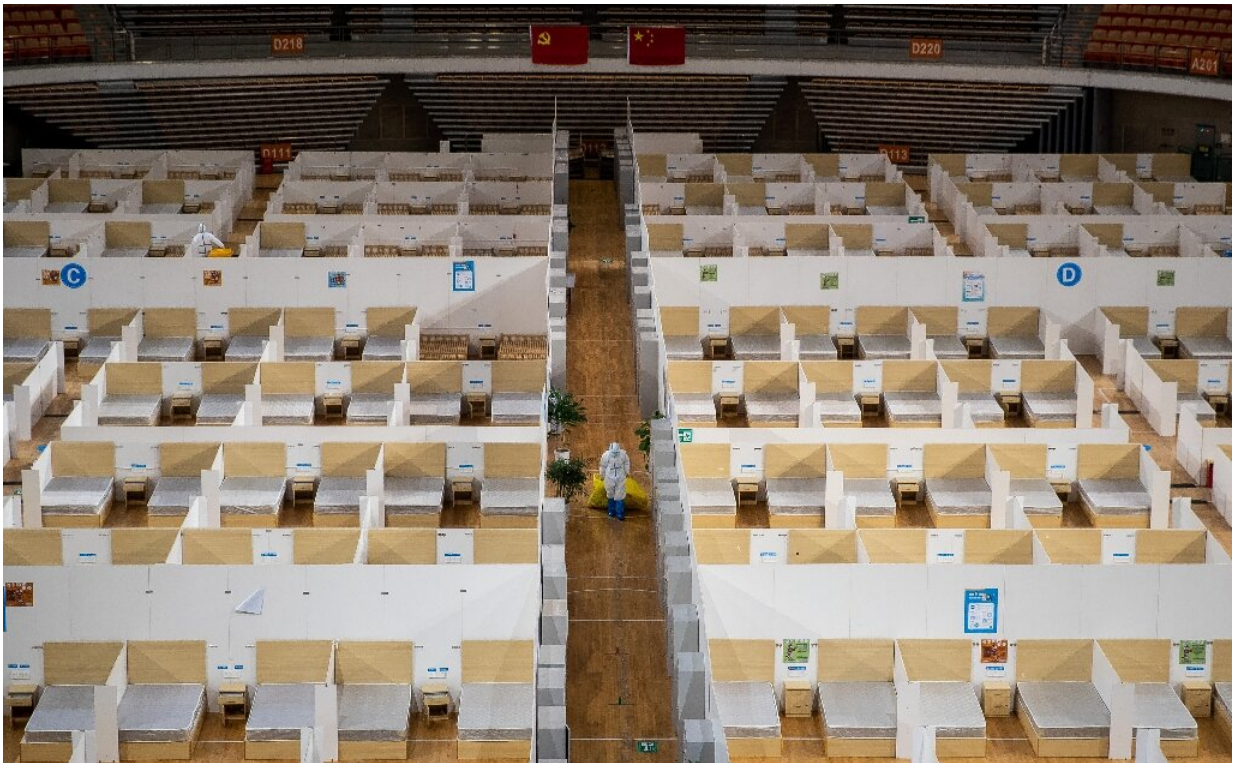


China signals progress in virus battle as Disney partially reopens

March 9 2020, by Jing Xuan Teng



A staff member removes waste after the final patients were discharged from a temporary hospital set up to treat people with the COVID-19 coronavirus in a sports stadium in Wuhan

China closed most of its makeshift hospitals for coronavirus patients, some schools reopened and Disney resort staff went back to work Monday as normality slowly returns to the country after weeks battling

the epidemic.

New virus cases in China—which accounts for the vast majority of the more than 100,000 infections worldwide—have declined in recent weeks in a sign the country's unprecedented lockdown measures are working.

The improving situation stands in stark contrast with the growing global spread of the disease that has affected scores of countries and prompted some governments to impose their own draconian measures and quarantines.

China reported 40 new infections nationwide on Monday—the smallest increase since the country began reporting the data in January.

Nearly all the fresh cases and 22 new deaths were in Wuhan, the capital of central Hubei province, which has been under lockdown for weeks.

The latest fatalities bring the country's death toll to 3,119.

A senior official hinted last week that China could soon lift the travel restrictions on Hubei, which has effectively kept about 56 million people housebound.

Around 19,000 people are still getting treatment for the virus, down from a high of 58,000 on February 24.



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Shanghai Disney said it was reopening its shopping and entertainment Disneytown zone—plus a park and hotel in the same complex—in the "first step of a phased reopening".

The Disneyland amusement park, however, remains closed.

In Wuhan, 14 of 16 makeshift hospitals that were converted from public facilities including stadiums and schools were shuttered by Monday, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The Jiangnan hospital, housed in an international exhibition centre, was the latest to close Monday, Xinhua said. The last two are expected to shutter on Tuesday.

About 12,000 people were treated in the jury-rigged facilities.

Hubei Airport Group ordered all airports in the province to get back to work by Thursday, in a sign that the province is preparing to resume flights.

Wuhan's Tianhe airport—which suspended flights on January 23 except for airlifts for foreigners—said Monday that some of its managers had already resumed work.



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Ikea, schools reopen

Swedish furniture giant Ikea has reopened 16 of its stores with shorter opening hours in China, after closing all outlets in the country in late January, the company said.

Meanwhile, some regions are gearing up to reopen schools this week, after more than a month of closures across the country.

Qinghai province, spread across the Tibetan Plateau, announced in late February that high schools and vocational schools would resume gradually from Monday.

Middle schools would reopen later in the month.

Mountainous Guizhou province in southwest China has also said some students in high school and middle school would resume classes from March 16.

The only new cases outside Hubei were four imported from overseas, the health commission said, bringing the total number of infections brought into the country to 67.

The rise in imported cases is fueling fears that the country's progress in bringing infections down could be undone, and several local authorities are imposing quarantines on those arriving from hard-hit areas.

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