MAINLAND CHINA VIRUS CASES NEARING 67000

Winni Zhou and Kevin Yao, Reuters February 15, 2020 10:44pm Herald/Sun

The total confirmed infections of coronavirus across mainland China is now 66,492 with more than 1500 people dying from the disease. More than 2600 new cases of coronavirus have been confirmed in mainland China. More than 2600 new cases have been confirmed from a coronavirus outbreak in mainland China, after people returning to the capital from holidays were ordered to quarantine themselves for 14 days.

The total of confirmed infections across mainland China was now 66,492 after 2641 new cases were confirmed, as of Friday, the National Health Commission said. The death toll rose by 143 to 1523, it said, with most of the new deaths in central Hubei province and in particular the provincial capital of Wuhan, a city of 11 million people where the outbreak began in December. The number of deaths in Hubei rose by 139 as of Friday, 107 of those in Wuhan. A total of 1123 people in Wuhan have now died from the coronavirus.

China is struggling to get the world's second-largest economy going after the Lunar New Year holiday, which was extended by 10 days to help contain the virus. A top Chinese official, in an interview with Reuters, acknowledged that the coronavirus was a huge challenge, but defended the government's management of it and lashed out at the "over-reaction" of some countries. State Councillor Wang Yi, who also serves as China's foreign minister, said China had taken decisive measures, many going beyond international health regulations and World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations.

"Through our efforts the epidemic is overall under control," he said. Outside mainland China, there have been about 500 cases in some 24 countries and territories, and three deaths - one in Japan, one in Hong Kong and one in the Philippines. Africa recorded its first case, in Egypt, where the affected person, a foreigner, was been put into isolation in hospital.

Thailand reported its 34th case, a medical worker, a day after China said 1716 of its health workers had been infected and six had died. The virus is killing about two per cent of those infected and has spread faster than other respiratory viruses that emerged this century. A WHO-led joint mission with China will start its outbreak investigation work this weekend, focusing on how the new coronavirus is spreading and its severity.

US citizens on the Diamond Princess cruise ship who are confirmed to be infected with the coronavirus will not be taken back to the United States on a planned charter flight after all, a Japanese government official says. The US said earlier on Saturday it would send an aircraft to Japan to bring back US passengers on the Diamond Princess, where the most coronavirus infections outside China have occurred.

The ship, owned by Carnival Corp, has been quarantined since arriving in Yokohama, Japan, on February 3, with 3500 passengers and crew on board, of whom 218 have tested positive for the infection. Alarm was raised about the ship after a man who disembarked in Hong Kong was diagnosed with the virus. Those who tested positive were taken off the ship to hospital.

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