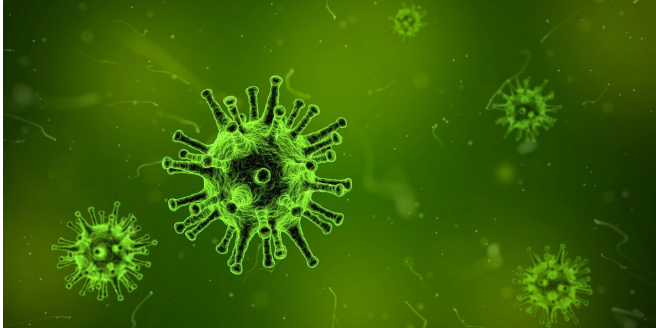# China virus toll jumps to 1,770: govt

17 February 2020

Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The death toll from China's new coronavirus epidemic jumped to 1,770 after 105 more people died, the National Health Commission said Monday.

More than 70,500 have now been infected nationwide by the virus, which first emerged in December in central Hubei province before spreading across the country.

Chinese authorities have placed about 56 million people in Hubei and its capital Wuhan under quarantine, virtually sealing off the province from the rest of the country in an unprecedented effort to contain the virus.

New cases outside of the epicentre have been declining for the last thirteen days.

There were 115 fresh cases outside the central province, according to the commission on Monday—sharply down from nearly 450 a week ago.

Local authorities elsewhere in China have introduced measures to try and stop the virus spreading, including a rule in Beijing requiring people coming to the capital to self-quarantine for 14 days, according to official media.

Most cases are still in Hubei, where nearly 2,000 were reported Monday.

The number of reported infections ballooned on Thursday last week after Hubei authorities changed their criteria for counting cases, retroactively adding 14,000 cases in a single day.

Monday's figures for new cases were around 100 higher than those on Sunday but still sharply down on those from Friday and Saturday.

A spokesman for China's national health authority said that the slowdown was a sign the outbreak was being controlled.

However, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned it is "impossible to predict which direction this epidemic will take".

International experts have arrived in Beijing and begun meeting with their Chinese counterparts over the epidemic, Tedros said on Twitter.

Global worries about its spread remain high and the epidemic's reach was highlighted by the US announcing that more than three dozen Americans from a cruise ship quarantined off Japan were infected.

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