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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Putin not seen ready to compromise ahead of peace talks

LVIV/KHARKIV, Ukraine, March 28 (Reuters) - Ukraine and Russia were preparing on Monday for the first face-to-face peace talks in more than two weeks, but a senior U.S. official said Russian President Vladimir Putin did not appear ready to make compromises to end the war.

Ukraine's foreign minister said a ceasefire was the most his country could hope for from the talks, due to be held in Istanbul on Tuesday after Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke to Russia's Vladimir Putin on Sunday. "We are not trading people, land or sovereignty," Dmytro Kuleba said.

A report that Russian billionaire and mediator Roman Abramovich and Ukrainian peace negotiators had suffered symptoms of suspected poisoning after a meeting in Kyiv this month underlined the tension over the talks. [read more](#)

The Wall Street Journal and the investigative outlet Bellingcat cited people familiar with the matter for their reports but Ukraine poured cold water on them and a U.S. official said the cause of the symptoms was environmental, not poison. In besieged Ukrainian cities where conditions are desperate, the threat of Russian attacks blocked exit routes for civilians, two Ukrainian officials said, including the devastated port of Mariupol whose mayor said 160,000 people were still trapped.

But the United Nations said it had been able to bring food and medical supplies into Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-biggest city and one of its hardest hit.

"They've not been able to take the city, so they've decided to destroy it," said Oleksandr, sweeping rubble out of a third-storey classroom after spending the night with his mother on a lower floor because their own neighbourhood had been hit.

The mayor of Irpin, near Kyiv, said Ukrainian forces were back in full control and a U.S. defence official said the Ukrainians had recaptured the eastern town of Trostyanets, south of Sumy and were continuing to try to take back ground.

Russia's defence ministry, for its part, said its troops had destroyed ammunition depots in the Zhytomyr region west of Kyiv and had hit 41 Ukrainian military sites in the past 24 hours. Reuters could not immediately verify any of the reports.



'CHANGE THEIR GOALS'

Tuesday's talks will be the first in person since an acrimonious meeting between foreign ministers on March 10, a sign of shifts behind the scenes as Russia's invasion has stalled and sanctions have hit home.

"We have destroyed the myth of the invincible Russian army. We are resisting against the aggression of one of the strongest armies in the world and have succeeded in making them change their goals," Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

He said 100 people had been killed in the capital, including four children, and 82 multi-storey buildings had been destroyed. It was not possible to verify the figures.

Russia's military signalled last week it would concentrate on expanding territory held by separatists in eastern Ukraine, but Ukraine said it saw no sign Russia had given up a plan to surround the capital, which it targeted in its Feb. 24 invasion.

Ukrainian officials had suggested Russia could be more willing to compromise having seen stiff Ukrainian resistance and heavy Russian losses. But a senior U.S. State Department official said Putin did not give that impression.

"Everything I have seen is he is not willing to compromise at this point," the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity, after Ukraine's president sketched out a potential way to end the crisis over the weekend.

When the sides last met in person, Ukraine accused Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov of ignoring pleas to discuss a ceasefire, while Lavrov said a halt to fighting was not even on the agenda.

Since then, they have held talks via video link and publicly discussed a formula under which Ukraine might accept some kind of formal neutral status. But neither side has budged over Russia's territorial demands, including Crimea, which Moscow seized and annexed in 2014, and eastern territories known as the Donbas,

which Moscow demands Kyiv cede to separatists.

"I don't think there will be any breakthrough on the main issues," Ukrainian interior ministry adviser Vadym Denysenko said.

Turkey's president Erdogan, however, was more upbeat, reporting progress in telephone calls with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

BIDEN CALL 'ALARMING'

The Kremlin said Biden's surprise comment about Putin at the end of a speech in Warsaw at the weekend, "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power" was "certainly alarming" after earlier saying it was up to Russians to choose their leader.

On Sunday Biden said he was not calling for regime change.



