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Infection total surges within expectations

Large rise in province's cases due to revised diagnosis criterion, experts say

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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The sudden spike in newly confirmed cases of novel coronavirus pneumonia in Hubei province on Wednesday is due to a revised diagnosis criterion, and experts said the change, which is within expectations, can enable more people to obtain appropriate medical treatment.

Hubei had 14,840 additional confirmed cases on Wednesday, the highest daily increase so far, Hubei Provincial Health Commission said on Thursday morning.

Of these newly confirmed cases, 13,332 were clinically diagnosed, meaning suspected patients were identified as having the disease based on symptoms, medical history, and computerized tomography, or CT scans, rather than testing positive for the virus using lab kits, which accounted for 1,508 of the new cases.

The surge in Hubei pushed the new infections nationwide on Wednesday to 15,152. Among the newly added 254 deaths, 242 were in Hubei, said Mi Feng, a spokesman

for the National Health Commission, on Thursday.

As of the end of Wednesday, there were 52,526 confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland, he said.

The sudden increase is due to a revised diagnostic criterion, according to the Hubei health authorities.

On Feb 3, the National Health Commission released the fifth edition of the diagnosis and treatment plan. It required Hubei to count clinically diagnosed patients as newly confirmed cases so that more suspected patients can receive the same standard of treatment as confirmed ones, thus reducing the possible spread of the virus and improving the treatment success rate.

On Tuesday, the provincial health commission released the first figure for clinically diagnosed cases, which was 10,567 as of late Monday night, but it wasn't added to the newly confirmed cases that day.

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Hard-hit cities told to scale up prevention measures

By XU WEI
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A meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Thursday called for the authorities in Wuhan, the epicenter of the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak, to accelerate steps to offer treatment to confirmed and suspected cases and isolate close contacts in curbing the contagion.

The meeting of the leading group of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on coping with the outbreak also stressed the need to enable Xiaogan and Huanggang, cities in Hubei province also hit hard by the outbreak, to adopt

medical treatment and isolation measures on a par with those in Wuhan, the provincial capital.

The authorities in Hubei and Wuhan must scale up control over roads leading out of the province and the city to prevent the spread of the epidemic, said a statement released after the meeting.

It is important to focus on prioritized areas, make coordinated efforts and adopt differentiated strategies to resolutely win the battle against the outbreak and endeavor to meet the targets for social and economic development this year, the statement said.

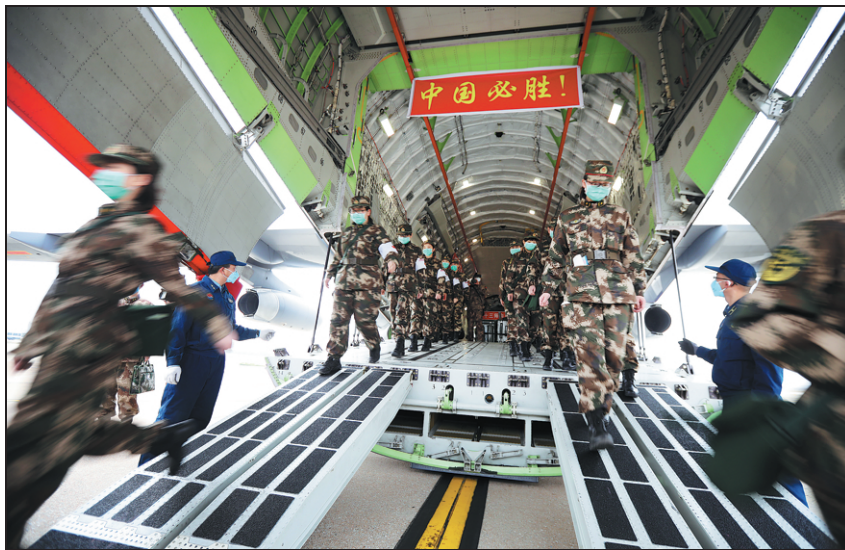
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Safe passage



A worker passes through an automatic disinfection gate before he leaves a factory in Chongqing on Wednesday. The local authorities have asked enterprises to step up epidemic prevention and control efforts before they resume production. LIU CHAN / XINHUA

Joining the battle



Medical personnel from the People's Liberation Army get off a military transport aircraft at Wuhan Tianhe International Airport in Hubei province on Thursday, marking the first civilian-related mission carried out by the PLA's Y-20 transport aircraft. The 1,400 military medical workers, boarding 11 aircraft, will be joined by another 1,200 colleagues in the latest effort to fight the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan. CHEN XIAODONG / FOR CHINA DAILY See story, page 3

Hubei, Wuhan get new Party chiefs

By CAO YIN in Beijing and ZHOU LIHUA in Wuhan

The top officials in Hubei province and the city of Wuhan were replaced on Thursday, a move by the central leadership to help the region better fight the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak.

Approved by the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Ying Yong, mayor of Shanghai, was appointed Party secretary of Hubei, replacing Jiang Chaoliang.

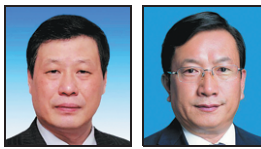
Wu Yuliang, deputy head of the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, made the announcement to Hubei officials at a conference on Thursday.

He said the decision was made by the central leadership after thorough and careful considerations, and is based on the needs of the epidemic prevention and control work as well as the reality of the leadership structure in Hubei, according to a report by Xinhua News Agency.

On the same day, Wang Zhonglin, Party secretary of Jinan, capital of Shandong province, replaced Ma Guoqiang to be the top official of Wuhan, the epicenter of the ongoing viral outbreak.

