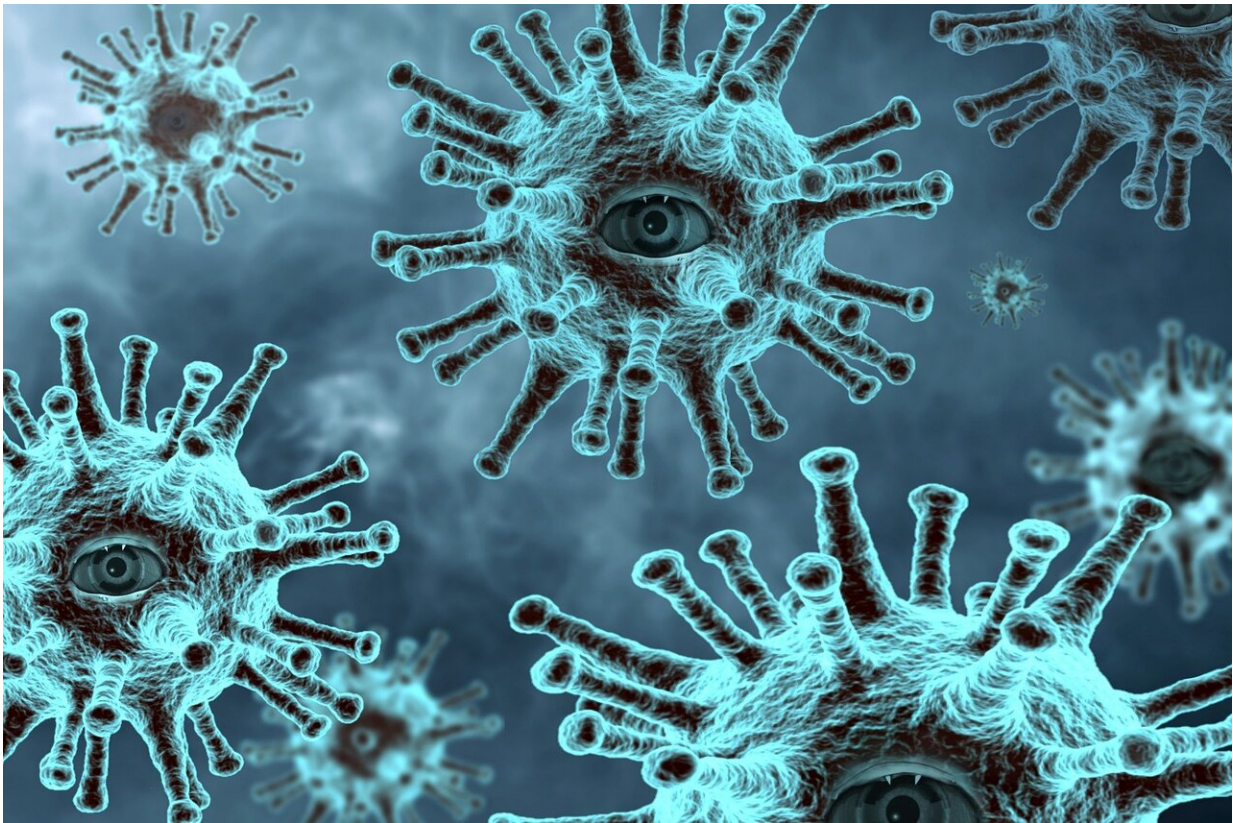


China COVID surge not expected to 'significantly impact' Europe: WHO

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The World Health Organization said on Tuesday it did not expect a surge of COVID-19 cases in China to "significantly impact" the situation in Europe.

"The ongoing surge in China is not anticipated to significantly impact the COVID-19 epidemiological situation in the WHO European Region at this time," Hans Kluge, WHO's Europe director, told a press conference.

But, he stressed, "we cannot be complacent".

China's hospitals have been overwhelmed by an explosion in cases since Beijing began unwinding hardline controls that had torpedoed the economy and sparked nationwide protests.

The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries and includes Russia and countries in Central Asia.

The regional director also said it was "not unreasonable for countries to take precautionary measures to protect their populations" but called for such measures "to be rooted in science, to be proportionate and non-discriminatory".

More than a dozen countries have slapped fresh travel regulations on travelers from China.

A group of European Union experts last week "strongly encouraged" the bloc's 27 member states to demand COVID tests from people on flights from China and conduct random tests on arrivals.

Kluge also urged countries to step up surveillance efforts such as sequencing variants, noting that many had "greatly reduced" their capacities.

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