

The Information Office, International
Department of the CPC Central Committee

SPECIAL ISSUE AGAINST CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)



China **i**nsight



Xi stresses unremitting efforts in COVID-19 control, coordination on economic, social development



Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivers an important speech at a meeting to advance the work on coordinating the prevention and control of the COVID-19 and economic and social development, in Beijing, capital of China, on February 23, 2020

Chinese President Xi Jinping on February 24 stressed unremitting efforts in the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic and coordination in advancing economic and social development.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks when delivering an important speech at a meeting in Beijing to advance the work on coordinating the prevention and control of the COVID-19 and economic and social development.

The Chinese nation has experienced many ordeals in its history, but it has

never been overwhelmed. Instead, it has become more and more courageous, growing up and rising up from the hardships, Xi said.

The epidemic situation remains grim and complex and it is now a most crucial moment to curb the spread, he noted.

Xi asked Party committees and governments at all levels to continue to make unremitting efforts in various prevention and control work and resume work and production in an orderly manner.

Efforts should be made to fully unleash the huge potential and powerful driving force of China's development and strive to achieve the goals and tasks for economic and social development this year, Xi said.

On behalf of the CPC Central Committee, Xi extended sincere greetings to Party members, officials and the general public throughout the country, especially those in Hubei Province and its capital city Wuhan, and expressed respect to the medical workers, officers and soldiers of the People's Liberation Army and comrades from various sectors who have been fighting on the front line of epidemic prevention and control.

He also expressed his sincere gratitude to compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, overseas Chinese, as well as to countries, international organizations and friendly people that have provided various support to the epidemic prevention and control.

Xi also expressed deep condolences to compatriots and medical personnel who lost their lives in the fight against the epidemic, and sincere sympathy to patients and their families who are struggling with the disease, as well as to the families of those who died on duty and the deceased patients.

The meeting on February 24 was presided over by Li Keqiang and attended by Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji and Han Zheng.

Positive trend expanding

Xi said since the start of the outbreak the CPC Central Committee has attached great importance to the issue, made swift deployment, strengthened the centralized, unified leadership of the Party, requiring Party committees and governments at all levels to put people's lives and health as the top priority and adopt effective measures to curb the spread of the virus.

The CPC Central Committee has made it a prominent task to improve the admission and cure rates and reduce the infection and mortality rates, Xi said, noting that Wuhan and Hubei have been taken as the country's main battlefield against the epidemic.

Efforts have also been made to

strengthen the emergency supply of medical materials and daily necessities, safeguard social stability and win the support of the international community, he added.

The COVID-19 outbreak is a major public health emergency that has spread in the fastest speed, caused the most extensive infection and is the most difficult to contain in the country since the founding of the People's Republic of China, said Xi.

"This is both a crisis and a big test for us," Xi said, adding that after arduous work, the positive trend in the prevention and control work is now expanding.

"It has been proven that the CPC Central Committee's judgment on the situation of the epidemic is accurate, all work arrangements are timely, and the measures taken are effective," said Xi.

"The results of the prevention and control work have once again demonstrated the notable advantages of the leadership of the CPC and the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics," he added.

Solid, meticulous efforts required

Xi called for firm, solid and meticulous efforts in the epidemic prevention and control, urging Party committees and governments at all levels to remain vigilant and make unremitting efforts in the epidemic prevention and control work.

No victory should be lightly announced until there is a complete win, Xi said, making the following demands:

- Hubei Province, as well as its capital city Wuhan, should be safeguarded with resolute efforts, with focal attention paid to containing the spread at communities and treating the patients;

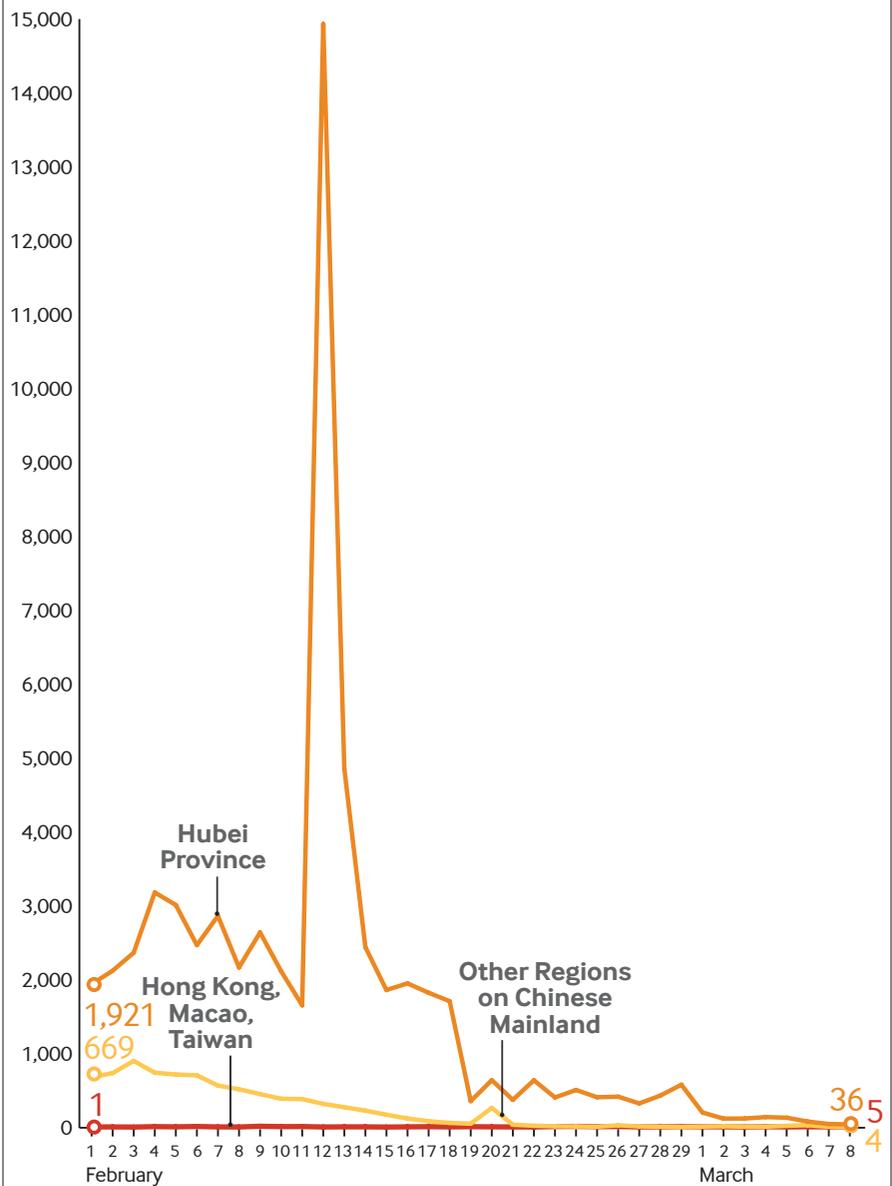
- The epidemic prevention and control work in Beijing should be carried out with all-out efforts. Both imported cases and spread within the city should be prevented;

- Medical resources and key supplies should be allocated in a scientific manner, providing more protection for the medical workers;

- Scientific research should be accelerated in terms of drug and vaccine development. Effective diagnosis and treatment plans should be summarized and promoted in time;

- International and regional cooperation should be expanded. Good communication with the World Health

Newly Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in China



(Source: National Health Commission; compiled by Beijing Review; designed by Pamela Tobey)

Organization and experience sharing with relevant countries should be continued;

- Public communication through news media should be more effective. Release of epidemic information should be improved;

- Social stability should be well safeguarded. Illegal activities disturbing medical treatment, epidemic prevention, and market and social order should be severely punished.

Impact manageable

The impact of the epidemic on China's economic and social development is temporary and generally manageable, Xi noted.

He said the COVID-19 epidemic will inevitably deal a relatively big blow to China's economic and social development. However, at such a time it is even more important to view China's develop-

ment in a comprehensive, dialectical and long-term perspective, and to strengthen and firm up confidence.