There was no information about future arrangements for Jiang or Ma.

On Monday, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, said during an inspection in Beijing that officials could be better assessed in face of major challenges.



Ying Yong Wang Zhonglin

He said the country still faces a severe epidemic situation, and called on officials at all levels — the backbone and commanding officers in the battle against the disease — to meet the challenges head on and better undertake their responsibilities.

Thursday's reshuffle was the latest move to inject fresh impetus into the leadership in Hubei. On Monday, Chen Yixin, secretary-general of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, returned to Hubei as deputy head of a central government group to guide the local disease prevention and control work. Chen was deputy Party secretary of Hubei and Party secretary of Wuhan from December 2016 to March 2018 before he was transferred to the secretary-general post.

On Tuesday, Wang Hesheng, former deputy head of the National Health Commission, was named director of the Hubei provincial health commission.

Both Ying Yong and Wang Zhonglin have had long working experience with the political and legal affairs departments.

Ying, 62, a native of Zhejiang

province, started his career with the industrial and commercial administration in Huangyan county, Zhejiang, in December 1976. From 1984 to 1986, he studied law at the China University of Political Science and Law.

Since then, he has held office in public security authorities and political and legal affairs agencies in the province's cities of Taizhou and Shaoxing. In 1995, he became deputy director of the Zhejiang Provincial Public Security Department, and 10 years later he was named president of Zhejiang High People's Court.

In 2007, Ying was transferred to Shanghai and became the president of Shanghai High People's Court in 2008. Five years later, he was promoted to the city's leadership and started to serve as Shanghai mayor in January 2017.

Wang, the new Wuhan Party secretary, 57, is a native of Shandong province. He began his career at a public security bureau in the province's city of Zaozhuang in 1984 and joined the CPC in the same year.

In 2013, Wang became mayor of Liaocheng, Shandong. Five years later, he was named the Party secretary of Jinan, the provincial capital.

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INNOVATION HELPS CONQUER BOREDOM

Restless residents become creative at home amid outbreak

By WANG QIAN
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With plenty of time at home on his hands during the extended Spring Festival break, Leng Yang came up with an innovative idea involving the use of shells from popular Lunar New Year snacks such as pistachios and almonds, along with sunflower seeds.

The 30-year-old designer from Weifang, Shandong province, spent three days making a figure of Mickey Mouse. A video of him putting the artwork together has been viewed more than 100 million times online.

Leng said in the video: "Give shells a new lease of life. Salute the Year of the Rat," adding that he decided to make the figure in an attempt to combat his boredom.



He was unable to meet friends over Spring Festival due to the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak, but chose to share his work with millions of netizens on social media platforms such as Sina Weibo and Douyin.

Inspired by his efforts, many kindergarten children have been asked by their teachers to use shells to create such figures.

Leng is not the only person to come up with creative ways to pass the time during the outbreak.

Cheng Dadu, from Xi'an, Shaanxi province, who enjoys running marathons, posted footage on Weibo of himself running barefoot for 10 hours in his living room.



A man does exercise on his balcony in Xining, Qinghai province, on Feb 7. MA MINGYAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Since Jan 30, he has run about 100 kilometers every day indoors.

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Xi: Nation can limit impact of epidemic

By MO JINGXI
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China can minimize the impact of the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic, maintain the country's momentum of economic development and work to achieve the goals and tasks for this year, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday evening.

He made the remark in a phone conversation with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, whom Xi described as an "old friend of the Chinese people".

Mahathir's phone call at such a critical period when the Chinese people are fighting the contagion shows Malaysia's friendly feelings and support for China, Xi said.

Xi stressed that the Chinese government has adopted the most comprehensive, strictest and most sweeping preventive measures since the outbreak of the epidemic.

The fatality rate remains at a relatively low level, breakthroughs are being made in treatment methods and the recovery rate continues to rise, he said.

Xi said that the Chinese government will lead its people to win the war of epidemic prevention and control with greater confidence, stronger resolve and more targeted measures.

Meanwhile, China will keep marching toward its long-term goals with determination, he added.

Xi noted that China's strong measures to curb the contagion not only show its responsibility for the health of its own people, but also its contribution to global public health.

This has been fully affirmed by other countries and the World Health Organization, he said, adding that China will continue to strengthen cooperation with the international community to fight the epidemic.

In particular, the governments and people in neighboring countries with friendly relations with China, including Malaysia, have taken positive steps to provide timely assistance to China, he said.

This is a vivid example of how countries in the region help each other in times of need, Xi said.

He said China will continue to enhance preventive cooperation with member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in a transparent and open way to jointly safeguard public health in the region.

China will continue to treat citizens of Malaysia and other countries in China the same as Chinese citizens and take care of them, he added.

Xi also said that the profound friendship between the people of China and Malaysia is unshakable although the epidemic has temporarily affected normal personnel exchanges between the two countries.

While the two countries are joining hands to deal with the challenge, Xi called on the two sides to continue to deepen bilateral ties especially in cooperation on jointly building the Belt and Road to produce more outcomes that benefit both countries and peoples.

Mahathir, on behalf of the Malaysian government, expressed condolences to the Chinese government and people over their suffering as a result of the epidemic.

Malaysia greatly appreciates the efforts and positive progress that China has made to deal with the contagion, which is China's contribution to maintaining global public security as a responsible country, he said.

Mahathir said that as a sincere friend of China, Malaysia has already provided a batch of medical supplies and is willing to continue to provide assistance.

The Malaysian prime minister stressed that his country believes that China's development can return to normal under Xi's leadership.

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