

Friday, March 18, 2022

'No need for citywide lockdown in Shanghai'

Yang Jian

There is no need for a citywide lockdown in Shanghai at present, despite the surging number of COVID-19 cases recently, according to a senior local government official.

Based on the current pandemic situation, Shanghai will designate several key areas according to the regional risk levels and conduct nucleic acid testing block by block, Gu Honghui, the city's deputy secretary general, said yesterday.

Outside the key areas, companies are encouraged to stagger their work hours and allow employees to work from home to reduce mobility.

"Such measures are expected to help achieve the dynamic 'zero-COVID-19' target at social level soon and let citizens to return to normal life," Gu told a press briefing.

"We have not locked down the city and don't have to do that now," he added.

Gu said the city is at a critical stage of the pandemic as the task of curbing the spread of the virus remains arduous.

Among the new cases, about 90 percent are asymptomatic patients infected with the highly-contagious Omicron variant, which is spreading rapidly and is hard to detect.

This round of the pandemic

mainly involves crowded places such as shopping malls, supermarkets, wholesale markets, public bathrooms, community activity centers, schools and hospitals as well as key groups such as supermarket employees, shuttle drivers, quarantine site staff and retirees.

The chain of transmission is complicated, Gu suggested.

Furthermore, a mixture of imported cases as well as domestic and local infections has put great pressure on the city's quarantine accommodations and medical resources, he pointed out.

More than 100 international flights to Shanghai will be diverted to one of a dozen different domestic airports beginning March 21 to help relieve the city's recent COVID-19 prevention pressure.

"The airlines are required to inform passengers who have already booked tickets about the flight diversions in order to protect their legal rights," Xu Qing, vice director of the of the CAAC's transportation department, said at a press briefing in Beijing on Tuesday.

The local government has enhanced management on people leaving and returning to Shanghai and asked residents not to leave the city unless absolutely necessary.

A negative nucleic acid test

report is required at local transport hubs and operations at all long-distance bus terminals have been suspended.

All local elementary and secondary schools have moved to teaching online, while all kindergartens, nursery schools, training organizations and day-care centers have suspended offline operations.

In addition, all large exhibitions, art performances and other gathering events have been banned.

Additional measures have been taken to further curb the spread of the virus.

All local universities have been under quarantined management for full COVID-19 screenings. The restrictions will be loosened only after everyone on campus tests negative twice, said Yang Zhenfeng, deputy director of the Shanghai Education Commission. All the teachers and staff must undergo weekly nucleic acid tests.

Shanghai will stick to the chief target of dynamic "zero-COVID-19" at social level with key strategies to "reduce mobility" and "expand screening and testing," according to Wu Fan, deputy dean of Shanghai Medical College of Fudan University and a member of the city's COVID-19 prevention experts' team.



People take nucleic acid testing at a temporary testing site at Luwan Gymnasium in Huangpu District on Tuesday. — Jiang Xiaowei

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