In general, the fundamentals of China's long-term sound economic growth remain unchanged, Xi added.

Orderly resumption of work, production

Stressing orderly resumption of work and production, Xi made specific requirements to that end.

Each region should adopt a precise approach when advancing resumption of work and production based on local health risks, Xi said.

Regions with relatively low risks should reorient their disease prevention and control strategies as soon as possible to focus on forestalling imported cases and comprehensively restoring the order of production and life, Xi said.

Medium-risk regions should promote work and production resumption in an orderly manner based on local epidemic-control situations, while high-risk regions should continue to be fully committed to doing a good job in epidemic prevention and control, he said.

Xi stressed strengthening the regulation role of macro-economic policies, calling for more positivity in the country's proactive fiscal policy and the roll-out of more targeted interim policies in cutting taxes and fees to help micro, small and medium-sized firms tide over difficulties.

Besides, the prudent monetary policy should feature more flexibility and moderation, Xi said, calling for making good use of existing financial support policies and introducing new policies and measures in due course.

China will step up efforts to keep employment stable, with all-round measures to cut corporate burdens, keep the payroll stable, and create more jobs, Xi said, adding that in addressing the outstanding problems of serious scarcity of workers in some enterprises, high pressure in keeping the payroll stable, and difficulty of key groups to obtain employment, efforts should be given to support flexible employment through multiple channels and facilitate employment of college graduates.

The country should resolutely accomplish the task of alleviating poverty despite the impact of the epidemic, Xi said, urging efforts to help poor workers return to their posts in an orderly manner, support leading poverty alleviation enterprises and workshops to resume work as soon as possible, and improve mechanisms to prevent people from returning to poverty.



Party and state leaders Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji and Han Zheng attend a meeting to advance the work on coordinating the prevention and control of the COVID-19 and economic and social development, in Beijing, on February 23

Xi underscored efforts to push for the resumption of work and production with precise epidemic prevention and control strategies, while smoothing travels and logistics channels and lifting cargo transport bans to push all links in the industrial chains to resume work and production in a coordinated way.

The country should actively expand effective domestic demand, fast-track the progress of projects under construction and new ones, as well as enhance guarantees for labor, land, funds and other production factors.

In the meantime, China will ensure the timely agriculture work in spring, Xi said.

In doing so, he urged efforts to address the protruding issues in spring farming preparation and ensure well-organized production, transportation and supply of farming materials.

Xi also noted that people's basic livelihood should be guaranteed, such as the supply of staple and non-staple food. Enhanced efforts should be made to take care of those in need as well as those losing their family members due to the epidemic. Efforts should also be made to coordinate medical treatment for patients with other diseases.

The country should keep the foreign trade and investment stable amid the epidemic outbreak, Xi stressed.

Foreign trade policy tools like export tax rebates and export credit insurances should be put to good and full play to ensure smooth operation of foreign trade industrial chains and supply chains.

Major foreign investment projects should

be well implemented, while opening-up of finance and other services should be expanded. Business environment should continue to be optimized to strengthen foreign businesses' confidence in long-term investment and operation in China, Xi said.

In order to win the people's war against the epidemic, the Party's leadership should be strengthened, Xi said.

Xi required cadres at all levels, especially the leading officials, to take initiative in fulfilling duties.

Cadres who make outstanding contributions should be awarded, while those who fail to perform their duties should be held accountable, Xi noted.

Stressing more care for primary-level cadres, Xi called for solving their practical difficulties in a timely manner and resolutely rectifying the practice of formalities for formalities' sake and bureaucratism.

Xi also required summing up experience and drawing lessons from the weak links exposed in the epidemic to improve the ability to deal with major public health emergencies.

While presiding over the meeting, Li Keqiang called for rallying more closely around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core and required the solid and precise implementation of the decisions and policies made by the CPC Central Committee.

Li demanded efforts to achieve this year's economic and social development goals and tasks, and secure finishing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and completing the 13th Five-Year Plan. **C**

Basic protective measures against the new coronavirus

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. COVID-19 is still affecting mostly people in China with some outbreaks

in other countries. Most people who become infected experience mild illness and recover, but it can be more severe for others. Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following:

Wash your hands

Wash your hands with soap and running water when **hands are visibly dirty**



If your **hands are not visibly dirty**, frequently clean them by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water



Protect yourself and others from getting sick

Wash your hands



- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are visibly dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste



Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

Protect others from getting sick

When coughing and sneezing **cover mouth and nose** with flexed elbow or tissue



Throw tissue into closed bin immediately after use

Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick



Protect others from getting sick



Avoid close contact when you are experiencing cough and fever

Avoid spitting in public



If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing **seek medical care early** and share previous travel history with your health care provider



Maintain social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow

the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider

Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves. **CI**

Scan to watch the videos



Rays of Hope

Trial of treatments for COVID-19 gathers steam By Ji Jing

At the Jiangxia Hospital, a hospital converted from the Dahuashan Outdoor Sports Center in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, a national team of over 200 traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) experts are using TCM to treat mildly infected patients. Among the converted hospitals in Wuhan, the city where the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic has been the most severe, the Jiangxia Hospital is the only one to provide mainly TCM treatments.

Every morning, TCM experts, after examining patients' pulse and tongue, give them decoctions to treat COVID-19. Patients are also given granulated medicine for fever, cough, anxiety and insomnia.

Auxiliary treatments are used as well, such as auricular therapy, stimulating of pressure points on the ear, and moxibustion, burning moxa, a cone or stick made of ground mugwort leaves, on or near the body's meridians and pressure points. In addition, patients are taught tai chi, a Chinese martial art practiced for both defense and health benefits. For patients who need them, the hospital also provides some Western treatments.

According to the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (NATCM), by February 21, nearly 3,200 TCM doctors from across the country had been sent to Hubei Province in central China where Wuhan is located. Of them, 700 took up their posts at four hospitals in Wuhan, including the Jiangxia Hospital.

Combining East and West

TCM prescriptions are part of the national treatment guidelines for COVID-19. According to the NATCM, by February 17, over 60,000 patients confirmed with COVID-19, or 85.2 percent of all confirmed cases, had been treated with TCM.

The NATCM has conducted clinical trials in Shanxi, Hebei, Heilongjiang and Shaanxi provinces to select effective prescriptions and promote them nationwide.

"We have introduced TCM since the onset of the epidemic and combined it with Western medicine in the treatment. Clinical practice indicates that combined Chinese and Western medical treatment is effective in treating the novel coronavirus pneumonia,"



Cai Taoying, a nurse who has recovered from COVID-19, donates plasma in Wuhan on February 17

Yu Yanhong, an NATCM official, said at a press conference held by the State Council Information Office in Wuhan on February 20.

"In mild cases, TCM can help treat fever, cough and lack of strength, reduce the time of hospitalization, and prevent mild cases from developing into serious ones. In critical cases, TCM can alleviate symptoms and reduce the death rate," Yu added.

According to her, research has shown that mildly infected patients who received a combination of Chinese and Western medical treatment had their clinical symptoms disappear two days earlier than the normal time. Their temperature returned to normal 1.7 days earlier and hospitalization time was reduced by 2.2 days on average.

TCM has also been administered to those who have been in close contact with the infected or those susceptible to the disease to improve their immunity and prevent and reduce infection. It is also used on patients with mild symptoms.

Multiple measures

Blood plasma collected from people who have recovered from COVID-19 is be-

ing used in critical cases.

On February 14, research proving the effectiveness and safety of using plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients to treat critically ill patients passed ethical review at the Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan. The treatment has also been included in the national treatment guideline.

Zeng Fandian, a professor of clinical pharmacology at Tongji Medical College in Wuhan, explained the use of plasma in the treatment of COVID-19 patients in an interview with Wuhan Evening News.

