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John Robbins 281-965-6390
Jun Gai 281-498-4310

Publisher: Wea H. Lee
President: Catherine Lee
Editor: John Robbins

Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072
E-mail: News@scdaily.com



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Japan's Suga visits for Biden's first White House summit; China tops agenda

President Joe Biden hosted Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Friday as the first foreign leader to visit his White House, underscoring Tokyo's central role in U.S. efforts to counter China's growing assertiveness.

Biden welcomed Suga for a one-day summit that offered the Democratic president a chance to work further on his pledge to revitalize U.S. alliances that frayed under his Republican predecessor, former President Donald Trump.

With China topping the agenda, the meeting was expected to yield steps for diversifying supply chains seen as over-reliant on Beijing and a \$2 billion commitment from Japan to work with the United States on alternatives to the 5G network of Chinese firm Huawei, a senior U.S. official said.

Biden and Suga also planned to discuss human rights issues related to China, including crack-downs in Hong Kong and on Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang, the official said.

The summit, Biden's first face-to-face meeting with a foreign leader as president, is expected to produce a formal statement on Taiwan, a Chinese-claimed, self-ruled island under increasing military pressure from Beijing, said the official, who did not want to be identified.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Biden would address with Suga China's "increasingly coercive action" on Taiwan, which is China's most sensitive territorial issue.

It would be the first joint statement on Taiwan by U.S. and Japanese leaders since 1969. However, it appears likely to fall short of what Washington has been hoping from Suga, who inherited a China policy that sought to balance security concerns with economic ties when he took over as premier last September.

In a statement after a March meeting of U.S.-Japan officials, the two sides "underscored the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" and shared "serious concerns" about human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

The U.S. official said that both countries, while not wanting to raise tensions or provoke China, were trying to send a clear signal that Beijing's dispatch of warplanes into Taiwan's air defense zone was incompatible with maintaining peace and stability. read more

A Japanese foreign ministry official said this week it had not been decided whether there would be a joint statement and two Japanese



ruling party lawmakers familiar with the discussions said officials have been divided over whether Suga should endorse a strong statement on Taiwan.

The U.S. official said Washington would not "insist on Japan somehow signing on to every dimension of our approach" and added: "We also recognize the deep economic and commercial ties between Japan and China and Prime Minister Suga wants to walk a careful course, and we respect that."

China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Friday that China has expressed solemn concern about what he called "collusion" between Japan and the United States, and the countries should take China's concerns seriously.

SUGA MEETS HARRIS

Suga arrived at the West Wing doors in a black sports utility vehicle flying U.S. and Japanese flags. The driveway was lined with a flag-bearing military honor guard.

He met earlier with Vice President Kamala Harris, and following Oval Office talks with Biden the two leaders were due to hold a joint news conference. On Friday morning, Suga participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

"Japan highly praises and appreciates that the Biden-Harris administration puts high importance on cooperating with its allies and partners," Suga told reporters as he began talks with Harris.

"There is no other time than today when the Japan-U.S. alliance needs to be strong," he added, citing "a wide range of challenges."

Harris said they would discuss "our mutual commitment in the Indo-Pacific."

With the Suga meeting and another planned summit with South Korea in May, Biden hopes to energize joint efforts with Australia, India and Japan, in a grouping known as the Quad, as well as with South Korea, to counter both China and longtime U.S. foe North Korea.

It requires a delicate balancing act given Japan and South Korea's economic ties with China and currently frosty relations between Seoul and Tokyo.

Also expected to figure into the White House discussions are the

summer Olympics due to be held in Tokyo. Psaki said the administration understands the careful considerations Japan is weighing as it decides whether to go ahead with the games. Japan is grappling with rising coronavirus infections with fewer than 100 days from the planned start.

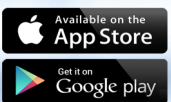
The emphasis on Japan's key status could boost Suga ahead of an election this year, but some politicians are pushing him for a tougher stance towards Beijing as it increases maritime activities in the East and South China Seas and near Taiwan.

The United States, the European Union, Britain and Canada have all imposed sanctions on Chinese officials for alleged abuses in Xinjiang and some Japanese lawmakers think Tokyo should adopt its own law allowing it to do the same, even as Japanese executives worry about a Chinese backlash.

