

COVID-19 CASES IN CHINA'S GUANGDONG

14pc tested positive again after recovery

THE STRAITS TIMES ONLINE

About 14 percent of patients who recovered from the novel coronavirus and were discharged from hospitals in southern China's Guangdong province were tested positive again in later check-ups, according to the local health authority.

A positive test suggests the recovered patients may still carry the virus, adding complexity to efforts to control the outbreak.

There is no clear conclusion on why it happens and whether such patients could still be infectious, said Song Tie, deputy director of the Guangdong Centre of Disease Control And Prevention (Guangdong CDC), at a Tuesday briefing.

According to the preliminary assessment, experts believed the patients are still recovering from lung infections and have yet to be fully healthy, according to Song.

According to the latest treatment guidelines for the COVID-19 issued by the National Health Commission, patients can be considered recovered and released from hospital when their throat or nose swabs show up negative in two consecutive tests, with a CT scan indicating no lung lesions, and when they have no obvious symptoms such as fever.

The guidelines suggest recovered patients should monitor their health and limit outdoor activities for two weeks after leaving the hospital, and check in for retesting in following weeks.

Some patients' test results returned to positive in the follow-up checks, said Li Yueping, director of the intensive care unit at Guangzhou No 8 People's Hospital at the briefing.



Congress Party workers shout slogans as they burn an effigy of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C) during a demonstration to protest against the violence occurring in New Delhi, in Amritsar, Punjab, Yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Lanka notifies UN over war crimes resolution withdrawal

Sri Lanka yesterday notified the UN that it was withdrawing from a United Nations resolution for investigating alleged war crimes committed during a decades-long conflict with Tamil separatists. "I wish to place on record Sri Lanka's decision to withdraw from co-sponsorship of resolution 40/1 on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights," Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena told the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa earlier this month had said Sri Lanka was withdrawing from the resolution that the country's previous government had endorsed. Rajapaksa was president when Sri Lankan troops defeated Tamil Tiger guerrillas in 2009, but rights groups accused the army of killing at least 40,000 Tamil civilians in the final months of the conflict. His brother Gotabaya, who is now president, was defence secretary at the time.

Erdogan rules out 'smallest step back' in Syria's Idlib

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday vowed Turkey would not take the "smallest step back" in an escalating stand-off with Damascus and Russia over the northern Syrian region of Idlib. Meanwhile, a meeting between Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, is expected to take place, the Turkish foreign minister, ahead of a possible summit including EU heavyweights Germany and France to find a political solution to the Idlib crisis. In recent weeks, Damascus backed by Russian air strikes has pressed a major offensive against the remaining territory held by jihadists and Turkish-backed rebels in Idlib. Idlib hosts more than three million people -- half of them already displaced by violence elsewhere and the United Nations has warned against an imminent "bloodbath" amid the continuing fighting.

Mubarak gets military funeral



Egypt held a military funeral yesterday for its former president Hosni Mubarak, bestowing the state's final rehabilitation on the man who ruled for 30 years until he was ousted in disgrace in a 2011 popular uprising. Horses drew Mubarak's coffin draped in the Egyptian flag at a mosque complex as cannons fired into the air, followed by a procession led by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, as well as Mubarak's two sons Alaa and Gamal. Mubarak died on Tuesday in intensive care weeks after undergoing surgery, leaving Egyptians divided over the legacy of his era, marked by stagnation and repression but recalled by some as more stable than the chaos that followed. Egypt declared three days of national mourning for him.

SOURCE: AFP

'Can't allow another 1984'

Says Delhi High Court, orders security for all citizens, action against hate speeches

THE STATESMAN/ANN

The Delhi High Court yesterday passed a series of orders with regards to the violence in Delhi's northeast district and said that "another 1984-like situation cannot be allowed to happen in this city under its watch".

"We have to be alert," said Justice S Muralidhar and ordered safe passage for collection of body of deceased, setting up of adequate number of helplines, shelter to people who have been displaced among other things.

"We propose to appoint amicus curie to coordinate between victims and agencies to ensure that prompt action is taken," the court added.

The high court was hearing a plea seeking FIRs against those who instigated violence in Delhi. The plea also sought an independent judicial inquiry into the violence in Maujpur, Jaffrabad and adjoining areas in Northeast Delhi.

The court observed that "it was time to provide Z-level security to citizens, as it was for everyone". The Bench also said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia should visit the affected areas "for confidence-building among people".

