The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Mutating Coronavirus Discovered in Siberia

November 17, 2020



Viruses such as the new coronavirus that emerged in China late last year mutate constantly. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

A mutated version of the coronavirus strain that causes Covid-19 has been discovered in Siberia, the head of Russia's consumer safety watchdog said Tuesday.

"We're seeing certain changes in the proteins, and these changes detected in Siberia allow us to assume that this region is forming its own version [of coronavirus] with certain mutations," Rospotrebnadzor head Anna Popova said at a scientific symposium, according to Interfax.

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Popova spoke as the coronavirus outbreak continued its shift from the epicenter of Moscow to Russia's regions, which are seeing around three-quarters of new infections and deaths during the country's record-setting second wave. Several of these regions have reported overflowing

morgues and severe hospital bed and staff shortages in recent weeks.

The state-run TASS news agency quoted Popova as saying that none of the mutations discovered in Russia so far have been shown to make the virus more contagious or dangerous.

Popova noted that foreign and domestic coronavirus genome analysis has shown "massively imported strains of the virus from Western Europe" but none from China.

"There are no strains circulating in Russia that would have been brought from China earlier this year," Popova added.

Viruses such as the one that emerged in China late last year mutate constantly and new variants are not necessarily worse than the previous ones.

So far, no study has shown newer variants of SARS-Cov-2, the strain that causes Covid-19, to be more contagious or dangerous than their predecessors.

AFP contributed reporting.

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