

President of Taiwan: How My Country Prevented a Major Outbreak of COVID-19

Taiwan is an island of resilience. Centuries of hardship have compelled our society to cope, adapt and survive trying circumstances. We have found ways to persevere through difficult times together as a nation, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no different. Despite the virus' highly infectious nature and our proximity to its source, we have prevented a major outbreak. As of April 14, we have had fewer than 400 confirmed cases.

This success is no coincidence. A combination of efforts by medical professionals, government, private sector and society at large have armored our country's defenses. The painful lessons of the 2003 SARS outbreak, which left Taiwan scarred with the loss of dozens of lives, put our government and people on high alert early on.

Last December, when indications of a contagious new respiratory illness began to appear in China, we began monitoring incoming passengers from Wuhan. In January, we established the Central Epidemic Command Center to handle prevention measures. We introduced travel restrictions, and established quarantine protocols for high risk travelers.

Upon the discovery of the first infected person in Taiwan on Jan. 21, we undertook rigorous investigative efforts to track travel and contact history for every patient helping to isolate and contain the contagion before a mass community outbreak was possible.

In addition to the tireless efforts of our public health professionals, spearheaded by Health Minister Chen Shih-chung, our informed citizens have done their part. Private businesses, franchises and apartment communities have initiated body temperature monitoring and disinfection steps that have supplemented government efforts in public spaces.

To prevent mass panic buying, at an early stage the government monitored market spikes in commodities and took over the production and distribution of medical-grade masks. With the cooperation of private machine-tool and medical-supply companies, the Ministry of Economic Affairs coordinated additional production lines for surgical masks, multiplying production capacity. Supported by technology experts, pharmacies and convenience stores, we devised a system for distributing rationed

masks.

Here, masks are available and affordable to both hospitals and the general public. The joint efforts of government and private companies— a partnership we have deemed “Team Taiwan”— have also enabled us to donate supplies to seriously affected countries.

Taiwan has one of the world’s top health care systems, strong research capabilities and transparent information that we actively share with both the public and international bodies. Indeed, Taiwan has effectively managed the containment of the coronavirus within our borders.

Yet on a global level, COVID-19 is a humanitarian disaster that requires the joint efforts of all countries. Although Taiwan has been unfairly excluded from the WHO and the U.N., we remain willing and able to utilize our strengths across manufacturing, medicine and technology to work with the world.

Global crises test the fabric of the international community, stretching us at the seams and threatening to tear us apart. Now more than ever, every link in this global network must be accounted for. We must set aside our differences and work together for the benefit of humankind. The fight against COVID-19 will require the collective efforts of people around the world.

Taiwan is no stranger to hardship, and our resilience stems from our willingness to unite to surmount even the toughest obstacles. This, above all else, is what I hope Taiwan can share with the world: the human capacity to overcome challenges together is limitless.

Taiwan can help.

中文譯稿

臺灣總統：我的國家如何預防 COVID-19 大爆發

臺灣是「堅韌之島」，數百年來歷經滄桑，終究能克服逆境並生存下來。我們全國上下總能堅忍共度，面對新型冠狀病毒疫情也是如此。儘管病毒傳染性非常高，而我們又與病毒發源地近在咫尺，不過，我們還是成功遏止了境內的大流行。截至 4 月 14 日止，累計確診病例不到 400 例。

臺灣的成功並非偶然。在醫療人員、公私部門及整個社會的共同努力下，我國做好了防疫的準備。在 2003 年的嚴重急性呼吸道症候群（SARS）疫情中，我們痛失了數十條人命。這個慘痛經驗讓政府及民眾在疫情初期階段就保持高度警戒。去年 12 月，當中國開始出現新型呼吸道傳染性疾病的跡象時，我們就開始管控從武漢入境旅客的健康狀況。今年 1 月，我們成立了中央流行疫情指揮中心，推動防疫措施，實施旅遊限制，並針對高風險旅客訂定隔離處置流程。

1 月 21 日，臺灣出現首例確診病例後，即進行嚴密的疫調，追溯每個病例的旅遊及接觸史，防堵大規模社區傳染於未然。除了衛生福利部陳時中部長帶領公衛專家不懈的努力外，國人都能充分掌握資訊並配合。私人企業和住宅社區也啟動體溫監測及消毒措施，呼應政府在公共空間的防疫努力。

為預防大眾恐慌性採購，政府初期就密切監控商品市場的波動，並接管醫療用口罩的製造與分配。經由工具機與醫療用品公司的合作，經濟部協調擴增口罩生產線，加倍產能。另外又在科技專家、藥局及便利商店的支持配合下，我們設計出一套配售口罩的機制，讓臺灣的醫院和民眾都買得到也負擔得起。在我們政府與民間企業合組的「國家隊」通力合作下，使臺灣有餘力捐贈物資給疫情嚴重的國家。

臺灣除了擁有全球數一數二的醫療體系以及強大的研發能力外，我們也致力於資訊的公開透明並積極與民眾及國際組織分享。臺灣確實已有效遏阻國內疫情，但在國際社會，新型冠狀病毒是一場人道災難，需要所有國家的通力合作。儘管臺灣遭受不公平待遇，被排除在世界衛生組織和聯合國之外，但我們仍然願意並發揮我國在製造、醫藥與科技的強項，與全世界攜手合作。

全球危機考驗整個國際社會的韌性，要打擊並撕裂我們。因此，現在比以往更須要重視全球網絡中的每一個連結。我們必須擱置歧見，只有全球人民齊心努力，才能對抗新型冠狀病毒，也才能共同為人類謀福。

臺灣飽經苦難，堅忍不拔，因為大家願意攜手團結，共度任何難關。最重要的是，我希望臺灣能讓世界了解：人類共同克服挑戰的潛能是無限的。

臺灣能幫忙。