

Mongolia closes China border, shuts schools to fend off virus



A Mongolian flag flies on top of the Parliament building in Ulaanbaatar. (Reuters pic)

ULAANBAATAR: Mongolia has closed its border crossings with China to cars, temporarily shut schools and suspended public events to prevent a deadly virus from reaching its soil, authorities said.

The measures announced by the vast, landlocked country are the most drastic steps taken by any nation so far over concerns about a coronavirus which has rapidly spread across China.

Mongolia has not recorded any cases of the pneumonia-like virus, which has killed at least 81 people in neighbouring China and more than 2,700.

Almost a dozen countries have found cases, including in Europe, Asia and the United States.

Vice Prime Minister Enkhtuvshin Ulziisaikhan said Monday, the decision was made because cases have been confirmed in China's neighbouring region of Inner Mongolia.

"Pedestrians and cars are prohibited to cross the Chinese border," Enkhtuvshin said on Sunday, saying the schools and universities would stay shut until March 2, 2020 along with other public places such as gaming centres.

"Public events are also prohibited. Public events mean conferences, any public gatherings such as sports, entertainment or travel, and competitions," he said. **-AFP, January 27, 2020**