

Xi warns China facing 'grave situation'

Written by Taipei Times

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Medical staff at the Wuhan Red Cross Hospital wear protective clothing yesterday in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei Province.

Photo: AFP

Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) yesterday convened a Chinese Communist Party politburo meeting in Beijing, saying the nation is facing a grave situation, while Hong Kong declared the outbreak an “emergency” — the territory’s highest warning tier — as authorities ramped up measures to reduce the risk of further infections from a new coronavirus.

The outbreak of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has killed 41 people in China and has infected more than 1,300 globally, most of them in China.

The country is facing a “grave situation” where the coronavirus is “accelerating its spread,” Xi told the meeting, China Central Television (CCTV) reported.

Resources and experts would be concentrated at designated hospitals for treatment of severe cases, with no treatment delayed due to cost, and supplies of materials to Hubei Province and Wuhan to be guaranteed.

Information disclosure on the virus outbreak must be accurate, prompt and transparent, CCTV said

Wuhan is building a second 1,300-bed facility to treat cases of the new virus, in addition to the 1,000 field hospital that is scheduled to be finished by Feb. 3, the *People's Daily* reported.

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In addition, Beijing is stopping all inter-province shuttle buses that cross in and out of the capital from today, local media reported yesterday, without saying when bus services would be resumed.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) held emergency meetings with health officials yesterday morning after returning from Davos, Switzerland.

"Today I declare the lifting of the response level to emergency," she told reporters.

All mainland Chinese arrivals to Hong Kong would now need to sign health declaration forms, while public events, including a new year gala and next month's marathon, would also be called off, and schools and universities, now on a Lunar New Year break, would remain closed until Feb. 17, she said.

"We haven't seen serious and widespread infections, but we are taking this seriously and we hope to be ahead of the epidemic," Lam said.

Of the five people who have tested positive for the virus in Hong Kong so far, four arrived via a newly built high-speed train terminal that connects with the mainland.

That led to calls from some medical experts and politicians to limit, or even halt, arrivals from China.

Meanwhile, the US is arranging a charter flight for today to bring its diplomats from its consulate and other citizens from Wuhan to the US, the *Wall Street Journal* reported yesterday, while the

China Morning Post

(
SCMP

) said France was making similar plans.

South

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Washington was given approval for the operation from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies following negotiations in recent days, the *Journal* said.

A spokesperson for the US embassy in Beijing said that the US Department of State on Thursday had ordered the departure of family members and all US government employees at its Wuhan consulate, which will be closed temporarily, but declined to comment on the report that other US citizens would be evacuated from the city.

Dow Jones reported that the plane can seat 230 people and the US consulate is approaching Americans to offer to evacuate them with costs borne by those who accept it.

France is organizing a bus service to take French nationals, their Chinese and foreign spouses and children from Wuhan to Changsha, the *SCMP* reported, citing an e-mail from the French consulate in Wuhan.

Australia and Malaysia became the latest nations to report cases of the new virus, with Canberra saying it has four and Kuala Lumpur reporting three.

Taiwan has three cases; Thailand has seven cases; Singapore, France and Japan each have three; Vietnam, South Korea and the US have two each and Nepal has one.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/01/26](#)