When the virus attacks, the human body produces antibody to fight the invader. After the patients recover, the antibody remains in their plasma. Zeng compared the treatment to patients borrowing "weapons" from recovered patients to combat the virus. He said the method has been used in many epidemic outbreaks before, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome and Ebola.

"As COVID-19 is a new infectious disease and has no effective medicine, the plasma treatment is used based on past experiences. However, it's an explorative treatment and its effectiveness and safety have yet to be proven through clinical trials," he added.

Liu Bende, Vice President of the Jiangxia First People's Hospital in Wuhan, told Wuhan Evening News that plasma treatment can greatly reduce the death rate for critically ill patients but it cannot be applied to all patients. The elderly, those who have other serious diseases and those allergic to plasma cannot be treated with it. Also, patients who have had respiratory or cardiac failure or other organ failure should avoid the treatment in case the plasma transfusion puts greater pressure on their heart and exacerbates damage to other organs.

The donors also have to meet multiple requirements. For instance, they should be confirmed COVID-19 patients who were hospitalized for treatment and discharged at least one week before the plasma donation. They should also be between 18 and 55 years. Female donors should weigh at least 45 kg and males above 50 kg. They should have no chronic diseases such as diabetes or cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases.

Not all cured patients are qualified or willing to donate their plasma, leading to a shortage of plasma. Deng Yiyu, head of the Department of Critical Care Medicine at the Guangdong Provincial People's Hospital in south China, told 21st Century Business Herald that the plasma treatment should be used only for select critically ill patients. The amount of plasma required is large. A critically ill patient might need the plasma of seven to 10 recovered patients with the same blood type.

Quan Jun, a professor with the Infectious Disease Department of the Xiangya Hospital, told the National Business Daily that even if a plasma transfusion helps clear the virus, the inflammation it has already caused might still harm the organs. Therefore the treatment may not be effective for all patients.

Chloroquine phosphate, an anti-malarial drug, has also been confirmed to have some curative effect on COVID-19. The drug, in use for more than 70 years, was selected from tens of thousands of existing drugs after multiple rounds of screening. It was under clinical trial at over 10 hospitals in Beijing, as well as in Guangdong and Hunan Province in central China. Finally, it was also included in the national treatment guideline for COVID-19 published on February 19.

Potential treatment methods

Xu Nanping, Vice Minister of Science and Technology, said at a press conference



Doctors of Peking University Third Hospital, a renowned hospital in Beijing, say goodbye to a patient to be discharged from a ward in Wuhan on February 19



Tu Li, head nurse of the First Hospital of Hunan University of Chinese Medicine, uses auricular therapy on a patient in the Jiangxia Hospital in Wuhan, Hubei Province, on February 25

on February 21 that three treatment methods are undergoing large-scale trial.

The first is Favipiravir, an antiviral drug that has shown potential in treating the novel coronavirus. Trials conducted in Shenzhen in Guangdong have shown promising results. However, experts suggest the trials be expanded to test patients' tolerance.

The second is mesenchymal stem cell treatment. Mesenchymal stem cells have a high self-renewal rate and are distributed widely in the body. This treatment was used on four critical patients who recovered but its clinical trial needs to be expanded.

The third is the United States biotech company Gilead Sciences' experimental drug Remdesivir. At present 10 hospitals

are participating in the clinical trial of the drug, involving over 200 critically ill patients and more than 30 mild cases.

Chinese scientists are also racing to develop vaccines. Zeng Yixin, Deputy Director of the National Health Commission, said at a news conference on February 21 that some projects have entered the stage of animal testing. "[We] foresee that as soon as April to May, some vaccines could enter clinical trial, or under specific conditions, could be applied for emergency use," he said. "Our goal is that if required by the outbreak situation, the emergency use of vaccines, as well as the emergency review and approval process, can be activated in accordance with the law." **CI**

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) hospital in Wuhan's coronavirus fight

The first batch of 23 patients walked out of a temporary hospital featuring traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) Wednesday in Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in central China's Hubei Province.

The makeshift hospital in Wuhan's Jiangxia District was transformed from a sports center.

Medical staff from 20 TCM hospitals of five provinces took charge of the infected patients in the hospital with support from the district TCM hospital. It is Wuhan's first temporary hospital that followed the treatment and management mode of TCM hospitals in China. **CI**



A medical worker examines a patient with traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, February 25



Medical workers examine a patient with TCM therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan



Medical workers treat a patient with TCM therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 25



Nurse Tu Li (right) prepares to treat a patient with TCM therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 25



Medical worker Zhan Min (right) treats a patient with traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 25



Medical worker Yi Qin teaches as patients follow during a traditional Chinese physical exercises session at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 25



Nurse Tu Li (right) treats a patient with TCM therapies at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 25



Medical worker Wu Zhiting takes boxes of concentrate granules from a shelf at the mobile emergency smart pharmacy for TCM at a temporary hospital in Jiangxia District in Wuhan, February 26

Joining Hands to Meet Challenges

China cooperates with international community to combat COVID-19

Currently, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has broken out in many countries and the situation in some countries has worsened. While continuing to keep the epidemic under effective prevention and control within the country, China has also spared no efforts to provide assistance to the international community.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a total of 62 countries and seven international organizations have donated

epidemic-control materials including masks and protective suits to China as of March 2. It's not just the quantity that is important; there are many touching stories behind the assistance at a difficult time. Myanmar donated rice, Sri Lanka offered black tea, Mongolia provided with 30,000 sheep while Pakistan took out its inventory masks from hospitals nationwide ... These are all symbols of true friendship. As the saying goes, a friend in

need is a friend indeed. This kindness will not be forgotten by the Chinese people.

China in turn is offering help to countries suffering from the outbreak. To date, the country has provided test kits to Japan, Pakistan and the African Union, and shared its medical solutions and dispatched specialists to many countries. The Chinese Government, organizations, enterprises and individuals are ready to extend support to the world as a whole. **CI**



Chinese Ambassador to Israel Chang Hua (third from right) and an official from the Iranian Health Ministry welcome a volunteer team of the Red Cross Society of China in Teheran, Iran, on February 29. On February 28, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone call with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. When the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) broke out in China, Iran was the first country to extend its sympathy. China will never forget it. Recently there have been more COVID-19 cases in Iran. China has made an emergency donation of nucleic acid detection kits and medical equipment to Iran. China will continue to help Iran within its capacity in line with the needs of the Iranian side, which will include cooperation in areas such as epidemic prevention and control and medical treatment, Wang said.



Chinese Ambassador to South Korea Xing Haiming (center) and other members of the embassy cheer up for Daegu, in Seoul, South Korea, on February 27. The embassy donated around 25,000 medical masks to Daegu to support the city hit by the COVID-19 outbreak. On the banner hung on the supply truck to the city was written a poem from Choe Chi-won, an ancient well-known Korean scholar who pursued studies in China during the Tang dynasty for many years. The poem reads, "Long distance cannot separate us, and we all live in a united world."



A cargo of donated masks is off-loaded at Narita International Airport in Tokyo, on March 3. Jack Ma, co-founder of Hangzhou-based e-commerce giant Alibaba, has donated 1 million facial masks to Japan in return for the generous help Japan gave China when the latter was hit severely by COVID-19. The Jack Ma Foundation and the Alibaba Foundation announced on March 2 that the masks will be donated to Japan to help alleviate suffering during the epidemic. "Like the mountain range that stretches before you and me, let's share the same trials and hardships together. We hope everything will get better soon," Ma said on his Weibo account, citing an old Chinese poem.



Members of a Chinese volunteer group distribute masks to local people in Nagoya, Japan, February 20. As COVID-19 continues to spread in Japan, many overseas Chinese there have voluntarily come out on the streets to distribute masks to the local people, expressing gratitude to the Japanese people for their selfless help to China during the virus outbreak.