It further asked the highest functionaries in the state and central government to personally meet the victims and their families.

The court asked the Delhi Police to 'take a conscious decision with respect to the registration of FIRs' against BJP leaders Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Verma and Kapil

VIOLENT CLASHES IN NEW DELHI



Mishra, and others, who made alleged hate speeches that may have incited violence in the national capital.

Clips of speeches made by Thakur, Verma and MLA Abhay Verma were also played in court. BJP leader Kapil Mishra carried out a rally in Jaffrabad area and gave a three-day ultimatum to the anti-CAA protesters in the area to clear. In a

video of the speech he can be seen making incendiary comments even as a Delhi Police officer stands next to him.

However, no action has been taken against Mishra by the party.

On the plea of deployment of Army in the violence-affected areas, the court said: "We don't want to enter into the question of deployment of Army. We should focus on the issue of registration of FIR right now."

At least 23 people have died and over 250 have been injured in violent clashes that erupted between the supporters and opponents of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Delhi's northeast region.

The petition was filed by Mander and activist Farah Naqvi and sought the setting up of a special investigation (SIT) team to inquire into the riots in Delhi and compensation for those killed and injured in the violence.

The high court has meanwhile, appointed advocate Zubeda Begum as amicus curiae to coordinate between victims and various agencies, news agency PTI reported.

Earlier, in an emergency midnight hearing, the high court had asked the police to ensure safe passage and emergency treatment for those injured in northeast Delhi violence since the last three days.

IRAN NUCLEAR ACCORD

Europe steps up bid to save deal

AFP, Vienna

Western European powers stepped up efforts yesterday to try to save a 2015 deal to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions -- on life support since a 2018 decision by the US to withdraw and reimpose sanctions.

Officials from Britain, France and Germany began a meeting in Vienna -- the first since they launched a dispute process over alleged violations by Iran -- aiming to persuade the Middle Eastern country to fall back into line with the deal.

The other parties to the deal, China and Russia, are also taking part in the talks overseen by the European Union, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying on Twitter there was still a chance "to stop escalation before it is too late".

In its last announcement in early January, Tehran said it would no longer observe limits on the number of centrifuges used to enrich uranium. It was its fifth step away from the deal since US President Donald Trump's withdrawal, and led to Germany, Britain and France triggering the dispute process on January 14.

The process spells out several steps, the last one of which is notifying the UN Security Council. UN sanctions would then automatically "snap back" after 30 days unless the Security Council voted to stop it.

Western diplomats believe Iran is highly unlikely to heed calls to come back into full compliance without substantial concessions in return -- such as an end to US sanctions or Europe taking measures to offset their economic impact.

NEWSIN brief

India wedding bus tragedy kills 24

AFP, Jaipur

A bus carrying a wedding party crashed into a river yesterday in India's western state of Rajasthan killing 24 passengers, including 10 women, police said. The driver lost control as the bus, with 28 people on board, was crossing a bridge, according to Bundi district police superintendent Shrivaj Meena.

S Korea's birth rate falls to all-time low

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's birth rate hit a new low yesterday as authorities announced barely 300,000 babies were born last year in the nation of 51 million people. The country has one of the world's longest life expectancies and one of its lowest birthrates, a combination that presents a looming demographic disaster. The government has spent more than 180 trillion won (\$148 billion) since 2006 to boost birth rates.

UN sanctions regime for Yemen renewed

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council on Tuesday renewed its sanctions regime on Yemen for another year. The sanctions plan, which would have expired on Wednesday, includes the extension of the mandate of UN experts who monitor the arms embargo imposed in 2015. The resolution also extends the measures that provide for the freezing of assets and travel bans on targeted officials.



Syrian children sit inside a vehicle as they are evacuated from the scene of a pro-regime forces' air strike in the town Maarat Misrin in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, on Tuesday. Foreign ministers from 14 European countries, including France and Germany, yesterday demanded that Syrian government forces and their Russian backers end their offensive in Idlib and return to the terms of a 2018 ceasefire deal. PHOTO: AFP

Assange tried to contact Clinton over data dump

His lawyer tells UK court during extradition hearing

REUTERS, London

Julian Assange tried to contact Hillary Clinton and the White House when he realised that unredacted US diplomatic cables given to WikiLeaks were about to be dumped on the internet, his lawyer told his London extradition hearing on Tuesday.

