

# SARS toll climbs to 170

## Road blocks put up to stifle spread

By Christopher Bodeen  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JIEZISHI, China — Zhang Qulian usually welcomes tourists to her bed-and-breakfast in the Lianhua mountains, an hour's drive north of Beijing. But with SARS spreading in China's capital, she sat beside a makeshift roadblock Thursday with a hand-lettered sign saying, "Terribly sorry, no access to outsiders."

The same sentiments were found throughout Beijing's outskirts, where people are sealing off villages to keep out the SARS virus. They've thrown up roadblocks of dirt, boulders, logs and sometimes just an old man waving a stick.

"People are scared of us. We're scared of people. It's a scary time," Zhang said, turning away visitors at her stone home with a resigned smile.

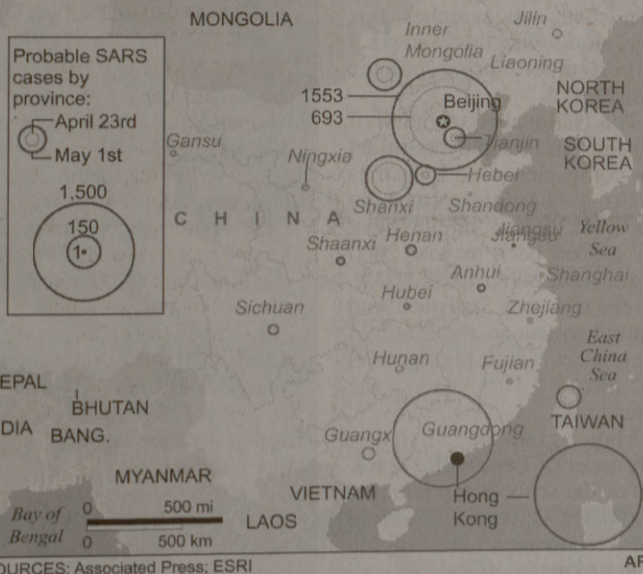
Those fears are likely to remain as long as the death toll from severe acute respiratory syndrome continues to rise. The Health Ministry reported 11 more fatalities Thursday — seven of them in Beijing — bringing China's death toll to 170. There were 187 new infections, raising the number of cases to 3,647.

Throughout China, millions were staying home for the May Day holiday after the government cut the weeklong vacation to five days and banned travel in hopes of containing the disease. Beijing's tourist sites from Tiananmen Square to the majestic Great Wall were nearly empty. Shopping centers were quiet and many restaurants closed down.

Dozens of tourists still passed by Zhang's "Farmer's Family Garden," one of dozens of little farmhouse inns in the scenic area just north of the famous Ming Tombs. But she could do little more than hand out name

### SARS thriving in Beijing

In recent weeks, the SARS outbreak slowed in China's south where the outbreak began, but numbers grew in the north.



cards and ask them to return later. How much later, she didn't know, although she said county health officials told her the closures could last three months.

About a half-hour drive from Zhang's place, a wheelbarrow blocked off the road to the village of Houniufang. A stern-faced man with a crewcut and a red armband reading "Security Patrol" said no outsiders were allowed. A roadside stand was set up to disinfectant residents' vehicles.

It wasn't clear whether the village roadblocks were considered a violation of an order by China's central government this week banning local communities from blocking traffic from Beijing and other hard-hit areas. One township official said his local government had authorized the roadblocks.

Such measures weren't legally authorized, but police weren't going to intervene, said an officer manning a toll booth further up the road at the border with

Hebei province. "These are extreme times, so we need to take extreme measures," the officer, Wang Quanzhi, said.

Beside him, Hebei provincial health workers in surgical masks and smocks were spraying disinfectant from backpack units on trucks entering the province from Beijing. Drivers were standing at a table having their temperatures taken and being quizzed about where they'd come from and where they were headed.

Closer to Beijing, authorities dressed in white anti-infection suits began moving patients into a new 1,000-bed SARS hospital erected in just over a week by thousands of workers laboring around the clock.

The new hospital at Xiaotangshan is part of extensive efforts over the past two weeks to stop SARS from spreading in Beijing, where 82 people have died of the disease and 1,570 have been sickened.



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