MFA on Health Regulation for Overseas Arrivals: Chinese and Foreign Nationals Treated as Equals

On 28 February, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian gave a regular press conference. One question was: with the COVID-19 outbreak spreading in the ROK, Japan and other countries, Chinese cities and provinces like Beijing and Shandong have tightened overall public health regulation on overseas arrivals. In Beijing, anyone who comes from or has been to a country or region severely affected by the epidemic needs to be quarantined for 14 days. Does that mean a full upgrade of restrictions for foreign nationals entering into China?

Zhao Lijian said that the fight against the epidemic has entered a critical and most demanding stage. Across China, rigorous measures are being taken to prevent any possible resurgence. As the epidemic spreads overseas, Beijing has stepped up health regulation for overseas arrivals. Those who come from or have been to severely affected regions are recommended to receive a 14-day medical observation at home or in designated places. Foreign nationals are also asked to comply with health regulation measures of their residential communities to jointly prevent the risk of the epidemic.

Zhao stressed that the epidemic control regulation in places like Beijing



Passengers arrive at the Qingdao Liuting International Airport on February 25. The airport took initiative to communicate with foreign passengers to better ensure the epidemic control, and since February 24, it adopted stricter measures to manage people who entered China.

applies to all overseas arrivals who come from or have been to severely affected countries or regions, and equally applies to Chinese and foreign nationals. WHO experts pointed out that China's strategic and tactical approach to epidemic control, including quarantine measures, have been proven correct, and helped significantly curb the spread of the virus and block human-to-human transmis-

sion. The special measures at a special moment have been understood and supported by the Chinese people, and they will surely have the understanding and cooperation of relevant countries. China will work with those countries to jointly take prevention and control measures, and more effectively protect the life and health of Chinese and foreign nationals. **CI**

COVID-19 May Not Have Originated in China, Expert Says



Zhong Nanshan in this file photo

Initially reported to have originated in the now-dismantled Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, the epicenter in Hubei Province, central China, the source of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) now remains unknown as new evidence challenges the original assumption.

"The first case of novel coronavirus pneumonia was reported in China, but its source may not be in the country," renowned respiratory expert Zhong Nanshan said at a news briefing in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province in south China, on February 27.

The new paper, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, co-authored by researchers from three Chinese institutions and published on February 21

on the distribution platform ChinaXiv, suggests that "the SARS-CoV-2 source at the ... market was imported from elsewhere." Health officials generally believe the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the disease known as Covid-19, originated in Wuhan.

Gene sequencing technology was used by scientists to analyze the haplotypes of 93 virus samples, which found that all the samples with a reported link to the market contained the same haplotype, called H1. But they later found that three more ancestral haplotypes, H3, H13 and H38, appeared in several cases with no reported ties to the market, including one in the southern city of Shenzhen and another in the U.S.

According to the World Health

Organization, cases of COVID-19 of unknown origin have emerged, including a woman in the U.S. who had not traveled to regions affected by the outbreaks. Germany and France also reported two such cases.

"It's what is happening in the rest of the world that is now our greatest concern," said the WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We are at a decisive point."

The paper follows on research published on January in the medical journal *The Lancet* challenging the hypothesis that the virus emerged at the Wuhan market. That paper analyzed 41 infected patients whose cases dated as far back as December 1 and concluded that 13 of them had no links to the marketplace. **CI**



The World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (center) speaks at a daily briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, February 27



A screenshot of the paper published on ChinaXiv

Phyloepidemiologic analyses indicate the SARS-CoV-2 source at the Huanan market should be imported from other places

The Strength of Solidarity

China's victory over the novel coronavirus pneumonia will benefit the rest of the world
By George N. Tzogopoulos

For almost a month, China has been engaged in a heroic fight against the novel coronavirus pneumonia (NCP). According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, as of February 10, there were 40,235 confirmed cases and 909 deaths. While the problem is principally in Hubei Province in central China with 29,631 cases, other provinces such as Guangdong in the south, Zhejiang in the east, and Henan in central China, have also been affected, though to a much lower extent.

In other countries, 319 cases in total have been reported. These countries include Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Thailand, the U.S., France and Germany. Although the novel coronavirus is not the same virus that caused the severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003, it has drawn some parallels in analysis because both epidemics broke out in the same country.

Effective measures

While China has been significantly transformed in comparison to 17 years ago, it is still encountering significant challenges as an emerging economy. This becomes evident in the 2009 Global Health Security Index, a project by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security and the Nuclear Threat Initiative using research by the Economist Intelligence Unit. The index links relevant capabilities with the level of income and puts China in the 51st position out of 195 countries.

A public disease can start everywhere and makes no exemptions. Developed countries have also seriously suffered from them. The H1N1 influenza that appeared in 2009 was first found in human beings in Mexico before reaching the U.S. In April that year, the U.S. had to declare a public health emergency,

which was renewed in July and October.

The incidence of illness continued to rise and then President Barack Obama announced the influenza had constituted a national emergency. Estimated fatalities in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, were 12,469. At that time, Beijing took successful measures to prevent the spread of H1N1. According to a China Youth Daily poll, the measures were highly appreciated by an overwhelming majority of the Chinese society.

The Chinese Government's battle against the NCP outbreak is multifaceted. The intensive support being offered to patients daily, including psychological counseling; the construction of two hospitals in Wuhan in only a few days; along with implementing numerous controls. Measure people's temperature in public places are indicative of that.

Additionally, efforts to test medicines and develop a vaccine are expanding. The speed, scale and efficiency of the response have been praised by WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Moreover, the government is providing financial assistance to citizens and companies suffering economic losses due to the disruption in their activities. This is the true meaning of a governmental social policy. When people are helpless due to a crisis beyond their means, the state needs to intervene.

As far as the international reaction is concerned, there are countries that are helping. Daily briefings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refer to specific cases along with the government's appreciation of support in difficult times.

A remarkable one is that of Japan, which has sent face masks, goggles, protective suits and other supplies for epidemic prevention and control. U.S. President Donald Trump congratulated—in a tweet—his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for the latter's attempts to alleviate the crisis and for transparency in governmental policies. In his 2020 State of the Union address too, Trump spoke about coordination of actions with China.

International reactions

Despite the good intentions of some governments, the role of the international

media in the coverage of the NCP has been largely unfair. The media are more interested in publishing stories that appeal to their readers and audiences than conducting a thorough research on the matter.

A few years ago, I wrote a book about the coverage of the Greek economic crisis in the international media and concluded that many journalists had unreservedly vilified Greece and its citizens without having a clear idea about the problem or having visited the country. This is what is currently happening with the case of the NCP and China. You don't have to be an expert in political communication to understand that the criticism of the Chinese Government comes from the Sinophobia in the Western discourse.

Sadly, there have been incidents of racism and xenophobia against the Chinese and people with Asian features. Fear and panic fueled by media reports lead individuals to occasionally show an unacceptable attitude.

But on a positive note, there are journalists across the world who condemn this behavior and warn about the impact of prejudices. People in Europe, where the racist incidents occurred, are more likely to be infected by seasonal influenza than the NCP. Countries that do not follow WHO guidelines and decide to suspend all flights to China will realize that it will damage their national economies.

This Spring Festival was certainly different. Numerous people had to stay at home and cancel their holiday or business schedule for safety reasons. Despite the inconvenience due to the precautions and the uncertainty about the evolution of the public health crisis, the Chinese society has remained united. This is perhaps China's most important 'profit' in the last weeks.

Even under extreme circumstances, the public is determined to fight together with biologists, doctors and the authorities and tackle the problem. This mentality can be rarely understood in the West, where critics of China and its governance model abound.

The Chinese leadership has not looked for excuses even though the international criticism against it has been often unfair. **CI**



The author is director of EU-China Programs at the Center international de formation européenne

Tools for Recovery

Strong fundamentals will see the economy rebound after temporary setback

By Lan Xinzhen

Does the novel coronavirus outbreak mean economic opportunities for the U.S. that wouldn't have been possible under normal circumstances? Some U.S. media and officials seem to hold that unkind hope. However, it is unlikely as the impact of the virus on China's economy will be temporary and limited.