Assange is being sought by the United States on 18 counts of hacking US government computers and an espionage offence, having allegedly conspired with Chelsea Manning, then a US soldier known as Bradley Manning, to leak hundreds of thousands of secret documents by WikiLeaks almost a decade ago.

On Monday, the lawyer representing the United States told the hearing that Assange, 48, was wanted for crimes that had endangered people in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan who had helped the West,

some of whom later disappeared.

Outlining part of his defence, Assange's lawyer Mark Summers said allegations that he had helped Manning to break a government password, had encouraged the theft of secret data and knowingly put lives in danger were "lies, lies and more lies".



He told London's Woolwich Crown Court that WikiLeaks had received documents from Manning in April 2010. He then made a deal with a number of newspapers, including the New York Times, Britain's Guardian and Germany's Der Spiegel, to begin releasing redacted parts of the 250,000 cables in November that year.

Summers also said Assange attempted to warn the US government, calling the White House and attempting to speak to then-Secretary of State Clinton, saying "unless we do something, people's lives are put at risk".

2020 DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

Rivals attack Sanders ahead of 'Super Tuesday'

AGENCIES

Democratic White House hopefuls rounded on leftist frontrunner Bernie Sanders at a feisty debate Tuesday, attacking him as too extreme for American voters and a flawed challenger to President Donald Trump.

Joe Biden, who needs a victory in South Carolina's crucial primary on Saturday to keep his campaign alive, hit Sanders as soft on gun control, while billionaire tycoon Michael Bloomberg claimed Russia was working to help Sanders win the nomination -- betting he would be defeated in November.

And Sanders' rivals joined in savaging the self-described democratic socialist as too radical to appeal to a broad swathe of Americans.

Fellow progressive Elizabeth Warren and centrists Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar, all desperate to halt Sanders' momentum before it is too late, laid into his ability to deliver on costly programs such as universal

health care and tuition-free college.

Buttigieg, a 38-year-old military veteran presenting himself as a unifier, warned a Sanders fight against Trump would spell "chaos" and divide the nation.

"I tell you what it adds up to," Buttigieg said, "it ends up as four more years of Donald Trump."

Sanders is in pole position in South Carolina, the last step before "Super Tuesday" on March 3 when 14 states vote and a whopping third of all delegates are up for grabs.

Talking over one another in often contentious exchanges, the seven candidates aggressively vied for attention, locking horns on everything from housing to China policy, and whether or not to move the US embassy from Jerusalem back to Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, according to a Reuters/Ipsos national poll released on Tuesday, Sanders has widened his lead and overtaken Joe Biden in support among African Americans.

Mahathir, Anwar vie for power

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia was plunged into a bitter power struggle yesterday as Mahathir Mohamad sought to form a unity government following his shock resignation, but old foe Anwar Ibrahim also pushed to become premier.

The developments deepened a crisis that began when the ruling coalition -- which included both men when it stormed to a historic poll victory in 2018 -- fell apart after a failed bid to establish a new government without Anwar.

Anwar was Mahathir's designated successor, but he would likely have been pushed out and blocked from becoming leader if the weekend bid had succeeded.

Mahathir quit Monday as premier but it remains unclear whether he had a hand in the plot to topple the government, although analysts suspect he at least gave it his blessing. He has been named interim leader and initially appeared to have strong support to remain as premier.

But backing fell away early yesterday and rumours swirled Anwar had garnered enough support from MPs

for the top job, fuelling expectations that Mahathir might finally cede power.

The elderly leader, however, announced in a televised address to the nation that he wished to establish a unity government, and was willing to return as premier.

"Party politics must be put aside for now," said Mahathir. "If allowed, I will try to form an inclusive government, not siding with any political parties."

POLITICAL TURMOIL IN MALAYSIA

If allowed, I will try to form an inclusive gov't: Mahathir

Anwar said he received backing from 3 parties in coalition to become PM



"If I still have the support I will return. If not I will accept whoever is chosen," he added.

Moments later at a press conference at his party headquarters, Anwar said he had received backing from three parties in the "Pact of Hope" coalition -- the grouping in power until Mahathir quit -- to

become premier. Anwar, 72, said the coalition had invited Mahathir to a meeting on Tuesday evening aimed at reviving the coalition, but after he failed to show they decided to put him forward as their candidate.

"Since the attempt to topple the government last week we have remained steadfast in defending the mandate of the Malaysian people," he said.