

# TOP NEWS

## New hospital to help HK battle COVID

City official thanks central government for rapid building of makeshift facility

By SHADOW LI in Hong Kong  
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A makeshift hospital in Tsing Yi, Hong Kong for COVID-19 patients began operation on Tuesday after it was handed over to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government on the same day.

The hospital, built in a week, has 3,900 isolation beds for patients with mild symptoms or who are asymptomatic. It is the first of nine such facilities to be built with the help of the central government as the city battles its fifth coronavirus outbreak.

After inspecting the site, Chief Secretary John Lee Ka-chiu thanked the central government for the "landmark" community isolation and treatment facility.

Describing the construction and handing over of the hospital in such a short time as a "miracle", Lee said it will help the city separate infected people from healthy residents and lower the risk of transmission.

The temporary hospital is made of prefabricated containers, with three beds per unit. There are also public toilets and showers.

The facility will be managed by the Security Bureau and medical workers will be on hand to care for patients. In total, the nine projects will add 50,000 beds for isolation and treatment of patients.

The government also announced on Tuesday it will open five more clinics to treat COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms, in addition to the nine clinics currently in operation. Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Center will also be used as a facility to provide care for 180 elderly patients referred by hospitals. From Wednesday, the North Lan-tau Hospital has been designated to handle COVID patients.

The third team of mainland epidemiologists led by Liang Wannian, head of the National Health Commission's COVID-19 leading task force, began its work in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

The five-member team met with two groups of Hong Kong health officials and exchanged views on the challenges posed by the outbreak, as well as the mainland's experience in tackling the pandemic.

Expressing gratitude for the delegation's visit, Secretary for Food



Social Welfare Department workers prepare beds on Monday at Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Center in Hong Kong for elderly patients. The center will be used as a makeshift facility to provide care for up to 180 elderly patients. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and Health Sophia Chan Siu-chee said: "The two meetings today were very thorough and constructive. In the coming few days, we will continue to explore strategies and measures to put the fifth wave of the epidemic situation under control based on the initial recommendations suggested by the experts."

Hong Kong health authorities reported 32,597 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday and a record 117 deaths in the past 24 hours.

Lee said the government is ironing out the details of planned mandatory testing in March and will inform residents once decisions are made to allow them enough time to prepare.

There is also no need to worry about food and daily necessities as the city has enough supplies, he said.

Supplies of fresh food from the mainland had largely returned to normal on Monday, official data showed.

About 2,100 metric tons of vegetables were shipped from the mainland, about 90 percent of the average daily supply from the mainland. Chilled meat deliveries from the mainland were 1.4 times more than the usual level.

Yuen Tai Trading, a major supplier of canned food in Hong Kong, said it has enough in reserve for the next 10 weeks, two weeks more than its usual stock.

The Hong Kong SAR govern-

ment also announced on Tuesday it will hire 1,000 caregivers from the mainland to work at nursing homes hit hard by infections.

Law Chi-kiung, secretary for labour and welfare, said infections were detected in over half the city's 1,000 residential care homes and in some nursing homes.

The mainland caregivers, hired on a three-month contract, will be paid up to HK\$31,000 (\$3,966) per month. The caregivers will arrive in groups and will undergo three-day of training to take care of the elderly at quarantine facilities and care centers.

Law said he hoped the first group would be ready to come in two to three days.

## Taiwan visit by former US officials slammed

By ZHAO JIA  
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China has slammed the visit by a group of US former defense and security officials to Taiwan, saying on Tuesday that it was futile for Washington to send anyone to demonstrate its so-called support for the island.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin made the remark at a regular news briefing after the delegation arrived in Taipei on Tuesday for a two-day visit. Reports said the group, led by one-time chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen, will meet on Wednesday with Tsai Ing-wen, leader of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party.

The Chinese people's resolve and will to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity are steadfast, Wang said, urging the US to abide by the one-China principle and the stipulations of the three China-US joint communiques and stop any form of official contact with the island.

The US should handle Taiwan-related issues with prudence to avoid further severe damage to the overall situation of Sino-US relations and peace and stability across the Straits, he added.

Zhu Fenglian, spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said on Tuesday that the DPP's colluding with external forces could not win security of the island and guarantee the well-being of Taiwan residents, which would only further make the island a pawn used by external forces to oppose and contain China.

