

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/australia-vietnam-step-up-efforts-against-spread-of-coronavirus-11580566417>

WORLD

Avian Influenza in China Adds to Economic Concerns Amid Coronavirus Spread

China pledges more support for its economy, exempts from punitive tariffs products imported from the U.S. to control the outbreak



A worker in a protective suit served customers at a pharmacy in Wuhan, where the coronavirus began, on Saturday
PHOTO: STRINGER/REUTERS

By Erin Mendell and Jonathan Cheng

Updated Feb. 1, 2020 1:29 pm ET

HONG KONG—Chinese authorities announced Saturday a recurrence of avian influenza in chickens in central China, adding fresh economic concerns for a country reeling from an outbreak of coronavirus that has sickened nearly 12,000 people since it emerged in December.

In a sign of the pressure already on China, Australia and Vietnam joined the U.S. and others in distancing their citizens from the country over the coronavirus, while Apple Inc. shut its stores on the Chinese mainland and Beijing pledged more support for embattled businesses.

THE LATEST ON THE CORONAVIRUS

- • Australia orders its citizens returning from China to self-quarantine for 14 days
 - • Vietnam halts all flights to and from Taiwan and China
 - • Apple closes all of its retail stores in mainland China until Feb. 9
 - • Beijing pledges more support for its economy
 - • Avian influenza adds to concerns about economy
-

The avian influenza is likely to add to the economic damage rather than pose a major immediate health risk. China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said that a case of H5N1 avian influenza, last

identified in China in April last year, had killed 4,500 chickens in central Hunan province, prompting authorities to cull another nearly 18,000 birds. But while avian influenza can be fatal in humans, with a mortality rate of 60%, according to the World Health Organization, it doesn't spread easily to humans.

In addition to the coronavirus, China has been grappling with an outbreak of African swine fever that has decimated the country's pig population over the past two years. Pork is China's main source of protein, and swine fever last year pushed overall consumer inflation to the highest level in eight years.

Hunan province, where the avian influenza outbreak announced on Saturday took place, neighbors Hubei province, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak.

Australia said that it would impose new entry restrictions in an effort to contain the spread of coronavirus, banning foreign nationals who have been in mainland China in the past 14 days from entering Australia, while Qantas Airways Ltd., the country's national carrier, said it would suspend flights to the mainland starting Feb. 9.

Vietnam's civil aviation authority said it would halt all flights to and from Taiwan and China, including the special Chinese territories of Macau and Hong Kong, starting Saturday.

Several countries and airlines have suspended flights to China, including Pakistan, Italy and the U.S.'s American Airlines Group Inc., Delta Air Lines Inc. and United Airlines Holdings Inc.

The move by Australia, which also ordered its citizens returning from China to self-quarantine for 14 days, to tighten entry restrictions followed a U.S. tightening. A day earlier, the U.S. said it would deny entry to foreign nationals who had traveled

anywhere in China within the past 14 days and imposed quarantines on Americans returning from Hubei province, whose capital is Wuhan.

The coronavirus has killed 259 people and infected nearly 12,000 in China as of late Friday, according to the official National Health Commission in Beijing. The number of infected patients in China alone now exceeds the global total for severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, which killed nearly 800 people after emerging from southern China in 2002 and 2003.

Authorities in Beijing pledged more support for the economy in a bid to reassure investors before markets reopen on Monday.

Companies and industries in regions hit particularly hard by the outbreak, including those that provide medical supplies, could get reduced lending rates, the central bank said in a joint statement with other government agencies, including the Finance Ministry and the banking regulator.

China's cabinet said separately that products imported from the U.S. to control the outbreak will be exempt from punitive tariffs through March 31. Authorities also exempted tariffs and other taxes on products donated by overseas entities, according to a joint statement by the Finance Ministry and the customs agency.

Resources are strained in Hubei province, and medical staff have been forced to turn away patients because of a lack of beds and basic medical supplies.

Local authorities in Huanggang, a city about 35 miles east of Wuhan, imposed new restrictions on residents' movements, saying only one person per household in the city center would be allowed to go out every two days to purchase basic necessities.

Apple is closing all of its retail stores and corporate offices in mainland China until Feb. 9 "out of an abundance of caution and based on the latest advice from leading health experts," it said. The company operates more than 40 stores in China.

North Korea said through its state media that it would send an aid fund to Chinese authorities, a rare extension of aid from Pyongyang.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, in a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, "expressed deep consolation for the families who lost their blood relatives due to the infectious disease," according to a report in Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency.

North Korea—a close ally of China that has long been dependent on China’s largess—was among the first countries to adopt stringent measures to keep the coronavirus outside its borders, and vowed to redouble its efforts.

“The novel coronavirus throws the world into uneasiness and horror, but the advantages and might of our state system...will be fully demonstrated to the whole world once again, when we ensure that the virus does not reach our country and that no one suffers from the infections,” it read.

—Liyan Qi, Rachel Pannett, Bingyan Wang, Xiao Xiao, Tripp Mickle and Niharika Mandhana contributed to this article.

Write to Erin Mendell at erin.mendell@wsj.com and Jonathan Cheng at jonathan.cheng@wsj.com

Copyright © 2020 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.