to remain vigilant and strengthen readiness to rapidly detect any case of importation of the new coronavirus and prevent its spread.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region said, “It is time to focus all efforts on readiness guided by whatever is known about the new coronavirus.”

As in the case of any new virus, much remains to be understood, the Regional Director said, adding that globally WHO has prepared interim guidance on case detection, testing, clinical management of cases, infection prevention and control during health care, home care for people suspected to have the virus, and guidance on reducing transmission.

WHO is working with countries in the Region to roll out these guidelines, prioritizing reviewing and building capacities for laboratory diagnostic, including referral of specimens and diagnosis; trainings in case management, specimen collection and transportation, and infection prevention and control; logistics support and communicating risks and promoting desired behavior in the community.

The Regional Director has been in contact with the Ministers of Health since the onset of the outbreak. Last week Dr Khetrapal Singh also took stock of the preparedness and support being extended by WHO to countries.

Two countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region – Thailand and Nepal - have reported confirmed cases of the new coronavirus.

Globally, WHO continues to work with networks of researchers and other experts to coordinate global work on surveillance, epidemiology, modelling, diagnostics, clinical care and treatment, and other ways to identify, manage the disease and limit onward transmission.

Dr Khetrapal Singh said, emphasizing that “We should continue to be vigilant and ready to contain and prevent any further spread.”

Though the new coronavirus being called novel coronavirus-2019 was not declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) by the Emergency Committee of the International Health Regulation which met last week, its risk was assessed to be ‘high’.