

Beijing bars more foreign arrivals for fear of virus resurgence

November 5 2020



While China's coronavirus is largely under control, Beijing is worried rising infections elsewhere in the world could return

China on Thursday defended a ban on non-Chinese arrivals from a growing list of countries as "reasonable and fair" as it guards against a

resurgence of the coronavirus.

COVID-19 first emerged in central China late last year, but Beijing has largely brought its outbreak under control through tight travel restrictions and stringent health measures for anyone entering the country.

In March, as the virus ripped across the world, China shut its borders to all foreign nationals.

It gradually eased restrictions to allow those stranded overseas to return with special permission from its embassies, negative COVID-19 tests and a two-week quarantine on arrival.

But in a sharp reversal, as the outbreak once more billows out across Europe, the Chinese embassy in the UK on Wednesday said Beijing had decided to "temporarily suspend" entry from Britain by non-Chinese nationals.

Embassies in Belgium, the Philippines, India, Ukraine and Bangladesh have since put out similar notices.

The Chinese foreign ministry said Thursday it was a "reasonable and fair" measure to tackle the pandemic.

"China is drawing on the practices of many countries and adjusting its handling of the entry of the relevant people into China based on the changing pandemic situation," said ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

Britain—one of the world's hardest-hit countries with nearly 48,000 deaths linked to the virus and more than one million cases—has entered a new nationwide lockdown to curb the contagion's spread.

Belgium, meanwhile, which has the most COVID-19 cases per capita in

the world, has been in lockdown since last week, while large parts of the Philippines went back into lockdown in October.

India passed eight million cases last week, second only to the United States, while Ukraine and Bangladesh have also been sources of imported cases in China in recent months.

Beijing has recently tightened requirements for travellers from several other countries, making entry much more difficult.

They include the presentation of a health certificate from the local Chinese embassy showing the results of a nucleic acid test and an antibody test—within 48 hours of travel.

The new rules apply to travellers from countries including France, Singapore, Canada, Germany, Pakistan, South Africa and the US.

The strict two-test entry requirement and short time frame have sparked complaints.

The European Chamber of Commerce in China said the measures were "a de facto ban on anyone trying to get back to their lives, work and families in China".

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