Economic opportunities should be seized by fair competition. The U.S., whenever it loses chances in international economic activities due to reasons of its own making, tends to blame others. It has blamed Japan, the EU and especially China, after the latter's rapid economic growth, to the extent of slandering it and starting a trade war. Now with China engaged in fighting an epidemic, some in the U.S. pin their hope on extracting economic mileage from the virus.

They forget the H1N1 influenza outbreak in the U.S. in 2009 that was declared a public health emergency of international concern with a 17.4-percent mortality rate. The fatality incidence of the pandemic was eight times higher than the novel coronavirus. The ongoing flu season in the U.S. had affected 19 million people, with at least 10,000 deaths from September 2019 to the end of January, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, neither epidemic made the U.S. economy crumble. Given the strong resilience of the Chinese economy, the current challenge will not hinder its future growth either.

China has its own advantages, which have laid a solid foundation for its economic growth despite criticism of the Chinese system by the U.S. media and certain politicians. This system has powered China to



The Hodo Group's production line turns out protective suits in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province in east China, on February 8

mobilize all sections of society to fight the epidemic in accordance with international practices. China is following an integrated approach combining domestic and international methods and forces. Unfortunately, many U.S. politicians are unable to recognize China's huge potential.

The Chinese financial system has matured with the ability to cope with economic uncertainties and risks, a reason why the outbreak will not affect the economy in the long term. Having withstood the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis, the country has established a sound response mechanism. With over \$3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, a low

fiscal deficit and a stable debt level, it can tackle any unexpected situation.

China's industrial structure has been upgraded, with equipment and hi-tech manufacturing taking the lead, while emerging industries and new forms of business have been rapidly developed. In 2019, for example, the value-added industrial output expanded 5.7 percent year on year, and production in strategic emerging industries increased 8.4 percent. The output of new products, such as urban rail vehicles and solar cells, rose 32.6 percent and 26.8 percent, respectively, year on year.

In addition, China has a well-developed logistics industry and highway, railway and



The author is a commentator of *Beijing Review*

shipping networks with a fairly comprehensive industrial system. These will help stabilize and maintain its manufacturing advantages.

So which enterprises are moving their factories back to the U.S. because of the outbreak, as U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross anticipated? Well, none so far.

The seven-day Spring Festival holiday and the National Day holiday week in October every year mark the peak seasons for the tourism, catering, entertainment and other service sectors in China. The outbreak affected consumption during one of the two most important holidays, which will certainly have some fallout. The restrictions by some countries on Chinese goods and travel will also have an impact on China's imports and exports and lead to a decline in the economic growth in the first quarter.

However, the government has already rolled out measures to stabilize the economy. The central bank has released 1.7 trillion yuan (\$233 billion) to maintain adequate liquidity in the banking system during epidemic control. Countercyclical adjustments will be boosted to keep market liquidity at a reasonable and ample level. So far, the financial market has been running smoothly.

On February 1, the central bank and four other authorities—the Ministry of Finance, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange—jointly issued 30 measures to increase financial support for small and micro businesses, private enterprises, manufacturing and other key sectors. The central bank has also provided relending funds of 300 billion yuan (\$42.97 billion) to national and local banks in the worst-hit regions so that they can offer loans at discounted interest rates to key manufacturers of medical supplies and daily necessities.

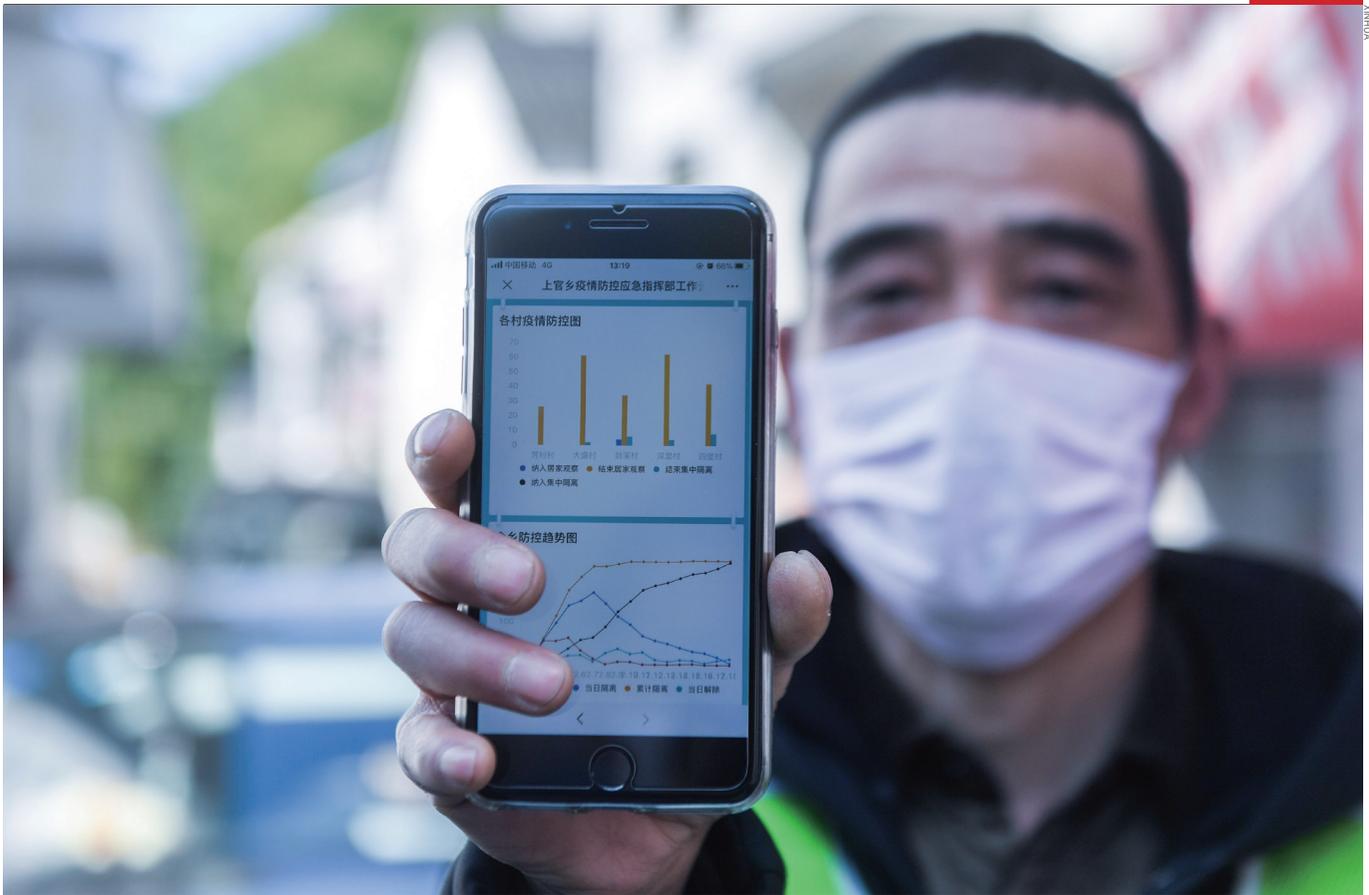
In 2003, China's economy declined in the second quarter due to the severe acute respiratory syndrome. But then it rebounded with an annual economic growth rate of 9.1 percent. Similarly, while the current outbreak will affect economic growth temporarily, once the epidemic is under control, the economy will return to stable growth, and the consumption and investment disturbed by the virus will rebound, leading to economic recovery. **CI**



A worker loads livestock feed at an animal feed mill in Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on February 9



At the Jiangling Motors Group's production base in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in east China, workers check ambulances on February 6



A staff member at a village checkpoint in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in east China, shows how to obtain instant data for epidemic prevention and control on February 20

Head in the Cloud

Tech companies empower China during epidemic

By Li Fangfang

When the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus struck 17 years ago, China was inching its way toward the information era. Alibaba was building the online shopping platform Taobao and developing its payment service Alipay, and the number of registered users of Tencent's instant messaging service QQ had just exceeded 100 million.

