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Video 5



# CHINA DELAYED RELEASING CORONAVIRUS INFO



# Our Interests

- ▶ Public Health
- ▶ Diplomatic & Foreign relations.
- ▶ Security
- ▶ GS II - Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.



## Read this...

- ▶ “We’re currently at the stage where yes, they’re giving it to us 15 minutes before it appears on CCTV,” said WHO’s top official in China, Dr. Gauden Galea, referring to the state-owned China Central Television.



# Context

- ▶ Donald Trump accusing both China and WHO of either incompetence or complicity
- ▶ WHO praising China of timely effort
- ▶ US pulling out of WHO and \$450 million it gives every year as WHO's biggest single donor.
- ▶ China opening its economy and warning Trump of disservice and doing election politics around COVID19
- ▶ World case count : **6,510,759** and deaths : **384,391**



# Setting the Plot

- ▶ Throughout January, the World Health Organization publicly praised China for what it called a speedy response to the new coronavirus. It repeatedly thanked the Chinese government for sharing the genetic map of the virus “immediately,” and said its work and commitment to transparency were “very impressive, and beyond words.”
- ▶ But behind the scenes, it was a much different story, one of significant delays by China and considerable frustration among WHO officials over not getting the information they needed to fight the spread of the deadly virus, The Associated Press has found.



# Chinese Signals

- ▶ China in fact sat on releasing the genetic map, or genome, of the virus for more than a week after three different government labs had fully decoded the information.
- ▶ **Tight controls on information and competition within the Chinese public health system were to blame.**
- ▶ WHO officials were **lauding** China in public because they wanted to coax more information out of the government, the recordings obtained by the AP suggest. **Privately**, they complained in meetings the week of Jan. 6 that **China was not sharing enough** data to assess how effectively the virus spread between people or what risk it posed to the rest of the world, costing valuable time.



- ▶ The story behind the early response to the virus comes at a time when the U.N. health agency is under **siege**, and has agreed to an **independent probe** of how the pandemic was handled globally.
- ▶ Although international law obliges countries to report information to WHO that could have an impact on public health, the U.N. agency has no enforcement powers and cannot independently investigate epidemics within countries. Instead, it must rely on the cooperation of member states.



# WHO's conundrum

- ▶ The previous experience of 2002 while dealing with the Chinese authorities for SARS related data was bad and they had to also take care of the information flow along with ensuring safety of Chinese scientists involved.
- ▶ During SARS outbreak 800 ppl lost their lives worldwide.
- ▶ WHO didn't face any obstacle while gathering information for the 2018 crisis in Congo for Ebola.
- ▶ The delay in the release of the genome stalled the recognition of its spread to other countries, along with the global development of tests, drugs and vaccines. The lack of detailed patient data also made it harder to determine how quickly the virus was spreading — a critical question in stopping it.



- ▶ Between the day the full genome was first decoded by a government lab on Jan. 2 and the day WHO declared a global emergency on Jan. 30, the outbreak spread by a factor of 100 to 200 times, according to retrospective infection data from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ▶ If WHO had pushed too hard, it **could even have been kicked out** of China, said Adam Kamradt-Scott, a global health professor at the University of Sydney. But he added that a delay of just a few days in releasing genetic sequences **can be critical in an outbreak**.
- ▶ As Beijing's lack of transparency becomes even clearer, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus's **continued defense** of China is problematic.



# Data sequencing – Not genome

- ▶ “It was kind of wait and see, when China will release the data, then we can compare, ” said Supaprn.
- ▶ On Jan. 8, Thai airport officers pulled aside a woman from Wuhan with a runny nose, sore throat, and high temperature.
- ▶ On Jan. 9, a 61-year-old man with the virus passed away in Wuhan — the first known death. The death wasn't made public until Jan. 11.



- ▶ On Jan. 11, **a team led by Zhang**, from the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, finally published a sequence on virological.org, used by researchers to swap tips on pathogens. The move **angered** Chinese CDC officials, and the next day, his laboratory was **temporarily shuttered by health authorities**.
- ▶ Supaprn compared her sequence with Zhang's and found it was a 100% match, confirming that the Thai patient was ill with the same virus detected in Wuhan. Another Thai lab got the same results.
- ▶ **That day** (Jan. 11), **Thailand informed the WHO**

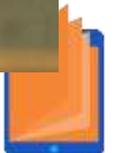


- ▶ After Zhang released the genome, the Chinese CDC, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences raced to publish their sequences, working overnight to review them, gather patient data, and send them to the National Health Commission for approval, according to documentation obtained by the AP.
- ▶ On Jan. 12, the three labs together finally published the sequences on GISAID, a platform for scientists to share genomic data.
- ▶ By then, more than **two weeks** had **passed** since Vision Medicals decoded a partial sequence, and more than a week since the three government labs had all obtained full sequences.
- ▶ Around 600 people were infected in that week, a roughly three-fold increase.