美南電視 15.3

每周一至五每晚7點專題節目

每晚7點播出
專題節目

每天一至五下午6:30播出《美南新聞聯播》

- 每周一晚7點：主持人：黃梅子，《生活》節目（《生活故事會》、《丁師傅私房菜》和《修車師姐》三個單元輪流播出）
- 每周二晚7點：主持人：陳鐵梅，《美南時事通》
- 每周三晚7點，主持人：王潔，《美南時事通》、《美南名人堂》
- 每周四晚7點，主持人：Sky，《子天訪談錄》或馬健《J&J論壇》
- 每周五晚7點，主持人：蓋軍，《美南時事通》

美南網Scdaily.com和youtube 頻道Stv15.3 Houston同步收看直播



主持人: 黃梅子



主持人: 陳鐵梅



主持人: 王潔



主持人: 馬健



主持人: Sky



主持人: 蓋軍

WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

03/28/2022



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 Republic of Guiana Honorary consul at Houston Texas

The Problems Of Local Small Business

President Chiling Tung was hosted by The National ACE small business in-person roundtable series which gives local Houston Asian American & Pacific Islander business owners an opportunity to discuss and network with key elected officials and corporate leaders on current business issues that affect them directly. Those issues include the current state of business, the affects of Covid-19, the anti-AAPI hate policy

and the recovery of AAPI business in the Houston market.

President Tung explained to everyone how the major American enterprises and federal government are willing to help local small business in many ways.

Today small businesses are playing a major role in our economies. During the epidemic we found that the main problem of many businesses in our

community is that they are "micro-businesses." In other words, most of them are operated by families or couples plus one or two employees. They don't have any complete or related financial statements or tax returns.

When we encounter major disasters and epidemics, the government requires you to have a basic accounting record for disaster relief assistance.



Otherwise, it will be very difficult to get approval. The other problem is the culture issue. Most of the new immigrants came from Asian countries and most of the local governments do not provide assistance to businesses. As long as they don't ask for bribes from them, they will be thankful to god. And because of their self-reliant nature, they are not used to asking for help from the government.

But at this critical moment in time, we must correct this concept. What we are spending today is

the Texas money we pay to the government for taxes. All of the salaries paid to officials come out of the taxpayers' money.

We are so grateful to President Chiling Tong. She plays a very important role of bridging the gaps between large companies, the federal government and local ethnic minority businesses.

What we do today for our community will inevitably leave an historical record.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



People line up near a makeshift nucleic acid testing site outside a shopping mall in Beijing, China, March 21. REUTERS/Carlos Garcia Rawlins



Rescue workers stand in a silent tribute at the site to mourn the victims of a China Eastern Airlines Boeing 737-800 plane, flight MU5735, that crashed in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. cnspphoto via REUTERS



Ariana DeBose accepts the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her role in "West Side Story" at the 94th Academy Awards. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



Will Smith hits at Chris Rock as Rock spoke on stage during the 94th Academy Awards in Hollywood. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



A Ukrainian serviceman walks past the wreck of a Russian tank in the village of Lukyanivka outside Kyiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Marko Djurica

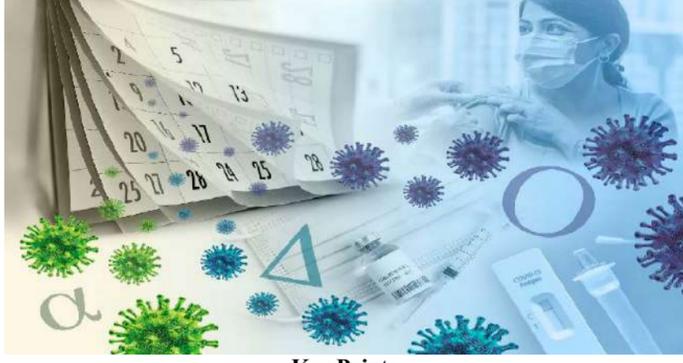


Palestinian children look out of a bus window in Gaza city. REUTERS/Mohammed Salem

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Scientists Now On Alert Over Rising Cases Caused By Omicron 'Cousin' BA.2



Key Points

A new, highly contagious subvariant of Omicron has emerged, which some have begun calling a "stealth variant," but public health officials say it's too soon to tell what kind of real threat, if any, this new strain will present.

In the meantime, it's worth watching BA.2, the World Health Organization says. The subvariant has been identified across at least 40 countries, including three cases reported in Houston and several in Washington state. BA.2 accounts for only a small minority of reported cases so far, including 5% in India, 4% of those in the United Kingdom, and 2% each of cases in Sweden and Singapore.