"TV news programs were a major source of information for people like me to find out what was going on," said Sunny Jiang to Pandaily.com about his experience in 2003. "My entire family freaked out when my dad got a fever, but we were too afraid to go to the hospital." Luckily, his father only had the common flu.

Today, those startups from 2003 have grown into tech giants and have paved the way for the country to deal with national

emergencies and make it possible for people to live an alternative life at home during the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Locked down but connected

Since the majority of Chinese people were encouraged to stay home as a precaution against contagion, the question of how to keep them informed and their daily life running has been answered by a modern, top-notch online infrastructure.

Now, people wake up every morning and can get information about the latest novel coronavirus cases from various channels on their phones or computers, such as newsfeeds, dashboards, news portals and text messages.

On January 23, Wuhan, the hardest-hit

city in Hubei Province in central China, was put on lockdown, followed by several other cities. Four days later, the government extended the holiday and advised people to work from home, a measure which was seen as a way to contribute to the national fight against the virus.

Media and online platforms quickly responded to misleading rumors, which helped people realize how easily fake news can spread during an epidemic.

WeChat, Tencent's popular multi-purpose app, became one of the main channels for residents to reach out for help. A mini-app on WeChat called Jiaozhen was launched on January 25 to help users filter out fake news, with expert explanations given for fast-spreading information that often proved to be false.

Practical ties

Thousands of WeChat groups have been established among communities, companies and non-governmental organizations, bridging the gap between people in need and people who can help.

Du Yun, a general practitioner in Wuhan's Fangcao Community with over 5,000 residents, invited doctors and nurses who live in

the community to join a WeChat group as a first step to address the epidemic.

"I suggested medical workers offer professional advice and psychological consultation for residents since the epidemic can easily cause panic," Du said. "Having a fever doesn't necessarily mean one is carrying the novel coronavirus."

The group has also turned into a logistics platform where community workers can buy daily necessities for residents who can then use a QR code to pay for them. Without ever having to meet face to face, social life continues.

Given that it is flu season in China, it is imperative to identify between a common respiratory illness and a viral pneumonia. This reassures people immediately and alleviates the burden of hospitals which may suffer shortages of medical personnel and materials.

But when community workers are unable to meet the needs of all who reach out, residents sometimes have to turn elsewhere for answers. As a result, many companies have launched online medical consultation services. On these platforms doctors or their artificial intelligence (AI) peers offer free advice.

Tencent launched a WeChat-based medical consultation platform for pneumonia-related questions for people with minor symptoms, partnering with five other popular online healthcare services including

Dingxiang Yisheng and Haodf.com, which have recruited 10,000 licensed doctors from all over the country. Alibaba and Baidu are offering similar services.

As of January 30, the number of visits to Alibaba's free consultation program offered on Taobao and Alipay had reached 2.8 million, with 90 percent coming from Wuhan. More than 530,000 consultations had been answered on a platform initiated by the smartphone app Chunyu Yisheng as of February 1, according to Jiemian.com, a news portal owned by the Shanghai United Media Group.

In addition, many other online-to-offline services have taken up their social responsibility. Ride-hailing services are playing a role as volunteer drivers help transport people to hospitals in areas where public transportation has been suspended. The on-demand service Meituan Waimai's distribution channels have become the only way for many small restaurants to purchase materials, and the company has promised to guarantee catering services for frontline medical workers and senior nursing homes.

NetEase is providing classes for primary school students in Hubei, while ByteDance is inviting physicians to talk about novel coronavirus-related issues and safety measures on its popular mobile platforms Toutiao and Douyin (TikTok).

The cybersecurity solution provider Qihoo 360 has launched a system of

reporting and statistics-gathering for community-based prevention and control. It identifies residents or visitors to a community and records their body temperature, which helps community workers collect real-time epidemic data that they then can report to local governments in a unified format.

For the public good

Since the novel coronavirus outbreak, at least 60 tech companies have rushed to provide support in various forms, according to data by news portal iFeng.com.

Alibaba Cloud, currently the country's largest cloud-computing service platform, announced on January 29 that it will make all its AI computing capabilities available for free to help scientific research into new medicines and vaccines for the virus.

Baidu has made its computing and software for RNA structure prediction available to gene testing organizations and scientific research institutions all over the world.

Tencent Cloud, another leading cloud provider in the country, has given a research team at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province in south China, free access to its cloud server and provided computing power and object storage capacity for a research team at Tsinghua University to help them conduct offline computing tasks for gene measurement.

Tencent has also become a reliable channel for crowdfunding. The company is cooperating with public charity foundations seeking to raise money for specific projects by publicizing them on WeChat. Among the many projects to support Wuhan, the one to donate to medical workers who are vulnerable on the frontline tops the list.

For Zong Ning, an Internet content provider who lived through both the SARS epidemic in 2003 and today's novel coronavirus, the big difference is the participation of tech companies.

"This year's fight against the novel coronavirus is tech-rich. More tech companies are participating in the battle. Their distribution channels, which were invisible to the general public, have become a lifeline," Zong said.

"The infrastructure that facilitates entertainment services has become a strong support during a national emergency. It is worth thinking about how the whole tech industry can continue to fulfill its social responsibility after the epidemic," Zong said. "Many tech products are actively functioning to keep society working." 



A medical worker introduces a food delivery robot in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province in south China on February 7. Hi-tech is being used in the city in the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus



A group of medical experts provide remote consultation at a smart medical treatment center in Zhengzhou, Henan Province in central China, on February 1

Distance Makes Less Difference

Remote work is promoted to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak By Li Xiaoyang

As a big data engineer based in Beijing, Li Kun got into telecommuting as early as 2013, but he said that today, during the novel coronavirus outbreak, he has seen it grow like never before.

To reduce face-to-face contact and prevent the spread of the epidemic, China has promoted telecommuting and online education through emerging Internet platforms.

Data from DingTalk, a mobile office tool developed by China's Internet giant

Alibaba, showed that nearly 200 million people across the country started working online on February 3, the first work day after the Spring Festival holiday.

As a flexible way of working, telecommuting is expected to offer more choices to domestic enterprises. "It may become a new trend in some industries, such as technological research and development, where offline communication is not always needed, which can greatly lower costs," Li told Beijing Review.

Remote but close

As the demand to work online has grown during epidemic control, many telecommuting and teleconferencing platforms have offered free services such as video conferencing to support working from home. Along with DingTalk, products from tech giants such as Tencent, ByteDance and Huawei have also seen robust user growth.

According to WeChat Work, developed by Tencent, millions of domestic enterprises had used the app by 6 p.m. on February 3, three times the number of users for the corresponding period a year before.

Data from WeLink, a Huawei cloud service, showed that a total of 17,000 new enterprise users registered on the platform and held 120,000 conferences that same day.

Telecommuting service providers such as Xiaoyu Yilian, a China-based intelligent cloud platform established in 2015, have emerged by providing targeted support. According to the company, its newly reg-

istered users have surged since the end of January, consisting of both enterprises and hospitals for remote work and consultation.

Technology enterprises have also seized the opportunity to expand their consumer base in the online education market. Since the Ministry of Education announced that the 2020 spring semester would be postponed due to the epidemic, many schools have joined the trend toward online education by turning to platforms where students can communicate with teachers in real time. According to DingTalk, its live-streaming courses had attracted 12 million students in 20,000 schools nationwide by February 2.

To ensure people's health while working at home, DingTalk has introduced a module for a daily health report that collects real-time data. As of February 4, nearly 100 million people from over 2 million enterprises and organizations had used the module to report the health status of members, the company said.

While many people are staying home, the delivery sector has remained busy to ensure the supply of daily necessities. UU Runner, a delivery service platform, told Zhengzhou-based Dahe.cn that consumer demand for cooked food, foodstuffs and medical products such as masks, has increased greatly in this period.

Online food delivery platforms such as Meituan Waimai have introduced special services for users to pick up their food in containers without face-to-face contact with delivery people.