- ▶ The next day, in a confidential teleconference, China's top health official ordered the country to prepare for a pandemic, calling the outbreak the **“most severe challenge since SARS in 2003”**. Chinese CDC staff across the country began screening, isolating, and testing for cases, turning up hundreds across the country.
- ▶ Yet even as the Chinese CDC internally declared **a level one emergency, the highest level possible**, Chinese officials still said the chance of sustained transmission between humans was low.
- ▶ WHO also tweeting “Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission”.



- ▶ On Jan. 20, the leader of an expert team returning from Wuhan, renowned government infectious diseases doctor Zhong Nanshan, declared publicly for the first time that the new virus was spreading between people.
- ▶ Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the “timely publication of epidemic information and deepening of international cooperation.”

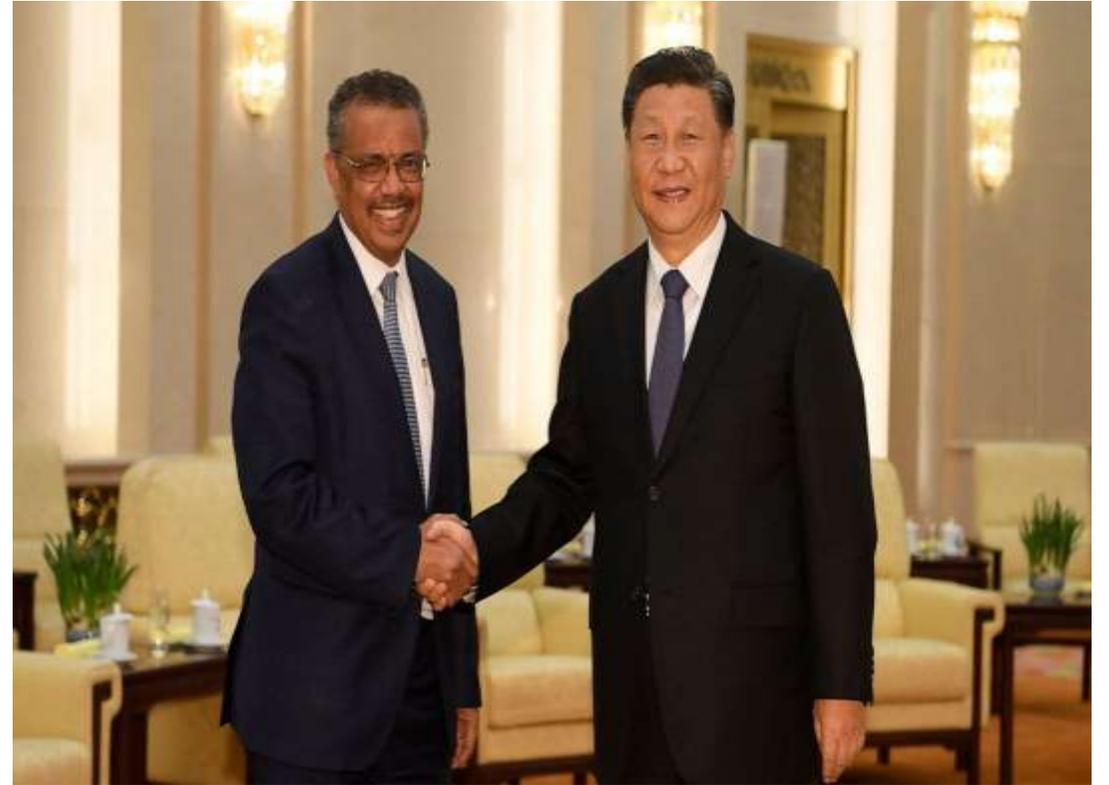


# Incompetency proved

- ▶ On Jan. 22, WHO convened an independent committee to determine whether to declare a global health emergency. After two inconclusive meetings where experts were split, they decided against it — even as Chinese officials **ordered Wuhan sealed** in the biggest quarantine in history. The next day, WHO chief Tedros publicly described the spread of the new coronavirus in China as **“limited.”**
- ▶ On Jan. 28, Tedros and top experts, including Ryan, made an extraordinary trip to Beijing to meet President Xi and other senior Chinese officials. It is highly unusual for WHO’s director-general to directly intervene in the practicalities of outbreak investigations. Tedros’ staffers had prepared a list of requests for information.
- ▶ In a press briefing on Jan. 29, Tedros heaped praise on China, calling its level of commitment “incredible.”



- ▶ The next day, WHO finally declared **an international health emergency**.
- ▶ Once again, Tedros **thanked** China, saying nothing about the earlier lack of cooperation.



# Vindicated

- ▶ <https://www.theproperganda.com/article?topic=Wuhan-Conspiracy>

# Courtesy

▶ **Associated Press**

<https://apnews.com/3c061794970661042b18d5aeaaed9fae>



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