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New China Coronavirus Poses 'Biological Threat' to Russia – Official

By Reuters

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Russian airports have introduced measures to identify infected passengers. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian airports have stepped up screening of travelers arriving from China to try to identify people infected with the new coronavirus, airport officials said Tuesday.

The World Health Organization has said that the coronavirus outbreak, which the mayor of the Chinese city of Wuhan says has killed six people, was likely to spread. The virus poses a threat to Russia's biological security, Deputy Health Minister Sergei Kraevoi was cited as saying by the state-run RIA news agency.

In Russia, at least four airports — Sheremetyevo and Vnukovo in Moscow, as well as airports in Yekaterinburg and Irkutsk — have introduced screening measures to try to identify infected passengers, Russian airport officials said.

Russia's consumer health regulator, Rospotrebnadzor, advised Russian tourists who planned to go to China to refrain from visiting Wuhan and to steer clear of zoos and of markets selling animals and seafood.

The regulator said it could not rule out the possibility of the infection spreading to Russia, but evaluated the risk of a widespread outbreak in Russia as low, Interfax reported.

It was also cited as saying that a testing system to diagnose the new coronavirus had been developed in Russia and that laboratories would start receiving it by the end of the week.

Regional authorities have already been briefed on measures they need to take to reduce the risks of an epidemic.

More than 1.5 million Chinese citizens visit Russia each year, according to Rospotrebnadzor.

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