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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Israeli army says thwarts naval attack against Israel

The Israeli army said on Monday its navy targeted a submarine which allegedly belongs to Hamas naval forces attempting to attack Israel.

“This is a significant event,” said Jonathan Conricus, a spokesman of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), adding that “the vessel was of significant size.”

Over 3,200 rockets have been fired into Israel since the beginning of hostilities last week. The IDF says over 460 rockets have been misfired by militants and landed within the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Iron Dome air defense system has intercepted 90 percent of the rockets fired into the country.

Saying Hamas’s capabilities of producing rockets have been significantly degraded, Conricus noted “it will take them a long time to replenish and that is an important thing for the future.”

The Israeli military said it has attacked over 800 targets, adding at least 130 militants were killed.

Gazan health officials reported that approximately 200 Palestinians have been killed, including dozens of children, with over 1,000 injured. There have been 10 Israeli deaths, including one child.



Police officers stand in line to separate protesters supporting Palestine from a small group of Israel supporters in front of city hall in Toronto, Canada. REUTERS/Chris Helgren

California announces new plan to boost film industry

LOS ANGELES, May 14 (Xinhua) -- California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday announced a new measure to attract productions to the Golden State by adding 30 million U.S. dollars to its film and television tax incentive program.

As part of the 100-billion-dollar “California Roars Back” plan, this move would boost the existing 330 million dollars tax credit program by nearly 10 percent, allowing the state to dole out a total of 360 million dollars annually to qualify film and television projects.

This new plan was applauded by the entertainment industry immediately. According to Los Angeles City’s Economic and Workforce Department, this industry brought more than 30 billion dollars annually to California and supported more than 200,000 local jobs before the COVID-19 pandemic.

California Film Commission Executive Director Colleen Bell told the Hollywood Reporter, a leading entertainment news website, that thanks to the state’s current film incentive program introduced in

2014, the state had welcomed nearly two dozen relocating television series from other regions since then.

other states and countries. The additional funding will enable us to grow that positive impact.”



“Governor Newsom’s announcement to expand the film and TV tax credit program is great news for California,” said Bell. “The additional 30 million dollars in funding will be allocated to relocating TV series, which bring long-term, high-wage jobs and significant production spending to our state. To date, our tax credit program has welcomed 23 relocating series from

state of California,” Newsom said at a press conference in Sacramento, capital city of the state, adding “that’s what that 30 million dollars intends to do.”

In recent days, Newsom announced a number of high-dollar initiatives, including an additional 12 billion dollars for homeless housing, 2 billion dollars to

Moreover, Newsom said this measure was designed to show the state’s political gesture against those states who passed voter suppression legislation, like Georgia.

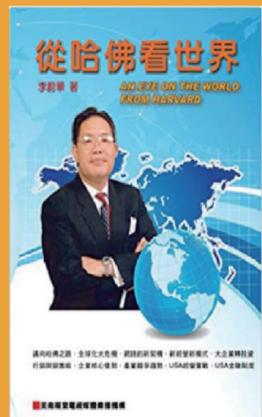
“This is an opportunity for those productions, TV and others, in places like Georgia, whose values don’t necessarily always align with the production crews to consider coming back to the

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

05/17/2021



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Beaumont, Texas We Are Coming Back



field.
When we passed this very peaceful town we saw a beautiful park and school.
People living in Beaumont offer resident a rural feel and most people own their homes. Many retirees live here tend to lean towards peaceful and conservative.

In the early 70's when my wife and I were graduate students at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, this was the city where we spent our college life many years ago.

detailed near Beaumont from the larger camp in Huntsville in Walker County, Texas.

We started our journey from Houston through Interstate 10 and Highway 90. After we passed Dayton, we approached the City of Beaumont.

