

China's Xi Vows to Defeat 'Devil' Coronavirus Outbreak as Death Toll Soars



Tedros Adhanom, director-general of the World Health Organization, left, meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Jan. 28, 2020.

Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed the country will conquer the fight against a "devil" coronavirus outbreak that has killed 106 people and sickened thousands in China and around the globe.

President Xi made the vow during his meeting Tuesday in Beijing with Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organization, according to state-run news outlets. Xi was quoted telling Ghebreyesus "we cannot let this devil hide."

Chinese health authorities earlier announced an additional 25 deaths on Tuesday, including the first fatality reported in the capital city. The total number of confirmed cases in China now stands at well over 4,500.

Authorities have imposed a virtual quarantine on the central city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the virus, banning people from traveling in and out of the city. Several other cities in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, are facing heavy restrictions on movement. Wuhan is racing to complete two new field hospitals to treat the growing number of patients.

Japan and the United States are among several countries that are planning or are considering evacuating its citizens from Wuhan. Japan is sending a chartered jet to Wuhan Tuesday to evacuate about 200 of the 650 Japanese nationals in the city. The United States is preparing to fly staff from its consulate in Wuhan, along with some American citizens, sometime this week. France, Russia and other nations also have announced plans to evacuate their citizens out of Wuhan.



Two Chinese nationals wearing masks leave the infectious diseases hospital in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Jan. 28, 2020.

Germany and Sri Lanka reported their first cases of the virus Monday, joining Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, Nepal, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam. The World Health Organization says most of those are people who had a travel history in Wuhan, with several others having contact with someone who traveled there.

There have been no reported deaths linked to the virus outside of China.

U.S. President Donald Trump has offered China any help needed to combat the deadly coronavirus. In a Monday tweet, Trump said, "We are in very close communication with China concerning the virus," adding, "We have offered China and President Xi (Jinping) any help that is necessary. Our experts are extraordinary!"



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang wearing a mask and protective suit speaks to medical workers as he visits the Jinyintan hospital where the patients of the new coronavirus are being treated in Wuhan, Hubei province, Jan. 27, 2020.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited the city of Wuhan on Monday to meet with health officials and examine the response to the outbreak.

Separately, in an effort to stop the virus from spreading, Mongolia closed its vast border with China, while Hong Kong and Malaysia announced they would ban entry to visitors from Wuhan. Hong Kong also announced Tuesday that it was suspending all high-speed rail and ferry services from the mainland beginning Friday.

Global stock markets plunged Monday as investors feared the economic impact from the coronavirus.

The virus hit China just as it was beginning celebrations to mark the Lunar New Year, resulting in the canceling or the scaling back of festivities for tens of

millions of Chinese. Chinese officials took an extra step Sunday to extend the Lunar New Year holiday three extra days to cut down on group gatherings.

Chinese National Health Commission Minister Ma Xiaowei said Sunday little is known about the virus. But doctors do know it has an incubation period that can range from one to 14 days. Ma said the virus is infectious during the incubation period, when no signs or symptoms of the disease are present.



The Wuhan Huanan Wholesale Seafood Market, where a number of people fell ill with a virus, sits closed in Wuhan, China, Jan. 21, 2020.

The virus is believed to have emerged late last year at a Wuhan seafood market illegally selling wildlife. Chinese authorities have imposed a temporary ban on the selling of wildlife.

Tourist destinations are closed and school closings have been extended in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. Public transportation has been severely restricted. Many businesses have closed or asked employees to work from home.

The WHO recommends several steps to help protect people against acute respiratory infections. They include avoiding close contact with those already infected, frequent hand-washing and avoiding unprotected contact with farm animals and wild animals.

VOA's Margaret Besheer contributed to this story.

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