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

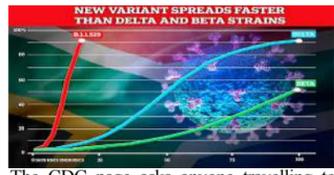
(Reuters) - The highly transmissible Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus - the most common form of which is known as BA.1 - now accounts for nearly all of the coronavirus infections globally, although dramatic surges in COVID cases have already peaked in some countries. Scientists are now tracking a rise in cases caused by a close cousin known as BA.2, which is starting to outcompete BA.1 in parts of Europe and Asia. The following is what we know so far about the new subvariant: "STEALTH" SUBVARIANT Globally, BA.1 accounted for 98.8% of

sequenced cases submitted to the public virus tracking database GISAID as of Jan. 25. But several countries are reporting recent increases in the subvariant known as BA.2, according to the World Health Organization. In addition to BA.1 and BA.2, the WHO lists two other subvariants under the Omicron umbrella: BA.1.1.529 and BA.3. All are closely related genetically, but each features mutations that could alter how they behave. The variant, B.1.1.529, is believed to have emerged in Botswana - from where there are no direct flights to the U.S. - and is also being found in neighboring South Africa. Hong Kong reported a case after a passenger who had recently traveled from South Africa was found to be infected with the variant, and then infected another person while in the same hotel, quarantining. Israel has also identified a case 'in a person who returned from Malawi,' with 'two more cases of people returning from abroad' placed in quarantine, the country's health ministry said Friday.

The variant - now named Omicron -- by the World Health Organization has caused an 'exponential' rise in infections in South Africa. Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding, an epidemiologist and senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists, said initial data from the variant was worrying and border restrictions should be imposed. 'Looks like vaccine evasion could be real with this variant,' he tweeted, pointing out that the two patients in Hong Kong who had the variant were both double-jabbed with the Pfizer vaccine.

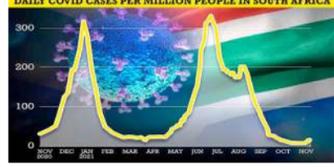


One of the two had recently been in Southern Africa. That person then passed it on to a second person, quarantining in the same hotel. 'It's very airborne,' Feigl-Ding said. 'The hotel guests were in different room across the hallway from each other. Environmental samples found the virus in 25 of 87 swabs across both rooms.' He added: 'I think border and travel restrictions make sense. Especially since Hong Kong only caught the case because of a mandatory hotel quarantine. Which countries in the west still have that??? Almost none.' Botswana has four confirmed cases, South Africa 77 - with the real figure likely in the hundreds - and Hong Kong has two, meaning 83 cases of the variant are confirmed so far. But South African scientists tried to backpedal today saying it was 'likely' that vaccines still offered 'high levels of protection' against hospitalisations and deaths from the variant. Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands joined Britain, Israel and Singapore in suspending travel from South Africa today and, in a sign of growing alarm, the European Union is also proposing prohibiting travel from the country and its neighbors. As of 5:00 a.m. EST, the CDC website's travel advice page for South Africa had the country listed as 'Level 1: Low Level of COVID-19', with flights to the U.S. permitted from the African country since November 8. The levels range from Level unknown, Level 1: Low, Level 2: Moderate, Level 3: High and Level 4: Very High.



The CDC page asks anyone travelling to and from South Africa to be fully vaccinated, or for those who are not to be tested for Covid. It also recommends travellers follow measures in-place in South Africa, including wearing a mask and social distancing. South Africa's infection rate spiked 93 percent in a day yesterday amid fears the strain is driving the surge. Local scientists say it has likely spread to all the country's nine provinces, but there is yet to be a surge in hospitalisations in epicentre Johannesburg. Travellers from South Africa have been allowed entry into the US since November 8, when restrictions barring entry to people from more than 30 countries - implemented at the start of the pandemic - were partially lifted. The new rules, which came 19 months after the travel ban was implemented, require international visitors to show both proof of vaccination and a negative Covid test. 'There's a lot we don't understand about this variant,' said Richard Lessells, an infectious disease physician at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, at a press briefing organized by South Africa's health department on Thursday. 'The mutation profile gives us concern, but now we need to do the work to understand the significance of this variant and what it means for the response to the pandemic.'

U.S. stock futures dropped in overnight trading on Thursday as concerns about the variant spread. Futures for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell more than 400 points, while those for the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq 100 were both in negative territory. On Thursday Britain's health secretary, Sajid Javid sounded the alarm over what one senior scientific advisor in the UK termed the 'worst-ever' super-mutant COVID variant.