In 1999 Disney celebrated the movie release of "Mulan" in Texas. They built a miniature version of the Great Wall of China on the school football

During World War II a small camp was built for German prisoners of war who were



Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Scarlett Johansson is slimed as she receives the Generation Award during the 2021 MTV Movie & TV Awards in Los Angeles, California. Viacom/via REUTERS



Fire is seen on a Union Pacific train carrying hazardous material that has derailed in Sibley, Iowa. NATHAN MINTEN/via REUTERS



Anderson, a six-year-old unaccompanied minor from El Salvador, stands in line with other asylum-seeking children as they identify themselves to a U.S. border patrol agent after crossing the Rio Grande river into the United States from Mexico in La Joya, Texas, U.S. Over 170 asylum-seeking migrants, including about 50 unaccompanied minors, surrendered to border patrol agents in La Joya and nearby areas on Friday. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



People try to topple the statue of South American independence leader Simon Bolivar during a protest against sexual assault by the police and the excess of public force against peaceful protests, in Bogota, Colombia. REUTERS/Luisa Gonzalez



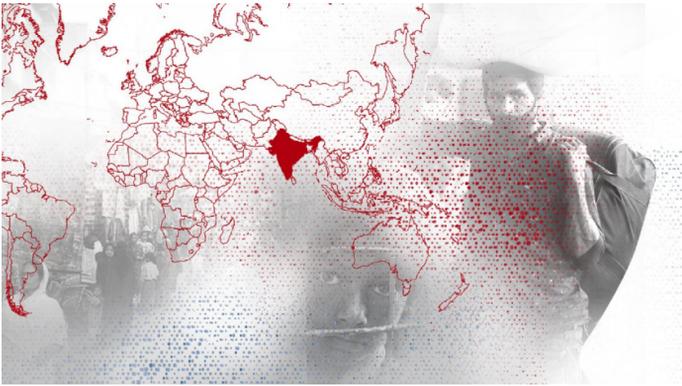
Natasha Hibbert poses alongside an exhibition of life-size elephant sculptures, part of the CoExistence campaign organised by the Elephant Family Trust, on The Mall in London, Britain. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



A cargo ship, boat marina and the Olympic Mountains are visible from the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. REUTERS/Karen Ducey

Scientists Are Concerned Vaccines Are Less Effective Against The Indian Variant And It Could Be Dominant In The UK By June

COVID-19: How Dangerous Is The Indian Variant? Are Today's Vaccines Less Effective Against It?



The Indian variant could be more transmissible and vaccines could be less effective against it.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A new double mutation COVID-19 variant is thought to be behind a sudden surge in cases in India that has overwhelmed hospitals.

The variant was only confirmed on 25 March by the Indian government so the data are still not 100% clear on its effects when compared to existing forms of the virus.

However, scientists and doctors are concerned this particular variant could be more transmissible and may even make vaccines less effective.

What is the new variant?

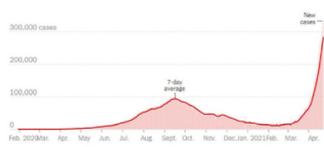
Its official name is B.1.617, but is being called the Indian variant.

Viruses regularly mutate but most are insignificant, however, some mutations can make the virus more infectious, deadly or resistant to vaccines.

The Indian virus is one of those - especially because two mutations have come together to help infect cells and evade the immune system.

It has evolved independently but has the

same mutation as the Californian variant and nearly the same as the South African and Brazil/Manaus ones.



In lab tests, the South African variant (B.1.351) and Brazil variant (P.1) both have a key mutation, E484K, which can help the virus evade antibodies produced by vaccines or by having had COVID-19. It is also more transmissible.

The Californian variant (B.1.429), discovered in December, carries the L452R mutation that makes it about 20% more infectious.

The Indian variant has the E484Q mutation, which is very similar to the one found in the South African and Brazil variants, and also has the L452R mutation found in the Californian one.

What is happening in India?

Cases in India have risen rapidly since mid-March after weeks of steady decline. Hospitals are becoming overrun and they are running out of ventilators, with New Delhi placed under a week's strict lockdown from 19 April.



New Delhi's hospitals are running out of ventilators.

There is a worry India's second wave is even worse than appears, as scientists are concerned about figures being under-reported.

India also does not have as comprehensive a genome sequencing programme as the UK so cases of the Indian variant there are likely to be higher than reported.

"The exponential rise is quite staggering," Dr Deepti Gurdasani, clinical epidemiologist and senior lecturer in machine learning at Queen Mary University of London, told Sky News.

"We first saw the rise in Maharashtra state, then other states are seeing a rise.

"What seems quite clear is there's a rise and the new variant has become dominant in India."

Is the Indian variant more transmissible and will vaccines still work against it?

