

China seals city as its worst virus outbreak in a year grows

August 4 2021



A nurse takes swab samples in the new rounds of Covid-19 testing in Nanjing in eastern China's Jiangsu province Monday, Aug. 2, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021 with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: Chinatopix Via AP

China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders.

Since that initial outbreak was tamed last year, China's people had lived virtually free of the virus, with extremely strict border controls and local distancing and quarantine measures stamping out scattered, small flareups when they occurred.

Now, the country is on high alert as an outbreak of cases connected to the international airport in the eastern city of Nanjing touched at least 17 provinces. China reported 71 new cases of COVID-19 from local transmission Wednesday, more than half of them in coastal Jiangsu province, of which Nanjing is the capital.

In Wuhan, the [central city](#) where the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in late 2019, mass testing has shown some of its newly reported cases have a high degree of similarity to cases discovered in Jiangsu province. Those cases have been identified as being caused by the highly transmissible delta variant that first was identified in India.

Meanwhile, another COVID-19 hotspot was emerging in the city of Zhangjiajie, near a scenic area in Hunan province famous for sandstone cliffs, caves, forests and waterfalls that inspired the on-screen landscape in the "Avatar" films.



A worker disinfects the flooring outside the inflated cabins at the pop-up Huo-Yan Laboratory set up in an expo center to test samples for covid-19 virus in Nanjing in east China's Jiangsu province Wednesday, July 28, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021, with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: Chinatopix Via AP

The city, with a population of about 1.5 million, ordered residential communities sealed Sunday, preventing people from leaving their homes. In a subsequent order on Tuesday, officials said no one, whether tourist or resident, could leave the city.

The city government's Communist Party disciplinary committee on

Wednesday issued a list of local officials who "had a negative impact" on pandemic prevention and control work who would be punished.

The city itself has only recorded 19 cases since last week, three of which were people with no symptoms, which are counted separately. However, individual cases linked to Zhangjiajie's outbreak have spread to at least five provinces, according to the Shanghai government-owned newspaper the Paper.

Far higher numbers were reported in Yangzhou, a [city](#) next to Nanjing, which has recorded 126 cases as of Tuesday.



Residents line up for Covid-19 tests near a banner with the words "Epidemic is the Order" in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a

half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: Chinatopix Via AP



A woman wearing a face mask to protect against COVID-19 walk across a pedestrian bridge during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



Residents line up for Covid-19 tests in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: Chinatopix Via AP



People wearing face masks to help protect against COVID-19 walk past an advertising billboard at a subway station during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



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People wearing face masks to help protect against COVID-19 walk through a subway station during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



People wearing face masks to help protect against COVID-19 walk through a subway station during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. China's worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



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After announcing last week that they were suspending issuance of passports for travelers except for those with an urgent need, officials at the National Immigration Administration reiterated the message again on Wednesday at a press briefing.

As of Tuesday, China has given more than 1.71 billion vaccine doses to its population of 1.4 billion. It's not clear how many of those are first or

both doses, but at least 40% of the population is fully protected, according to earlier announcements.

Chinese companies have not publicly shared real-world data on how effective their vaccines are against the delta variant, though officials have said the vaccines prevent severe disease and hospitalization.

In addition to the 71 cases of local transmission, 25 travelers from overseas have COVID-19 and have entered quarantine, making the total for Wednesday 96 new cases. The National Health Commission also said 15 people tested positive for the virus but have no symptoms.

China has reported 4,636 deaths and 93,289 [cases](#) of COVID-19 overall, most of them from the original outbreak in Wuhan that peaked early last year.

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