

Death toll rises in China as flu-like virus spreads



Beijing, January 22 (RHC)-- The death toll for a flu-like virus that hit China's Hubei province has risen to 17, Chinese state television stated on Wednesday, citing a report from the provincial government.

According to Chinese state television, the provincial government in Hubei has confirmed that the total cases of the coronavirus has risen to 444. The virus itself first emerged on Tuesday at 8 P.M. local time, as it hit the provincial capital, Wuhan.

The provincial government of Hubei has quarantined the affected areas, but cases of the coronavirus are now showing up in different parts of the world. Officials believe the origin to be a market where wildlife is traded illegally.

"The rise in the mobility of the public has objectively increased the risk of the epidemic spreading," National Health Commission vice-minister Li Bin acknowledged. In response to the virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) began an emergency meeting to rule if the outbreak was a global health emergency.

Amid official exhortations to stay calm, many Chinese were cancelling trips, buying face masks, avoiding public places like cinemas and shopping centers, and even turning to an online plague simulation game or watching disaster movie "The Flu" as a way to cope. "The best way to conquer fear is to confront fear,"

said one commentator on China's Twitter-like Weibo.

The virus has spread from Wuhan around China to major population centers including Beijing, Shanghai, Macau and Hong Kong, with 473 cases confirmed in the country. Abroad, Thailand has confirmed four cases, while the United States, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan have each reported one.

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