Any so-called attempt to "embolden Taiwan" cannot change the fact that Taiwan is a part of China, and it cannot stop the reunification and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Zhu added.

In another development, Wang, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, denounced the hyping of the passing of the US guided-missile destroyer USS *Ralph Johnson* through the Taiwan Straits on Saturday, the second such passage of the year.

Wang said that if Washington attempts to exploit the passage of its warships to embolden the "Taiwan independence" forces, it would have to pay a heavy price for its adventurous acts.

Such a move would only accelerate the fall of "Taiwan independence" forces, he added.

He issued a solemn warning to those in the US who intended to intimidate China by this move, saying that any military deterrent is like "scrap metal" in front of the "Great Wall of steel" made up of 1.4 billion Chinese people.

The trick of sending military vessels through the Taiwan Straits is an act better saved to entertain those obsessed with hegemony, Wang added.

## Tibetans celebrate New Year



Colorfully dressed girls play a game in Gulong village, Lhasa, Tibet autonomous region, on Sunday to celebrate Losar, which is also known as New Year on the Tibetan calendar. CHOGO / XINHUA

## Operation: Russian convoy massing on outskirts of Kyiv

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Kuleba also said Ukraine attaches great importance to China's concerns and is assisting the smooth evacuation of Chinese citizens, including students.

In another development, Russia's TASS news agency reported on Tuesday that the second round of Russia-Ukraine talks is planned for Wednesday, quoting a source on the Russian side.

The first round of Russia-Ukraine talks aimed at ending their conflict concluded with no immediate agreement on Monday. The talks, which lasted nearly five hours, took place in the Gomel region of Belarus, near the border with Ukraine.

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said on Tuesday that Russia will continue the special military operation in Ukraine until the achievement of its set purpose.

Interfax News Agency reported on Tuesday that Russia is planning to move troops from its Far East region closer to Europe.

The news agency quoted Russia's eastern military district as saying that Russian troops based in the country's Far East region will hold drills in Astrakhan province, which lies on the border between the European and Asian parts of Russia.

Meanwhile, a huge Russian military convoy was massing on the outskirts of Kyiv on Tuesday morning.

Satellite images showed the convoy of armored vehicles, tanks, towed artillery and other vehicles. The convoy is more than 65 kilometers long, stretching from near Antonov airport outside Kyiv to the town of Pryborsk.

Russian troops will carry out an attack on what they said was the infrastructure of Ukraine's intelligence services in Kyiv and urged residents living nearby to leave, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Tuesday.

Blasts were heard in the Ukrainian capital hours after the talks ended on Monday. A mushroom cloud erupted over eastern Kyiv as air raid sirens were sounded early on Tuesday.

Explosions were also reported in and around Brovary, on the outskirts of the capital. Ukrainians set up checkpoints and blocked streets with piles of sandbags and tires as they waited to take on Russian soldiers.

In Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv, a government building was shelled by the Russian military on Tuesday morning.

Kharkiv's Mayor Igor Terekhov, quoted by Ukrainian media, said that Russian armored vehicles and tanks are "everywhere around the city."

Agencies contributed to this story.

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## PMI: Better economic performance expected

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China's non-manufacturing PMI was 51.6 in February, up from 51.1 in January. And the official composite PMI, which includes both manufacturing and services activity, stood at 51.2 in February, compared with 51 in January, according to the NBS.

A separate private survey released on Tuesday that focuses on small and export-oriented businesses also showed that factory activity in February expanded. The Caixin China General Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index stood at 50.4 in February, up from 49.1 in January.

Momentum set to continue

Wu Chaoming, deputy director of Chasing International Economic Institute, attributed the pickup in PMI readings to factors such as the government's effective measures to stabilize growth, the improvement in demand conditions, and the accelerated structural transformation, and said the PMI readings were likely to continue to stay in the expansion territory in March.

On the demand front, the bureau said the sub-gauge for new orders rose to 50.7 last month, versus 49.3 in January, thanks to improving market demand following the Spring Festival holiday.

Yang Jinghao, chief economist at Concat Data Technology

(Hangzhou) Co, said the accelerated manufacturing activity in February points to the resilience of China's economy amid downward pressure and uncertainties.

