

## China's Dongguan is latest southern city to be hit by COVID-19

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Property management workers in protective suits deliver goods to residents at a compound under lockdown due to the recent coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, China June 2, 2021. Picture taken June 2, 2021. China Daily via REUTERS

- Guangdong province fighting COVID-19 outbreak for 31 days
- Almost 90% of infections in provincial capital of Guangzhou
- Shenzhen's Yantian port seen resuming normal ops by end-June

BEIJING, June 21 (Reuters) - The manufacturing hub of Dongguan in China's most populous province Guangdong launched mass coronavirus testing on Monday and cordoned off communities, after the city detected its first infections of a flare-up in the province.

The Delta variant of COVID-19 has dominated infections in the provincial upsurge, the first time it has hit China. Seen by experts as highly transmissible, the variant was first identified in India.

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Dongguan launched its citywide testing programme following two cases reported since Friday.

City authorities told residents not to leave the city, except for essential reasons. Those leaving must show negative test results within 48 hours of departure.

A few entrances on highways to other cities were closed, while all shuttle buses linking airports in other cities and check-in terminals in Dongguan were halted. Some museums and libraries in the city also closed to visitors.

Its factories are still running, however.

"(Workers) need to do COVID tests, but it's not a prerequisite for them to be able to enter factories," said King Lau, who helps manage a metal coating factory.

"My staff will do (their COVID tests) after work, although there will be long queues."

Guangdong has reported 168 confirmed infections since May 21, with nearly 90% of them in its capital, Guangzhou.

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The cases are few compared with the rest of the world and previous outbreaks in China. But Guangdong, a key entry point for travellers and cargo, is not taking any chances.

Although its capital has reported no cases for two successive days, the province as a whole is still detecting new infections.

## PORT DISTURBANCES

Strict disinfection and quarantine measures since May 21 have led to congestion of vessels waiting to berth in one of China's busiest container ports, Yantian International Container Terminal (YICT) in Shenzhen.

"The impact would be bigger than the Suez Canal incident," said Patrik Berglund, chief executive of Xeneta, an ocean freight rate benchmarking firm headquartered in Oslo.

Although 50 vessels were waiting outside the port, more than 160 were being affected, he added.

"We've seen exporters who cannot wait for the port congestion to ease turning to trucks to send the cargoes from China to Europe."

Normal operations are expected to resume by end-June.

But even as congestion at Yantian eases, traffic at the Shenzhen port of Shekou and the main Guangzhou port of Nansha remains high, shipping firm Maersk said on its website.

## COMPLACENCY WARNING

Chinese experts said Guangzhou's fight against the Delta variant served as a warning to other cities against complacency.

China reported 17 new confirmed mainland infections on June 20, down from 23 a day earlier, its health authority said on Monday, adding that one of the new cases one was a local infection in Dongguan, while the rest were imported.

"All our workers were asked to complete their testing yesterday, and the results were all fine," said the owner of an electronics plant in Dongguan.

"Also, we've all been given the second shot of the vaccine," said the factory owner, surnamed Wang.

Guangdong has sped up its vaccination effort since the outbreak. By May 19, before any local cases were reported, the province of 126 million people had administered 39.15 million doses. By June 20, the figure was 101.12 million, meaning more than 60% of its doses were injected over one month.

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