He said it could make vaccines at least 40 per cent less effective, and as a result he said they had banned flights from South Africa and five other regional countries. Experts explained earlier how the B.1.1.529 variant has more than 30 muta-

tions - the most ever recorded in a variant and twice as many as Delta - that suggest it could be more jab-resistant and transmissible than any version before it. In response, Javid announced that flights from South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Eswatini and Zimbabwe will be suspended from midday Friday and all six countries will be added to the red list. South Africa blasted Britain's travel ban as rushed. Foreign minister Naledi Pandor said: 'Our immediate concern is the damage that this decision will cause to both the tourism industries and businesses of both countries.' A spokesman for the Government said: 'Imposing bans on travellers from countries where a new variant is reported has not yielded a meaningful outcome.' Israel was the first country to follow suit, also red-listing the six nations, with Singapore, Germany, Italy the Czech Republic and the Netherlands also banning flights from South Africa. A statement from European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU aims to halt air travel from the region due to concerns over the possible dangers posed by the variant. Germany's new travel restrictions, starting Friday night, will affect South Africa and 'probably neighbouring nations', Spahn said, with only German nationals allowed entry. They must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival even if vaccinated. In Britain they must quarantine for 11 days in Government hotels for about £2,800.



'The last thing we need now is an introduced new variant that causes even more problems,' Spahn said, with Germany in the grip of a ferocious fourth wave of the pandemic. In Rome, the government on Friday announced it was banning entry to those who have been in South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia or Eswatini in the past fortnight. Health Minister Roberto Speranza said scientists were studying the new B.1.1.529 variant, 'and in the meantime, we will follow the path of maximum caution'. Asian countries are also preparing to tighten curbs. (Article continues below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

Scientists Now On Alert Over Rising Cases Caused By Omicron 'Cousin' BA.2

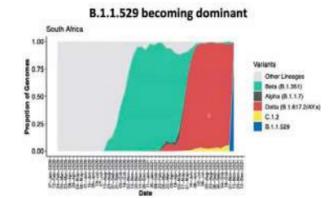
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

No cases have been detected in the UK so far but everyone who has returned from South Africa in the past 10 days will be contacted and asked to take a test. There are currently 13 direct flights a week from South Africa to the United States - Johannesburg and Cape Town are the only cities in the region from where it is possible to fly direct to the U.S. The 13 flights could hold around 3,900 people, if full. United Airlines currently fly direct from Johannesburg to New York City seven days a week, with the 16-hour flight leaving at 10pm and arriving at 7am in Newark. United also fly direct to New York City from Cape Town three times a week, on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. United flies Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, which can hold 290 people. Delta fly direct from Johannesburg to Atlanta on Saturday, Monday, and Thursday. They use Airbus A350-900, which can seat between 300 and 350 people.



The UK and Israel on Thursday effectively stopped travel from Southern Africa, and some believe the US may follow suit. Flight 'bans' have been implemented before - although they are rarely an outright ban on a commercial flight from a country. Instead, they are stringent restrictions on who can fly, meaning that the airlines themselves cancel the routes because there are so few people who meet the requirements. Donald Trump placed restrictions on travel from China to the U.S. in February 2020, and then the border between the U.S. and Canada was closed, and the U.S. and Mexico. This month Joe Biden 18 months of

restrictions placed on arrivals from the European Union, China, Iran, South Africa, Brazil and India, which had largely stopped travel between the countries. Some epidemiologists have argued that putting a travel ban in place for South Africa is counterproductive, because it punishes a country that has been transparent with its data. 'Given how transmissible that the nu variant apparently is, I do not think that halting travel will ultimately be effective in preventing the variant from arriving,' said Jay Bhattacharya, a professor of health policy at Stanford, whose recent research focuses on the epidemiology of COVID-19 as well as an evaluation of policy responses to the epidemic. He told DailyMail.com: 'COVID is a global pandemic. No country can isolate itself forever, and halting travel imposes harm on the kind of international cooperation we will need to end the pandemic. 'A better idea would be for the international community to provide sufficient vaccine supplies to the affected places.' Others, such as Feigl-Ding, insist travel restrictions are necessary.



South African scientists, meanwhile, add that they are 'concerned by the jump in evolution in this variant'. The variant has over 30 mutations - around twice as many as the Delta variant - which could potentially make it more transmissible and evade the protection given by prior infection or vaccination. 'I've said before - I'm not always as concerned about these variants of concern, but this one, B.1.1.529, does concern me,' said Marc Siegel, professor of medicine at the NYU Langone Medical Center, in an interview with Fox News.

