

Taiwan Steps up COVID-19 Alert, Shuttters Non-Essential Workplaces

Mask-wearing is compulsory indoors and outdoors, and social gatherings are strictly limited.



A local resident listens to a medical staff before queueing up for the COVID-19 virus testing at the Wanhua District in Taipei, Taiwan, May 19, 2021. -AFP

The democratic island of Taiwan on Wednesday moved into a Level 3 coronavirus alert as a community outbreak of COVID-19 spread across the country.

Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) said it had recorded more than 100 locally transmitted cases for the fifth consecutive day.

Residents are now required to wear masks at all times when they leave their homes, indoor gatherings of more than five people banned, and outdoor gatherings are limited to 10 people.

Places of business and public venues not providing essential services like law enforcement, medical treatment, and government offices are advised to close.

To date, Taiwan has reported 2,533 cases of COVID-19 since the outbreak began, of which 1,226 cases are domestic infections reported since May 15, the CECC said.

Health minister Chen Shih-chung said that while the outbreak began in and around the capital, Taipei, domestic transmissions have been found in other cities too.

The authorities have set up a text-messaging service enabling residents to register more easily with the track, test, and tracing regime across the island.



A customer waits for her lunch box at a restaurant next to the Taipei Cinema Park in the Wanhua District, in Taipei , May 19, 2021. Credit: AFP

Home-grown vaccine

President Tsai Ing-wen has visited pharmaceutical factories producing Taiwan's home-grown COVID-19 vaccine, while the island recently took delivery of fresh AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccine shipments.

"The vaccines we have purchased from abroad through various channels are gradually moving into place, so please don't worry [about availability]," Tsai said on Tuesday.

"Development of our homegrown vaccines is also on schedule, [with Lianya] entering the second phase of the final clinical trial," she said. "We hope to be able to start the first tranche of domestic production by the end of July."

Meanwhile, the island's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) rejected suggestions that Taiwan would need to import vaccines from China to meet demand.

"As long as mainland China doesn't get in our way, we can get greater quantities, and more reliable, vaccines from the rest of the world faster," MAC spokesperson Chiu Chui-cheng told reporters.

"If the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) really cared about the lives of ordinary people, they should stop sending their military aircraft to harrass Taiwan, and let us get on with fighting the pandemic," Chiu said.

He was responded to recent comments from China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian, who had suggested Taiwanese would be "eagerly looking forward" to getting Chinese vaccines given the current outbreak there.

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Sources:

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