

# China shuts down: The measures taken to curb a virus

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China has enacted extraordinary measures to contain the spread of a new coronavirus that has killed more than 130 people, infected thousands and reached some 15 countries.

Here is a rundown of the steps taken so far in an unprecedented effort:

## **Millions under lockdown**

More than 56 million people are subject to travel curbs in Hubei province, where the virus was first detected.

Public transport has been stopped in 18 cities there, with train stations shut, events cancelled and theatres, libraries and karaoke bars closed in some locations.

The epicentre of the outbreak is provincial capital Wuhan, the biggest city on lockdown, where the government has halted all travel out of the Yangtze River metropolis of 11 million.

Wuhan residents have been urged to stay home and authorities have restricted car traffic in the city centre.

Similar quarantine measures are being taken in nearby cities, with strict controls on weddings and funerals, temperature screenings for new arrivals, and the suspension of online taxi services.

The United States and Japan airlifted out some of their trapped nationals on Wednesday. Europeans plan a similar operation this week.

## **Travel restrictions**

Beijing, Shanghai and other megacities have suspended the entry and departure of long-distance bus services.

At least 2,000 inter-province train services have been cancelled since Friday—most until February 8-9 but some for weeks.

State broadcaster CCTV reported that 3.3 million railway trips were expected to be made on Wednesday, down more than 70 percent year-on-year.

Chinese authorities have also asked citizens to delay international travel to stop the virus from spreading elsewhere overseas.

Authorities had already suspended both domestic and overseas Chinese group tours over the weekend.

Tourists from Hubei in Haikou, capital of the island province of Hainan, were told by the city government they had to spend 14 days in a hotel for centralised medical observation, and were forbidden to leave.

## **Holidays extended**

Hundreds of millions of people criss-crossed the country last week for family reunions for the Lunar New Year holiday, in what is typically a joyous time of gatherings and public celebration.

Instead, public health officials asked China's 1.4 billion citizens to confine themselves at home until all is clear.

Schools and universities across the country were ordered not to reopen until further notice on Tuesday, a day after the holiday break was extended to try and reduce the spread of the virus.

Wuhan and Beijing had earlier cancelled public events that usually attract hundreds of thousands of people to temples during the New Year holiday.

## **Attractions closed**

Beijing's Forbidden City, a sprawling imperial palace, was closed from Saturday.

Other famous landmarks including a section of the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs and Yinshan Pagoda also shut. Tibet's Potala Palace was shut down on Monday.

Disneyland amusement parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong have closed down indefinitely.

Women's Olympics football qualifiers scheduled for next week in Wuhan have been moved out of the country and will now be held in Sydney.

China's film box-office earnings for Lunar New Year's Eve on Friday were just one-tenth of last year as people shunned crowds.

US coffee chain Starbucks said it had shut all its stores in Hubei during the holiday break and more than half of its stores around the country.

## **Travel screenings**

China has ordered sterilisation and ventilation at airports and bus stations, as well as inside planes and trains, while travellers are being screened for fever.

Temperature screening checkpoints have been set up in hundreds of Chinese railway stations, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Authorities have asked people to wash their hands regularly, avoid crowded places, get plenty of fresh air and wear protective face masks.

City authorities in Wuhan have gone further and made it mandatory to wear masks in public places. A similar order was issued in southern Guangdong province, which has 110 million people.

With people rushing to get masks at pharmacies and on popular websites, China's industry and information technology ministry vowed to increase supply.

## Two new hospitals

Authorities in Wuhan are rushing to build two field hospitals by next week to ease pressure on medical facilities in the city that are struggling to handle a growing caseload.

The first facility is expected to be operational by next Monday and will have a capacity of 1,000 beds spread over 25,000 square metres, according to state media.

The second is slated to open two days later. State media announced Wednesday that it would hold 1,600 beds, 300 more than earlier indicated.

The two new hospitals will be similar in size to the temporary facility built to tackle SARS in Beijing in 2003, when 650 people died from the disease in the mainland and Hong Kong.

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