'It's got 32 mutations in the spike protein, which is how the virus spreads. 'And in the province around Johannesburg, there's about 2,500 new cases over the past day, and they think - not proven yet - that this is the predominant variant.' Siegel said that there were numerous reasons for concern. 'It looks like it's highly contagious,' he said. 'And that is what concerns me, because the other variants that have emerged haven't had a chance against Delta because Delta is so contagious. 'The other issue is, will the vaccine protect against this variant? Will the treatments protect against this variant? We're keeping a really close eye on this one.' The British expert whose modeling helped instigate the first coronavirus lockdown said that the decision to impose travel restrictions was 'prudent'. Professor Neil Ferguson, a member of the British government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), said: 'The B.1.1.529 variant has an unprecedented number of mutations in the spike protein gene, the protein which is the target of most vaccines. 'There is therefore a concern that this variant may have a greater potential to escape prior immunity than previous variants.



A healthcare worker collects a swab from Bronwen Cook for a PCR test against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) before traveling to London, at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, November 26, 2021. 'It is also concerning that this variant appears to be driving a rapid increase in case numbers in South Africa. The Government's move to restrict travel with South Africa is therefore prudent. 'However, we do not yet have reliable estimates of the extent to which B.1.1.529 might be either more transmissible or more resistant to vaccines, so it is too early to be able to provide an evidence-based assessment of the risk it

poses.' Experts from the UKHSA have been advising ministers on the issue, with a number of scientists expressing serious concern over the variant due to the significant number of mutations in the spike protein. One senior scientist said: 'One of our major worries is this virus spike protein is so dramatically different to the virus spike that was in the original Wuhan strain, and therefore in our vaccines, that it has a great cause of concern.' Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) are meeting with South African officials on Friday at 11:00 GMT to assess the evolving situation in the country. The variant could eventually be given the moniker 'Nu' - with the most concerning variants given named after the Greek alphabet. The variant is already in three countries, suggesting it is more widespread than the official tally. Two cases have been detected in Hong Kong - both of whom had links to South Africa - three have been picked up in Botswana and the remainder are in South Africa. But a lack of surveillance on continental Africa may be underestimating the true numbers there, scientists warned. Professor Tulio de Oliveira, a director of COVID surveillance in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, told a press conference on Thursday that it has been spotted in nearly every corner of South Africa.



A baby cries as her mother receives her Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19, in Diepsloot Township near Johannesburg, South Africa on October 21. He admitted he was still 'uncertain' about the impact of the variant on the country's epidemic, with other scientists saying that it might be so evolved that it becomes unstable. But Professor Oliveria explained the new variant is 'clearly very different' from previous strains, including the fact that it has five times more mutations than

a specific part of the spike protein than Delta - meaning it might be better at infecting vaccinated people than the world-dominant strain. He said that officials 'do expect, unfortunately, to start seeing pressure in the healthcare system in the next few days and weeks.' Joe Phaahlam, South Africa's Health Minister, warned at the same press conference: 'Here is a mutation variant of serious concern.' He added: 'We were hopeful that we might have a longer break in between waves - possibly that it would hold off to late December or even next year January.' Current jabs train the immune system to recognize an older version of the spike, and lots of changes to this protein make it harder for the vaccinated people to fight it off.

What Impact Might B.1.1.529 Have On Vaccines? Scientists have raised concern that the super Botswana Covid variant may be better able to dodge vaccine-induced immunity than all previous strains - including Delta. UK Health Security Agency scientists say it is the 'worst ever'. It combines mutations previously seen on the Beta variant, which sparked concern last year as it was thought to be more vaccine resistant, and those on the more transmissible Alpha strain that was behind the second wave. Scientists warn it is 'plausible' that the mutant variant is spreading quickly because it is better able to infect people who have immunity either from vaccines or previous infection.



In South Africa where it is spreading most people already have immunity from previous infection. Some 40 per cent have also received two doses of the Covid jab. But despite the concern lab tests are yet to confirm that the variant is better able to dodge vaccine-triggered immunity than other mutant strains. Very little is known about its virulence and whether someone who catches the mutant strain is more likely to end up in hospital or dying from the disease. (Courtesy https://www.dailymail.co.uk/)