Italy imposes mandatory Covid tests for travellers from China

MILAN – Italy has ordered COVID-19 antigen swabs and virus sequencing for all travellers coming from China, where cases are surging, the health minister said on Wednesday.

Italy, which was the first nation in Europe to be hit hard by the virus in February 2020 after it emerged in China, is now the first to impose mandatory tests on people arriving from the Asian country grappling with a new wave.

Milan's main airport, Malpensa, had already started testing passengers arriving from Beijing and Shanghai on Dec. 26, and the results showed almost one in two passengers was infected.

"The measure is essential to ensure surveillance and detection of possible variants of the virus in order to protect the Italian population", minister Orazio Schillaci said, announcing mandatory testing for all passengers.

The minister did not say what measures would be imposed on travellers testing positive, but the local health chiefs in the Lombardy region around Milan and the Lazio region around Rome said they would have to quarantine in buildings set aside by the local health authorities.

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