China denies any human rights violations, but Washington says Beijing is perpetrating a genocide in Xinjiang.



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Iran nuclear talks to last several days then pause - EU official

Talks on rescuing Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal will carry on for several days before breaking so that Iranian and U.S. officials can return home for consultations, a European Union official said on Friday.

The EU is chairing meetings in Vienna of the remaining parties to the deal - Iran, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain. A delegation from the United States, which pulled out of the accord under President Donald Trump, is based in a nearby hotel as Iran has refused to hold direct talks.

A second round of talks, which involve discussions in various formats as well as formal meetings of all the remaining parties, started on Thursday. The aim is a U.S. return to the deal, lifting sanctions that were reimposed after its pullout, and undoing Iranian breaches of its nuclear restrictions. [read more](#)

Talks will continue “for a few days and then I think the two most relevant delegations will go back home to receive more precise instructions and then, I don’t know when, we will resume,” the EU official told reporters in a phone briefing.

The talks have been overshadowed by an explosion at Iran’s main uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz, which Tehran has blamed on Israel, and Iran’s decision to enrich uranium to 60% purity, a big step towards weapons-grade, which it said it started doing on Friday. [read more](#)

“We have this (Iranian) decision to go for 60% enrichment. Obviously this is not making the negotiation easier,” the official said, calling what happened at Natanz “deliberate sabotage”. It is not clear how long the talks will last in total, he added.

Israel - widely believed to be the only Middle Eastern country with a nuclear arsenal - has not formally commented on the Natanz incident. Several Israeli media outlets have quoted intelligence sources as saying the country’s Mossad spy service carried out the operation.



China’s Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine 67% effective in preventing symptomatic infection

Sinovac’s COVID-19 vaccine CoronaVac was 67% effective in preventing symptomatic infection in the first real-world study of the Chinese shot, the Chilean government said on Friday.

The vaccine was 85% effective in preventing hospitalizations and 80% effective in preventing deaths, the government said in a report prepared by the Chilean health ministry.

The release of the data makes Chile one of a handful of countries, including the United Kingdom and Israel, that have used inocula-

tion campaigns to gather insights into how effective vaccines are outside controlled clinical trials and when faced with unpredictable variables in societies.

Israel’s real-world study of the effectiveness of Pfizer’s (PFE.N) vaccine looked at the results among 1.2 million people, a mix of those who received the shot and those who did not.

Chile’s study examined CoronaVac’s effectiveness among 10.5 million people, again looking both at people who had been vaccinated and those who had not. Vaccines were administered in Chile

Editor’s Choice



Patients suffering from the coronavirus receive treatment at the casualty ward in Lok Nayak Jai Prakash hospital, amidst the spread of the disease in New Delhi, India. REUTERS/Danish Siddiqui



A child plays with a mock sub-machine gun at a model Mass Transit Railway station during the open day to mark the National Security Education Day, at Hong Kong Police College, in Hong Kong. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu



Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases testifies before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis on the Capitol Hill in Washington. Amr Alfiky/Pool



Bengal tiger Garfield reacts at the zoo in Havana, Cuba. REUTERS/Alexandre Meneghini



A service member of the Ukrainian armed forces smokes at fighting positions on the line of separation near the rebel-controlled city of Donetsk, Ukraine. REUTERS/Anastasia Vlasova



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, watch a performance in celebration to mark the birthday of his grandfather Kim Il Sung, in Pyongyang. KCNA via REUTERS

Stay Home!

BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

More Highly Transmissible Variant of CCP Virus Detected In 10 States: CDC



Health care workers receive a COVID-19 vaccination at Ritchie Valens Recreation Center in Pacoima, Calif., on Jan. 13, 2021. (Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP Photo)

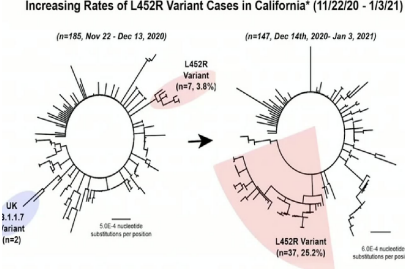
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