Dr. Gurdasani, who trained as a doctor and worked in India for 10 years, said it is "very likely it's more transmissible".

She said: "There are two mutations here. The first is similar to the Manaus variant and we know that is affecting vaccine effectiveness.

"The second is the same as the Californian, which has been associated in labs with escaping immunity - both of antibodies and T-cells - and also increased transmissibility."

She continued: "This is quite worrying, it builds a really concerning picture as it ticks all the boxes for rising cases and

outcompeting the vaccine.

"We don't have definitive data but we can see from the other variants there's more than enough to be concerned about."



There are concerns cases are being under-reported in India.

Dr. Gurdasani added that the Indian variant shares the same mutation as both the South African and Manaus variants, which has been associated with a reduction of effectiveness in the Oxford-AstraZeneca, Johnson and Johnson and Novavax vaccines.

Should people in the UK be concerned? Boris Johnson has postponed his trip to India due to the surge in cases and shortly after, India was added to the UK's "red list", where arrivals from certain countries have to go into hotel quarantine.

Several scientists have called for India to be on the red list, including Dr Gurdasani, although she added that the system "doesn't work because by the time a variant is here, it's too late".

"Because we are so far into our vaccination programme and if this variant means a lower vaccine effectiveness, if this becomes dominant in the UK it will be catastrophic," she added.

"India did not take pre-emptive action and the situation is really dire - we need to start acting before it gets as bad as India."

Professor Christina Pagel, a member of the Independent Sage committee and director of clinical operational research at University College London, had also called for India to be on the red list.



She said if the UK's vaccination programme

goes to plan it will still be the end of July before every adult has one dose, as she added that since UK schools opened, the Indian variant is the fastest growing.

It is doubling every week, as did the Kent variant when it was detected in September, but is doing so under "much tighter restrictions and more vaccinated people", she said.

The British government has said the Indian variant is a "variant under investigation", not a "variant of concern", due to a lack of evidence, so surge testing or forensic contact tracing are not taking place. Prof Pagel said: "Because we are very good at sequencing, we might be the first country to provide such definitive evidence. But by the time we do, B.1.617 is likely to be quite widespread and it might be too late to contain it."

She predicts that with the current growth rate, the Indian variant could be dominant by the end of June. (Courtesy news.sky.com)



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Scientists Around The World Are Now Fighting The Next Pandemic



By improving water sanitation, we can reduce the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Image: Riccardo Mayer/Shutterstock.com

KEY POINTS

Children in developing countries are acquiring an anti-biotic-resistant infection due to their regular contact with poor sanitation and limited clean water.

This means, when they do fall ill, there is more than a 50% chance an antibiotic treatment will fail.

The practice known as WASH is vital to reduce the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

It is also crucial countries do more to treat sewage, improve sanitation and develop sufficient infrastructure.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

If a two-year-old child living in poverty in India or Bangladesh gets sick with a common bacterial infection, there is more than a 50% chance an antibiotic treatment will fail. Somehow the child has acquired an antibiotic resistant infection - even to drugs to which they may never have been exposed. How? Unfortunately, this child also lives in a place with limited clean water and less waste management, bringing them into frequent contact with faecal matter. This means they are regularly exposed to millions of resistant genes and bacteria, including potentially untreatable superbugs. This sad story is shockingly common, especially in places where pollution is rampant and clean water is limited.

For many years, people believed antibiotic resistance in bacteria was primarily driven by imprudent use of antibiotics in clinical and veterinary settings. But growing evidence suggests that environmental factors may be of equal or greater importance to the spread of antibiotic resistance, especially in the de-

veloping world.



This article focuses on antibiotic resistant bacteria, but drug resistance also occurs in types of other microorganisms - such as resistance in pathogenic viruses, fungi, and protozoa (called antimicrobial resistance or AMR). This means that our ability to treat all sorts of infectious disease is increasingly hampered by resistance, potentially including coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. Overall, use of antibiotics, antivirals, and antifungals clearly

must be reduced, but in most of the world, improving water, sanitation, and hygiene practice - a practice known as WASH - is also critically important. If we can ensure cleaner water and safer food everywhere, the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria will be reduced across the environment, including within and between people and animals. As recent recommendations on AMR from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that the "superbug problem" will not be solved by more prudent antibiotic use alone. It also requires global improvements in water quality, sanitation, and hygiene. Otherwise, the next pandemic might be worse than COVID-19.