He also warned of challenges and uncertainties such as the crisis between Russia and Ukraine that may push global commodity prices higher, which could increase the cost pressures on manufacturing enterprises.

Yang estimated China's 2022 economic growth will start low and end high, and the growth may stabilize and recover in the second or third quarter.

"The February PMI readings proved China has taken proper measures to deal with the downward pressure," Yang added. "We expect the PMI will continue to stay in the expansion territory, and the readings may fluctuate or rise slowly."

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said he expects the manufacturing PMI will reach a new high in the short run, and then fall slightly in the second quarter. With the government's pro-growth policies gradually kicking in, manufacturing PMI is expected to pick up significantly in the second half.

For the whole year, Luo estimated China's economy will grow by around 5.2 percent.

He expected more supportive measures to be launched soon to stabilize the overall economy,

including tax and fee cuts and expanding effective investment in fields such as infrastructure and manufacturing.

Luo's views were echoed by Chen Chuanglian, deputy director of the Southern China Institute of Finance at Jinan University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, who said China's economy has shown signs of recovery, and expected to see better economic performance in the second half.

"The government will take further steps to spur the growth, including further tax and fee cuts and more monetary easing measures," Chen added. "And the construction of infrastructure projects in fields like transportation and the development of 5G and other information sectors will create new growth points for the economy."

With a GDP of \$17.7 trillion, China, the world's second-largest economy, is expected to account for more than 18 percent of the global economy in 2021, according to the NBS.

"The contribution of China's economic growth to the world economy is expected to reach about 25 percent in 2021. ... playing a key role in supporting the global economic and trade recovery and maintaining stability in global industrial and supply chains," Sheng Laiyun, deputy head of the NBS, said on Monday.

## Wider clinical use of acupuncture therapy urged

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A study led by a prominent Chinese acupuncture expert has identified eight diseases or conditions for which acupuncture therapy shows a moderate or large effect with moderate or high certainty, providing more scientific evidence for wider clinical use of acupuncture worldwide.

Acupuncture was proved in the study to be effective for post-stroke aphasia; neck and shoulder pain; myofascial pain; fibromyalgia-related pain; nonspecific lower back pain; lactation success rate within 24 hours of delivery; vascular dementia symptoms; and allergic rhinitis symptoms, according to the research by a team led by Xu Neng-gui, a professor at Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine and vice-president of the China Association of Acupuncture-Moxibustion.

The research report, titled "Evidence on Acupuncture Therapies Is Underused in Clinical Practice and Health Policy", was published on Friday in the peer-reviewed British Medical Journal.

Acupuncture, a technique of traditional Chinese medicine that originated 2,000 years ago, has seen increasingly wide clinical use worldwide, according to Xu. Research into the underlying biology and clinical research have also grown.

Since 1975, the results of more than 10,000 randomized, controlled trials on acupuncture have been published.

Xu's team reviewed the number and quality of systematic reviews of acupuncture, explored the possible underuse of proven beneficial acupuncture therapies in clinical practice and health policy worldwide, and identified promising and under-researched areas.

For instance, they found that acupuncture is underused in practice for treatment of post-stroke aphasia, a disorder that affects the ability to communicate.

A high-quality, systematic review of eight trials involving 481 patients that compared acupuncture with language rehabilitation, a standard treatment in the West, found a large difference in improvement in the functional communication of post-stroke aphasia patients in favor of acupuncture, the study report said.

However, worldwide, only one Chinese clinical practice guideline has recommended acupuncture therapy for treatment of post-stroke aphasia.

The National Aphasia Association of the United States estimated that 2 million people in the country and 250,000 people in the United Kingdom suffered from post-stroke aphasia in 2016. However, acu-

puncture is not included in treatment guidelines.

Health insurance policies' lack of coverage is also a factor in the underuse, the study found.

Meanwhile, acupuncture also showed promising effects for such problems as depressive disorders, migraine and opioid use disorders, though funding and research in these areas have increased little in the past decade, according to Xu.

Promising acupuncture therapies that show evident effect yet low certainty represent potentially fruitful future clinical research targets, according to the report.

"It is vital to make use of the large existing body of research evidence to inform clinical and policy decision-making and establish funding and research agendas globally," Xu said.

The team suggested that evidence on acupuncture be digitized and disseminated to facilitate access.