Harder than expected

Although remote work is a fantasy for most, suggesting flexibility and freedom, some office workers have found it less rosy than they expected. According to many users, problems caused by the delay of live streams have led to big headaches.

Working at home also brings challenges such as how to remain efficient and focused. Many people have reported that housework has taken up much of their working time.

Fei Fan, a designer based in Beijing, posted on Weibo, the Chinese Twitter-like platform, that his views on working from home have changed. At first, he said he was happy to be spared the daily three-hour commute as a freelancer, but unexpected problems soon emerged.

"Since my company has shifted from offline businesses to online promotion during epidemic control, I have been even busier than usual," Fei said.

Working at home also makes the boundary between work and life less clear. "My phone rings at all hours with new messages and there are even more conferences because team leaders want to ensure efficiency and progress, which makes me anxious. Having my child around also makes it hard to focus on the work," he added.

For those working in industries that involve offline activities, it has been quite

difficult for them to advance their work. A legal specialist surnamed Cheng told TMTPost, a domestic tech site, that the project he is working on has been suspended because it requires the collection of paper documents in person. "I have only completed about a quarter of my routine weekly work in the week starting on February 3," Cheng lamented.

Still promising

The boom of remote work has brought many telecommuting enterprises forward, but Yuan Wenhui, CEO of Xiaoyu Yilian, warned that the consumer group of remote work may shrink once the epidemic and free services end, according to Business News Daily.

"However, domestic enterprises will at least be able to make quick progress from user feedback and begin to explore a larger market with the consumer base developed during this special period," he said.

The rise of telecommuting enterprises has shown the potential of China's remote work market. Although it has not yet been widely promoted in China, the market has been expanding and has a lot of room for growth, Zhang Xia, an analyst with China Merchants Securities, told Securities Daily.

According to Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, China's remote work market was about 23.4 billion yuan (\$3.3 billion) in 2018, an increase of 20.8 percent year on year. And it is expected to expand to about 48.6 billion yuan (\$6.9 billion) by 2024, with a compound annual growth rate of 12.4 percent.

Remote work is part of China's drive to boost the digital economy. Although its long-term economic fundamentals will remain sound, it needs to restore growth momentum amid the epidemic, and the development of the digital economy needs to be prioritized, Hu Zongbiao, an associate professor at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, told Beijing Review.

The digital economy has become a key driving force for China's economic growth. Data from the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology showed that the market value of the digital economy was 31.3 trillion yuan (\$4.4 trillion) in 2018, contributing 34.8 percent to the country's GDP.

"With rising demand, remote work will expand to more industries, which can inject impetus into domestic enterprises and promote the digital transformation of the Chinese economy," Hu said. **C**



A food delivery man takes dishes from a restaurant in Hefei, Anhui Province in east China, on February 6



A welder works at Harbin Boiler Co. Ltd. in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, on February 10

Opportunity in Adversity

As a balancing act starts to revive the economy, industry insiders foresee new trends

By Zhang Shasha

When many Beijing residents bid farewell to the city before the Spring Festival, which fell on January 25 this year, to rush home in other regions for a family reunion holiday, it marked the start of chunyun, the traditional travel rush known as the greatest human migration on Earth. However, un-

like the tradition, this year, the city did not see all the revelers return.

The novel coronavirus epidemic pressed the pause button, not only for the capital but for the whole country. The State Council, China's cabinet, extended the new year holiday from a week to 10 days to prevent large-scale transmis-

sion of the epidemic but now, it is time to resume work to stabilize society and the economy. While work from home is encouraged wherever feasible, cautious onsite production started on February 10 in a new round of campaign to test epidemic control measures.

In a circular on February 8, the State Council stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of workers and public health while addressing companies' difficulties.

The epidemic situation has shown positive changes due to concerted hard work, President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said at a meeting in Beijing on February 12, adding that the prevention and control work has achieved notable outcomes.

"The results are hard-won progress

made by all sides," Xi said.

Noting that epidemic prevention and control have entered a critical stage that requires stringent efforts, Xi stressed focusing on priorities without any letup and strengthening prevention and control in areas where the epidemic situation is particularly serious or at greater risk.

"Currently, apart from Hubei Province, the hardest-hit place in central China, other provincial-level regions are heading back to work. Enterprises in key areas including medical materials manufacturing, energy, grain, transportation and logistics have reopened," Cong Liang, Secretary General of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), said at a press conference on February 11.

Picking up the pieces

Companies providing epidemic control supplies and services such as medical materials and daily necessities were among the first to resume work. They are racing toward full production.

On February 8, four production lines for acrylonitrile, an organic compound used in surgical masks, gloves and protective suits, were in full swing at a Sierbang Petrochemical Co. factory in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province in east China.

"We made a rational production plan during the holiday and have enough people and materials for production," Bai Wei, General Manager of Sierbang, said, adding that 1,500 employees had resumed work.

In the first 10 days of February, the company produced more than 25,000 tons of acrylonitrile and other products, alleviating the shortage of raw materials for medical supplies.

Domestic medical mask production capacity had rebounded to nearly 87 percent by February 7, Chen Da, an NDRC official, said. Masks could become a national strategic material reserve instead of emergency material in the future.

Nearly 95 percent of major grain production and processing companies had resumed production and there was sufficient supply of natural gas, electricity and refined oil, Chen added.

Logistics companies were expected to reach over 40 percent of their normal handling capacity by mid-February, according to the State Post Bureau.

In other sectors, enterprises have altered their methods of work and recommenced production in a phased manner. Daily and large-scale disinfection

and health checks have become normal in public areas and enterprises. Telecommuting and working in shifts are popular ways to reduce face-to-face contact. People who returned from outside their cities stayed at home for 14 days, the incubation period for the virus, working remotely. Those who had stayed in their cities reported for onsite shift duty. Public service organs and companies are working online, with approval and assignment allocation done by e-mail or phone.

Where commuting and onsite work are necessary, employees are encouraged to take private cars. Big cities like Beijing lifted the one-day-a-week restriction on car use for the time being, permitting all cars to ply the roads on all days. Under the previous regulation, each car was banned from the streets one day a week, based on the last digit of the license plate.

Bai knows the difficulties will not vanish overnight despite resumption of production. "Manufacturers have delayed their return to work, which has led to a slump in the demand for our products. Moreover, logistics constraints have also affected the transportation of our materials and products," he said.

To cope with the logistics problem, he rented storage tanks to ease the burden on the warehouse, and adjusted the product structure. More solid chemical products are being manufactured since they are easier to store than liquid ones.

Overcoming obstacles

Most companies face similar challenges. "Soaring logistics costs are one of the difficulties," Sang Baichuan, Dean of the Institute of International Economy at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, told Beijing Review. He said the mobility constraint has raised the cost of labor. Together with limited transportation, costs are rising.

Investment, supporting service facilities and supply chains have also been affected. Companies do not exist in isolation, they are all links in a chain, Sang said. If different companies resume work on different dates, it can cause the chain to unravel. Also, some foreign countries are likely to reconsider their imports from China and may restrict Chinese visitors, which will impact trade and lead to reduced orders, while some orders may not be finished in time due to the restricted supply chain.

"Shrinking orders and unfinished transactions can have a significant impact

on the liquidity of companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)," Sang said.

A recent survey of 995 SMEs by Tsinghua University and Peking University found 70 percent of the respondents can survive two months at most with their current cash flow. Less than 10 percent said they could continue for half a year.

Apart from SMEs, catering, retail and tourism have also suffered. Jia Guolong, founder of Xibei, a top restaurant chain, said in an interview with Chinaventure.com.cn on February 1 that the company had been forced to close more than 400 of its restaurants nationwide. Only 100 were open for delivery services. With 20,000 employees, the salaries alone cost the company 156 million yuan (\$22.4 million) per month.