Bacteria under stress

Over 70% of the world has no community wastewater treatment or even sewers; and most faecal matter, containing resistant genes and bacteria, goes directly into surface and groundwater, often via open drains. This means that people who live in places without faecal waste management are regularly exposed to antibiotic resistance in many ways. Exposure is even possible of people who may not have taken antibiotics, like our child in South Asia.



How antibiotic resistance spreads

Image: WHO Antibiotic resistance is everywhere, but it is not surprising that resistance is greatest in places with poor sanitation because factors other than use are important. For example, a fragmented civil infrastructure, political corruption, and a lack of centralized healthcare also play key roles. As an example of antibiotic resistance, the "superbug" gene, blaNDM-1, was first detected in India in 2007 (although it was probably present in other regional countries). But soon thereafter, it was found in a hospital patient in Sweden and then in Germany. It was ultimately detected in 2013 in Svalbard in the High Arctic. In parallel, variants of this gene

appeared locally, but have evolved as they move. Similar evolution has occurred as the COVID-19 virus has spread. Relative to antibiotic resistance, humans are not the only "travellers" that can carry resistance. Wildlife, such as migratory birds, can also acquire resistant bacteria and genes from contaminated water or soils and then fly great distances carrying resistance in their gut from places with poor water quality to places with good water quality. During travel, they defecate along their path, potentially planting resistance almost anywhere. The global trade of foods also facilitates spread of resistance from country to country and across the globe.

Resistant bacteria are not the only infectious agents that might be spread by environmental contamination. SARS-CoV-2 has been found in faeces and inactive virus debris found in sewage, but all evidence suggests water is not a major route of COVID-19 spread - although there are limited data from places with poor sanitation and each case differs. But there are common roots to disease spread - pollution, poor water quality, and inadequate hygiene. Using fewer antibiotics is critical to reducing resistance. However, without also providing safer sanitation and improved water quality at global scales, resistance will continue to increase, potentially creating the next pandemic. Such a combined approach is central to the new WHO/FAO/OIE recommendations on AMR.



Simple steps

It is clear we must use a holistic approach (what is now called "One Health") to reduce the spread of resistance across people, animals, and the environment. But how do we do this in a world that is so unequal? It is now accepted that clean water is a human right embedded in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But how can we achieve affordable "clean water for all" in a world where geopolitics often outweigh local needs and realities?

Simple is more sustainable. As an obvious example, we need to reduce open defecation in a cheap and socially acceptable manner. This is the best immediate solution in places with limited or un-

used sanitation infrastructure, such as rural India. Innovation is without doubt important, but it needs to be tailored to local realities to stand a chance of being sustained into the future. Strong leadership and governance is also critical. Antibiotic resistance is much lower in places with less corruption and strong governance. Resistance also is lower in places with greater public health expenditure, which implies social policy, community action, and local leadership can be as important as technical infrastructure.



Richer countries must work with poorer ones. But, actions against resistance should focus on local needs and plans because each country is different. We need to remember that resistance is everyone's problem and all countries have a role in solving the problem. This is evident from the COVID-19 pandemic, where some countries have displayed commendable cooperation. Richer countries should invest in helping to provide locally suitable waste management options for poorer ones - ones that can be maintained and sustained. This would have a more immediate impact than any "toilet of the future" technology. Antibiotic resistance will also impact on the fight against COVID-19. As an example, secondary bacterial infections are common in seriously ill patients with COVID-19, especially when admitted to an ICU. So if such pathogens are resistant to critical antibiotic therapies, they will not work and result in higher death rates. Regardless of context, improved water, sanitation, and hygiene must be the backbone of stemming the spread of AMR, including antibiotic resistance, to avoid the next pandemic. Some progress is being made in terms of global cooperation, but efforts are still too fragmented. Some countries are making progress, whereas others are not.

Resistance needs to be seen in a similar light to other global challenges - something that threatens human existence and the planet. As with addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity, or COVID-19, global cooperation is needed to reduce the evolution and spread of resistance. Cleaner water and improved hygiene are the key. If we do not work together now, we all will pay an even greater price in the future. (Courtesy weforum.org)