

South Korea sees more virus patients recover than new infections

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South Korea—once grappling with the largest coronavirus outbreak outside China—saw its newly recovered patients exceed fresh infections for the first time on Friday, as it reported the lowest number of new cases for three weeks.

The country confirmed 110 new infections, the Korea Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said, taking its total to date to 7,979.

But 177 fully recovered patients were released on Thursday, it added.

South Korea has an advanced medical system widely available to all, and has embarked on a huge coronavirus testing drive.

Its stock market was caught up Friday in global economic concerns over the pandemic, with trading briefly halted on the Korea stock exchange for six minutes after the opening when the benchmark KOSPI index fell to 1707.90, down 6.8 percent or 126.43 points.

It was the second consecutive day that trading had been halted on the main bourse and the first time since 2011.

To curb speculative trading, Seoul's Financial Services Commission announced a six-month ban on short-selling of shares on the KOSPI and KOSDAQ.

President Moon Jae-in called for "unprecedented measures" to help the world's 12th-largest economy cope with the outbreak, describing it as "an emergency economic situation".

The number of new cases in Daegu, the southern city at the centre of the country's virus spread, had declined "dramatically" along with those in neighbouring North Gyeongsang province, officials said.

So far, nearly 90 percent of South Korea's cases have been in the two regions.

But Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun, who is leading the response in Daegu, warned that the government "should not be complacent even a

bit".

"The battle against the [coronavirus](#) has now become a global fight going far beyond Daegu," he said.

Each morning the government announces how many cases were diagnosed the previous day, and recent figures have been well below the 500-600 increases the country was confirming in early March, raising hopes the outbreak is being brought under control.

The 110 new cases announced Friday by the KCDC was the lowest figure since February 21. One more person had died, it said, bringing the death toll to 67.

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