On February 6, Xibei signed a 530-million-yuan (\$76-million) credit agreement with the Beijing branch of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank. The first loan worth 130 million yuan (\$18.7 million) has already been issued. However, Jia said the business can't survive more than three months even after pooling in all cash and loans.

SMEs, on the other hand, have greater limitations in getting bank loans, compared to large chains like Xibei. The central authorities and local governments have already swung into action to cushion the epidemic's impact on companies, especially SMEs. As of February 7, 13 provincial-level regions and a number of lower-level governments had issued policies to support SMEs with measures such as the waiving of rent on a temporary basis, tax cuts and deferrals, credit support and subsidies, according to an Economic Daily report. Meanwhile, more policies are afoot.

The NDRC has allowed SMEs to maintain liquidity by issuing bonds. The capital raised via corporate bonds can be used to pay back project loans.

Giant real estate players such as Wanda, the R&F Group and the China Resources Group have stepped in to help, announcing that they will waive the rent for their commercial tenants by half to one month despite facing liquidity pressure themselves.

Hema Fresh, Alibaba's New Retail grocery chain with online and offline retail services, has offered to share employees to help workers who have been let go by distressed companies. With online orders for groceries mounting as people prefer to stay at home, Hema Fresh has a labor

shortage. So the retailer is borrowing idle employees from catering companies to fill the gap temporarily.

As of February 10, more than 1,800 employees from 32 catering companies, including Xibei, had joined Hema Fresh's temporary sharing plan. And many more companies have offered to temporarily employ disengaged workers to tide them over during this difficult period.

Planning for the future

While battling the current situation, enterprises need to make plans for the future to make up the losses. Sang said some difficulties are temporary as consumption will see a fast rebound after the effect of the epidemic wears off.

Xu Hongcai, Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Commission, China Association of Policy Science, told Beijing Review that changes will take place in people's lifestyle after the epidemic as they pay more attention to their health, which will also bring about new opportunities in business.

"From a long-term perspective, the outbreak will see a comprehensive reconstruction of the business ecosystem of the country, companies, industries and the people as a whole, the impact of which will last a long time," Li Jiangtao, a postdoctoral research fellow with the Institute of Economics, Tsinghua University, told Beijing Review.

In 2003, the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak became a catalyst for Internet industries. In the age of 5G, the epidemic may alter business models, consumption and purchasing habits in a revolutionary manner, Li added. He suggested SMEs pay more attention to social change since this marks an opportunity to reshape their companies and industries. "I'm confident new business models will emerge," he said.

According to Li, one change could come in management ideas as health maintenance may turn into company behavior from personal behavior. Telecommuting may also change corporate management. Freed from space constraints, employees can take several jobs while companies can adopt a project responsibility system. There is a great deal of opportunities, he said.

Sang also advised companies and public service systems to introduce and strengthen the use of artificial intelligence and automation in their production and services.



A worker hangs disposable gloves at a production plant in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province in north China, on February 10

At the national level, Xu said he thinks it is an opportunity to launch new reforms. For some public service sectors such as medical care and education, the government should increase investment instead of depending fully on the market, he said.

The outbreak exposed the weakness in infrastructure as the capacity for epidemic prevention and control was insufficient. Makeshift hospitals had to be built to tackle the emergency. It is crucial to increase public investment to improve medical services, Sang said. **CI**

Messages from foreign countries to support China's efforts to fight virus, restore economic growth

Nepal:

Nepal Communist Party strongly appreciates China's highly responsible attitude towards the safety of people's life and health, as well as its timely and transparent information sharing with the world in fighting the virus.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party

India:

After the outbreak of the epidemic, the Indian people, sympathizing with the Wuhan residents, firmly stand together with the Chinese Government and people in their anti-virus fight and wish them an early victory and return to normal work and life.

Ram Madhav, national General Secretary of India's Bharatiya Janata Party

Bangladesh:

We strongly oppose the ill-intentioned reports attempting to dishonor and degrade the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government, and it fully supports the devoted efforts by the CPC, the Chinese government and people in combating the virus.

Fazle Hossain Badsha, Secretary-General of the Workers Party of Bangladesh

The Philippines:

In coping with the epidemic, the CPC and the Chinese Government have adopted resolute measures to protect the people's life and health, providing

examples for the world to learn from.

Our party is willing to share the hardships with China, with its thoughts and prayers to be always with the CPC and the Chinese people, wishing them an early end of the public health emergency of international concern.

Aquilino Pimentel III, President of the Philippine Democratic Party-People's Power and former Senate president

Uganda:

I believe that the CPC will well coordinate the efforts to combat virus and promote economic development in China, benefiting both the Chinese and the world people. The eventful past years of the CPC and the People's Republic of China have shown

that the history is always on the side of the Chinese people, to which the current epidemic emergency will be no exception.

Justine Lumumba Kasule, Secretary General of Uganda's National Resistance Movement

Yemen:

China has blazed a unique development path and achieved in just a few decades what other countries have achieved in centuries. The fact that China has brought the epidemic under control quickly and is about to help mankind overcome it is testimony to China's strong capabilities to win the battle.

Sultan al-Barakani, Assistant Secretary-General of General People's Congress Party of Yemen, the speaker of the Yemeni parliament

Palestine:

Over the years, China has consistently supported the just cause of the Palestinian people. The two peoples have stood together through thick and thin and offered help to each other. The Palestinian side is ready to unite

with China as brothers and provide all assistance within its own capacity. China will overcome the epidemic as soon as possible, continues to achieve rapid development in various fields, and always stands firmly in the community of nations.

Jibril al-Rajoub, Secretary General of the central committee of Palestine's Fatah movement

Germany:

The Chinese government and people have made great efforts to fight the epidemic and prevent the spread of the virus. I call on the International community to strengthen coordination and jointly prevent the spread of the epidemic, and our party will firmly stand with the Chinese people.

Lars Klingbeil, General Secretary of Germany's Social Democratic Party, said

Laos:

I strongly believe that under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping, the

Chinese people will definitely defeat the COVID-19 soon. China's economy will maintain rapid growth and the livelihood of the Chinese people will continue to improve when the epidemic is over.

Bounnhang Vorachith, General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and President of Laos

Cambodia:

We would like to congratulate the People's Republic of China on its efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19, and we also thank China for taking care of Cambodian students there, including 23 in Wuhan city.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen, Cambodian Prime Minister

United Nations:

The measures put in place by the Chinese Government "is a gigantic effort and we are very confident that efforts will allow for the progressive reduction of the disease. It is always difficult to have a quick solu-

tion, but China has made a “very strong and very impressive response.”

Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

France:

France appreciates China’s arduous efforts to stem the epidemic, and will stay in solidarity with China, staunchly support China in its fight against the epidemic. Apart from the supplies France has already donated to China, more aid supplies will be provided by France to the Chinese side. The French consulate in Wuhan is still operating, with which France would like to testify to the true friendship between the two countries, and France would like to stay in solidarity with China in this rough times.

Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Foreign Minister

Indonesia:

Indonesia is willing to work with China to continue to promote the construction of the Belt and Road. We believe that the Indonesia-China friendship will be deepened and bilateral ties will be elevated to higher levels following the test of the epidemic.

Joko Widodo, Indonesian President

Senegal:

Senegal received strong support from China during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014. At this difficult time,

President Macky Sall as well as the Senegalese Government and people are ready to stand firmly with China and believe that the Chinese people are resilient enough to face the pressure and overcome the epidemic at an early date.

Amadou Ba, Senegalese Foreign Minister

U.S.:

The United States fully supports China’s fight against the novel coronavirus epidemic and is willing to send experts to China and offer assistance in various other forms. China has completed building special hospitals for novel coronavirus patients in an incredibly short time is impressive, and shows China’s outstanding organizational and response capabilities.

Donald Trump, U.S. President

IMF:

We are confident that China’s economy remains resilient. We have deep sympathies to all those affected by the serious situation related to coronavirus and support for China’s efforts to respond, including recent fiscal, monetary, and financial actions.

Kristalina Georgieva, IMF Managing Director