

How South Korea created the world's most ambitious coronavirus testing programme

By itv.com · 2 min

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When a **new coronavirus** was detected in Wuhan on December 31 last year, South Korea immediately set up an emergency team to study the disease.

They were among the first to travel to **the epicentre in China** to learn more about a virus which has now engulfed the world.

The early action taken by the **South Korean** Government and the knowledge they gained about Covid-19 went on to shape what has become the world's most ambitious virus testing programme.

When the first cases were confirmed in South Korea it began to roll out its trace, test and treat approach - which has led to almost half a million people being tested for Covid-19.



On February 29, it recorded 909 new cases, but by March 6, new infections began to level off.

It's claimed widespread testing not only located infected people, it also allowed close contacts to be traced and people not showing symptoms to be identified and isolated.

The thinking is that a diagnosis allows people to better take stock of the virus and take precautions.

Drive-through test centres were invented as the Government fast tracked test kits into mass production.

A drive-through allows people to be tested from the safety of their cars.

It takes just a matter of minutes and results are received within 24 hours.

Walk-through centres at clinics and hospitals were also added to a nationwide effort to contain what threatened to be a major outbreak in the country.

By the beginning of March, South Korea was capable of testing 20,000 people a day.

To date it has had 9,786 confirmed case and 162 deaths.



compared to 3.4 per cent globally.

While other countries - including the UK - question the accuracy, feasibility and value of testing on this kind of scale, South Korea is sticking to a system which, so far, is proving a success.



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