



Medical workers on duty at Taiyuan Wusu International Airport.
SHI XIAOBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Airport becomes line of defence against disease

By **ZHANG DANDAN**
zhangdandan@chinadaily.com.cn

North China's Shanxi province has been pulling out all the stops to curb the spread of imported COVID-19 cases, as the pandemic continues to grow globally.

Since March 21, Taiyuan, capital city of Shanxi, has become a first entry port for international flights due to arrive in Beijing, according to local officials. All passengers must be tested for the virus, with those cleared of the pathogen allowed to re-board the aircraft to Beijing.

As the front line for Shanxi's control of imported cases of COVID-19 infections, Taiyuan Wusu International Airport is "fully armed" to fight back, said local officials.

Led by Shanxi Governor Lin Wu, an emergency work group has been established at the airport. Involving customs, immigration inspection, health and public security departments, the work group is responsible for taking turns on duty at the airport around the clock.

"For international flights, the emergency operation center of the Taiyuan airport will obtain detailed information of each flight from the Civil Aviation Administration of China and airlines three hours in advance. The information includes the aircraft type, crew, passenger information and the physical condition of the crew and passengers during the flight," said Wang Xiangdong, chairman of the airport.

After landing, airport staff members will lead passengers to measure temperatures. Passengers with fever will be transferred by local disease control departments. Those with normal temperatures will be taken

over by different cities to designated quarantine facilities, Wang added.

In addition, a special rest area for international passengers has been set up at the airport, providing them with real-time information and services.

Taiyuan Customs has established a team at the airport to help with nucleic acid tests. The team consists of 100 staff members with education backgrounds in medicine and foreign languages, and work experience in travel inspection.

Responding to the emergency, an overwhelming proportion of returnees are offering truthful information registration and cooperation for testing and quarantine.

Su Shan, a student studying business administration in the United Kingdom, returned to Taiyuan on March 28, as the pandemic outbreak in the UK left her classes suspended.

"I am waiting for the test results. If it is negative, I will go to a designated hotel for 14-day quarantine. Only when I confirm I am without the virus can I ask my family to take me home. I am sure to cooperate with domestic epidemic prevention and control authorities," Su said.

Liang Shujuan, deputy director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Shanxi provincial government, said when considering whether to return home from abroad, expats should keep an eye on the latest prevention and control measures taken in Shanxi and abide by local rules and regulations.

As long-distance travel does have certain risks, travelers should make prudent decisions and protect themselves from the risk of infection, Liang added.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Historical tragedy which sparked national festival

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

When Qingming Festival — or Tomb Sweeping Day — is approaching, many people might not know the event is closely associated with another festival called Hanshi, or Cold Food Festival.

Both festivals originated from a tragedy that happened in Shanxi more than 2,500 years ago. At that time, during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), the location was called the Jin Principality.

Cold Food Festival is a traditional Chinese holiday celebrated for three consecutive days before Qingming Festival, which falls on April 4 and 5.

Legend has it that Chong'er, a prince of Jin, endured many hardships while he moved around the warring states. Once, when the prince was tormented by hunger, Jie Zitui, one of his supporters, offered him food.

Later, when Chong'er became the duke of Jin, he ordered a search for Jie who had gone into hiding in the remote mountains with his mother. The duke wanted Jie to serve as one of his ministers.

Jie, who preferred to be a hermit in today's Jiexiu city of Shanxi, had no political ambitions and refused the duke's invitation. Chong'er ordered the mountain to be burned down to force Jie out of hiding. Unfortunately, Jie did not give in and the fire ended up killing him and his mother.

Filled with remorse, Chong'er ordered that during the three days around this tragic anniversary the setting of fire be forbidden. This meant all food was eaten cold. Therefore the festival is thus named.

The days following Cold Food Festival were dedicated to sweeping the tomb of Jie and later developed into a national holiday called Qingming.

Mianshan Mountain, where the tragedy happened, is now a renowned tourist destination in Shanxi province.

In many areas of Shanxi, locals still remember this tradition. Although cold food is not the only option for people during the celebration, the practices of making typical cold dishes for the event have been preserved.

Li Yali contributed to this story.



The statues of Jie Zitui and his mother in the Mianshan Mountain scenic area. REN JUNBING / FOR CHINA DAILY



The last 323 of the 1,516 medical workers assigned to rescue missions in Hubei province celebrate their return to Shanxi on March 31.
SHI XIAOBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi medical workers back home from Hubei aid mission

Medics receive heroes' send-off and welcome from the public after fighting virus outbreak

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Two airplanes carrying 323 medical workers from Shanxi landed at Taiyuan Wusu International Airport on March 31, after completing their mission to Hubei province to treat those affected by the novel coronavirus epidemic.

The returnees were welcomed by Lou Yangsheng, Party secretary of Shanxi, Governor Lin Wu and other officials and local residents.

All 1,516 Shanxi medical workers who had worked in Hubei for about two months have returned to their home province.

