

China Fires Health Officials after New COVID-19 Outbreak

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A hospital president and the director of the health commission in the northern Chinese city of Qingdao have been fired after China's latest coronavirus outbreak, authorities said Thursday.

A brief notice on the Qingdao city government's official microblog Thursday said Health Commission Director Sui Zhenhua and Deng Kai, president of Qingdao's thoracic hospital to which the cases have been linked, were placed under further investigation. No other details were given.

Authorities ordered testing of all 9 million people in the city after a total of 12 cases, including those not displaying symptoms, were discovered over the weekend, accounting for China's first local transmissions in about two months.

Similar mass testing campaigns have taken place after previous outbreaks. Testing began with "close contacts, close contacts of those close contacts and more casual contacts," gradually expanding to all districts of the city, Qingdao's health department said.

Qingdao is a major commercial harbor and industrial center known for electronics and the country's most famous brewery, as well as the home of the Chinese navy's northern fleet.

China, where coronavirus was first detected late last year, has largely eradicated the virus domestically but remains on guard against imported cases and a second wave of domestic transmission.

Qingdao on Wednesday reported more than 8 million tests have been conducted, with no additional cases discovered among the almost 5 million results returned.

On Thursday, the National Health Commission reported 11 new cases over the past 24 hours, 10 of them imported. The other case listed as asymptomatic was discovered Sept. 24 and had been recategorized as a confirmed case.

Hospitals were treating 240 people for COVID-19, with another 392 people being kept under observation in isolation for having tested positive without showing symptoms or for being suspected cases.

China has reported 4,634 deaths among 85,622 cases of the disease.

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Featured image: People enjoy sunset on a plank road at the Donghu Lake in Wuhan, capital of central China's Hubei Province, March 18, 2020. No new infections of the novel coronavirus were reported on Wednesday in Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic, marking a notable first in the city's months-long battle with the microscopic foe. (Xinhua/Shen Bohan)

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