
China: Over 2 Million People in Beijing Are Tested for COVID-19

By: Telesur
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Beijing Prevention Team spokesperson Zhang Qiang Saturday reported that over 2.2 million people have been tested for COVID-19 and that 22 new cases were registered on Friday, a figure that implies a decrease from the 19 contagions detected on Thursday.

Since the outbreak began on June 11, Beijing has accumulated 205 COVID-19 cases. Nationwide, there are still 308 active cases and 6,023 people under observation.

The authorities of this Chinese city carry out COVID-19 tests on people who work in 36 types of activities and places with a high probability of transmitting the disease, including restaurants, universities, markets, shopping centers, and transportation services.

Zhang also reported that residents of 40 neighborhoods in risk areas cannot leave their homes to avoid infection. Those who have had to quarantine will only be able to leave once their coronavirus tests are negative, he added.

However, the municipal official noted that those who have not had direct contact with the Xinfadi market, where the outbreak originated, have "a very low risk" of being infected.

"There is no need for people to go for mass testing," he said.

In Beijing, activities have decreased markedly, transport services are at a minimum, and the streets, restaurants, and shopping centers are practically empty.

The restrictions to leave the city are still in force and people who live in risk areas cannot leave them. To leave those areas, a person must submit a negative coronavirus test performed seven days before the departure.

The Municipal Public Security deputy director Pang Xuhong said that "the restrictions do not mean that the city has been sealed", and that the objective is "to prevent the virus from spreading through the capital or reaching other parts of China "

So far, 17 Beijing-related COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in five provinces: Hebei (11), Liaoning (3), Sichuan (1), Zhejiang (1), and Henan (1).

Although the prevention authorities last week assured that the outbreak is already controlled and the curve of new cases would be flattening "little by little", some experts expressed that this conclusion could be premature.

"The virus circulated for a long period of time before it was detected. We have to do more tests on people who have had contact with the Xinfadi market to know for sure what the outbreak is," epidemiologist Jin Dongyan said.

"It is very possible that the virus will return in the near future. All these preventive measures must be normalized, we must not lower our guard," the National Health Commission member Zeng Guang warned.

Preliminary investigations by Chinese scientists suggest that the strain of the virus found massively in the Xinfadi market comes from Europe.

The National Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment's Microbiology Laboratory director Li Fengqin said that although "the virus does not come from food, it is possible that its packaging was contaminated."

On Thursday, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention director Gao Fu said that the outbreak began to spread probably in May inside the Xifandi market, which has 1,500 employees and more than 4,000 sellers.