Accompanying them were 11 journalists from the province, who had been reporting the fight against the epidemic during the past two months.

Since Jan 26, Shanxi dispatched 13 medical teams, with members from 189 medical institutions, to Hubei province, the center of the epidemic.

They worked in 16 hospitals in the cities of Wuhan, Xiantao, Tianmen and Qianjiang. They treated



3,527 patients, with a recovery rate of more than 95 percent, according to reports in Shanxi's media.

They also carried out 18,000 nucleic acid tests and 3,377 CT scans, and trained more than 6,200 local medical workers. During the two months, no cases of infection were reported among the medics.

"The facts and numbers demonstrate the sense of responsibility, the excellent skills, the effective protective measures and the high morale of the medical workers from Shanxi," said a commentary in Shanxi Daily.

Local media also highlighted the "targeted treatment measures" implemented by the Shanxi teams, featuring tailored therapies and plans for patients in various conditions.

With the news of the Shanxi medics' departure, residents in various cities lined the roads from their hotels to Wuhan Tianhe International Airport, to send off the heroes who had safeguarded their lives and health for more than two months.

In Qianjiang, Li Xuanyi, a first-grade student sent a painting to the medical workers.

In the painting, the medics were depicted as "angels in white".

"Farewell, my angels. Thank you for your painstaking efforts to save our lives," Li said.

Hou Ruigang, leader of the medical team in Qianjiang, said the city has left an unforgettable impression on him.

"The 66 days in Qianjiang have made the city a home away from home for me. I'll pay close attention to Qianjiang's development in the years to come," Hou said.

Qianjiang's authorities had asked the Shanxi medics to leave their protective garments, with the signatures of all the team members. The garments will be collected and

displayed at the Qianjiang Museum, showing the respect and gratitude of the locals.

In the lines sending off the medics, were people from all walks of life and age groups, including local medical workers, senior citizens, school children, construction workers and company employees.

They waved posters with grateful words and sang songs of gratitude.

Those who were required to stay at home waved from their balconies and windows.

Liu Chuange, head of the publicity department of Qiaokou district in Wuhan, said the two-month experience had forged a "lifelong friendship between the people of Shanxi and Wuhan".

"We hope you can visit Wuhan again in the future, not for medical work, but for the blossoming sakura flowers and the delicious hot dry noodles," Liu said.

"We welcome you to Wuhan where everybody is your friend and relative," the official said.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.



From left: The 29th Dahuaishu Ancestor Worship Ceremony is held during Qingming Festival in 2019. Dahuaishu township is regarded as an ancestral homeland by many Chinese people. CHI JIANPING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Ancestral homeland where Chinese honor relatives

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Qingming Festival — or Tomb Sweeping Day — celebrated in early April is a time for Chinese people to pay tribute to their ancestors and remember their deceased family members.

During this period, the township of Dahuaishu in Hongtong county, Shanxi province, is one of the most visited places in China. It is regarded as the ancestral homeland by many Chinese people.

Dahuaishu, which literally means the Big Locust Tree, is the place where many Chinese people inside and outside the country believe their ancestors started their long trek of immigration during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

The Dahuaishu Ancestor Memorial Garden in Hongtong county, is a holy place for many

Chinese people across the world.

Each year, thousands of Chinese return from afar during Tomb Sweeping Day to pay homage and show respect to their ancestors.

The garden has held the Dahuaishu Ancestor Worship Ceremony every April over the past three decades to welcome Chinese people who wanted to seek their ancestral roots there.

"If it were not for the novel coronavirus epidemic, we should have celebrated the 30th session of the ceremony this year," said Shi Ximin, an official of the memorial garden.

He said large celebrations on the site were canceled this year. However, the ancestor worship ceremony will still be held online.

"The policy was made to avoid crowding during this special period of time," Shi said.

The official said the ceremony will not be short of any necessary rituals, which will be performed by staff members of the garden and broadcast live.

"Qingming Festival — with a history of more than 2,500 years — is one of the most popular festivals in China as Chinese people highly value ancestral roots and familial piety," said Niu Xiaomin, a researcher of folk cultures in Shanxi province.

"The Dahuaishu Ancestor Worship Ceremony is an event not only for worshipping family ancestors, but also for immigrants worldwide to seek their roots," the researcher added.

According to historical records, during 50 years of the early Ming Dynasty, there were 18 large immigration movements from Dahuaishu township to more than 500 counties in 18 provinces. These

immigrants further moved across the world in the six centuries that followed.

A popular ballad in China reflects the large-scale population movement:

"Where were our ancestors from?"

It's the Big Locust Tree in Hongtong.

What is the name of our ancestral residence?

It's the Old Stork Nest under the Big Locust Tree."

The historical evidence can also be found in many family genealogy books and tombstone inscriptions throughout the country, according to Shi.

The official added that the Dahuaishu Ancestor Memorial Garden has welcomed more than 2 million visits each year since 2017.

Li Yali contributed to this story.