

Wuhan Expats Fed Up with Foreign Media Hype

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Expats living in Wuhan are enraged by foreign media coverage of the 19-nCoV outbreak. Better placed and likely more informed than any journalist in a faraway land, most are full of praise for the authorities' handling of the situation.

Media the world over are publishing stories about the virus' outbreak in Wuhan, much of them blaming the authorities in any way they can. They report containment of the virus to be the toughest challenge ever faced by the Chinese government.

Last week, they would not have been able to tell you that Wuhan is a city, let alone in which country it is.

The expats in Wuhan are taking an altogether different view. In a word, they are more pragmatic.

In the Facebook group, [Wuhan Expats](#), Chris Carr said:

“Wuhan has 11 million people, which is around three times my country's population. Odds of being involved in a road accident in Asia have always been much higher”.

Many of the group's members believe the authorities have been doing all they can. Afzaal Ahmed said,

“One of my friend had fever he was afraid of getting virus; the blood tests were done without any cost and he was free to go because the reports were negative.

“Even free masks were available in hospital. They were checking temperature in subway and in some streets to make sure that this should be controlled and in my university we were provided free food like bread, milk packs and water.”

Western Media Seek Out Foreigners in Wuhan

Many journalists have been posting in the group looking for people to comment. One from the UK's Evening Standard got just that. It read, “How about doing articles on road accidents in Asia and ensuring the entire Asian media see them?”

Daniel Pekárek sized up the opinion of many a Wuhan expat today.

“Seeing the reactions from outside world, especially in western media, racist, political comments and so on is so disgusting, people should stop this.”

Other requests from journalists have come from Australia, Italy, France, Canada, Ireland and the Philippines. Carr also asked whether there is any way to ban journalists from the group.

In further efforts to attract readers, much foreign media has been drawing comparisons between this outbreak and that of SARS.

Back in 2002 when the SARS virus hit, there was virtually no Internet in China. People relied on traditional media for their news, which was often slow, cumbersome and inaccurate.

Today, all media is online and there is also WeChat, Weibo and Douyin. Plus lots more. While censorship by the authorities is a reality, these platforms mostly comprise User Generated Content, meaning Chinese people are more informed and able to make up their own minds.

As to the Chinese media itself, with the government as owner, so there is less competition between publications for readers. It all adds up to more responsible reporting all round. At times like this, that's something of which we would all like to see a little more. One thing is for sure; sensationalism doesn't help.

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Featured image: A sanitation worker disinfects a rubbish bin in quarantined Wuhan. (Source: via Facebook courtesy of Afzaal Ahmed)

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