At least 10 state health departments in the United States have detected the highly contagious B.1.1.7 variant of COVID-19, the disease caused by the CCP virus, according to a new report. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in an update on Jan. 15, said that a “more highly transmissible variant of SARS-CoV-2, B.1.1.7, has been detected in 10 U.S. states.” SARS-CoV-2 is another name for the coronavirus that is believed to have emerged in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. Health officials warned that models have shown the B.1.1.7 strain of the virus has the potential to increase “the U.S. pandemic trajectory in the coming months” and “warrants universal and increased compliance with mitigation strategies, including distancing and masking.” Increased vaccinations may need to be achieved to fight the virus, the CDC said. This variant was first reported in the UK in mid-December, although the CDC noted that it may have emerged in September 2020. Meanwhile, B.1.1.7 has been detected in more than 30 countries, the agency said, while adding that it is easier to transmit than other CCP virus strains.



In the United States, the strain was first reported by state authorities in a rural area in Colorado, hours away from Denver. Other than Colorado, the B.1.1.7 variant was discovered in Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, California, and more, according to reports published in recent weeks. “The modeled trajectory of this variant in the U.S. exhibits rapid growth in early 2021, becoming the predominant variant in March. Increased SARS-CoV-2 transmission might threaten strained health care resources, require extended and more rigorous implementation of public health strategies, and increase the percentage of population immunity required for pandemic control,” said the CDC.

UK authorities said last year that the new variant of the virus was the reason for the increase in infection rates in London and southeastern England. But they said there’s no evidence that the variant makes people sicker. The CDC, in its update, did not appear to recommend any new mitigation strategies. “Further, strategic testing of persons without symptoms of COVID-19, but who are at increased risk for infection with SARS-CoV-2, provides another opportunity to limit ongoing spread,” according to the CDC. “Collectively, enhanced genomic surveillance combined with increased compliance with public health mitigation strategies, including vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine, will be essential to limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and protecting public health.”



Previously, the CDC noted that so far, there have been a number of mutations to the virus. “Among these possibilities, the last—the ability to evade vaccine-induced immunity—would likely be the most concerning because once a large proportion of the population is vaccinated, there will be immune pressure that could favor and accelerate emergence of such variants by selecting for ‘escape mutants,’” the CDC said. “There is no evidence that this is occurring, and most experts believe escape mutants are unlikely to emerge because of the nature of the virus.” (Courtesy ntd.com via theepochtimes)

Related

Incoming CDC Director Expects Over 100,000 COVID-19 Deaths in Next Month
Over 100,000 more Americans will die

from COVID-19 in the next month or so, the next Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director said Sunday. “By the middle of February, we expect half a million deaths in this country,” said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, who President-elect Joe Biden tapped for the position. “That doesn’t speak to the tens of thousands of people who are living with a yet uncharacterized syndrome after they’ve recovered. And we still yet haven’t seen the ramifications of what happened from the holiday travel, from holiday gathering, in terms of high rates of hospitalizations and the deaths thereafter. So, yes, I think we still have some dark weeks ahead,” she added.



Rochelle Walensky, who has been nominated to serve as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, speaks after U.S. President-elect Joe Biden announced his team tasked with dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic at The Queen in Wilmington, Del., on Dec. 8, 2020. (Jim Watson/AFP via Getty Images)
COVID-19 is the disease caused by the CCP virus. The virus primarily causes severe illness for the elderly and those with serious underlying health conditions. Most people who get it recover, but a small percentage of patients die. According to data collated by Johns Hopkins University, the United States has in some recent days seen over 4,000 daily deaths from COVID-19. The university has pegged the nation’s death toll at 397,600 as of Jan. 18. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention puts the toll slightly lower, at 394,495. Biden’s incoming chief of staff Ron Klain also said Sunday he expects the United States will hit 500,000 deaths in the month of February.



“People who are contracting the virus today will start to get sick next month and will add to the death toll in late February, even March. So, it’s going to take a while to turn this around,” he said. “The virus is the virus. What we can do is act to control it. And that means getting these vaccinations moving. It means getting help to state and local governments to help reopen schools safely, to give people the protective gear they need, and to really ramp up testing. We have laid out our plans to do this. That’s what we’re focused on.” Walensky was speaking on CBS’s “Face the Nation.” Klain was speaking on CNN’s “State of the Union.” (Courtesy ntd.com via theepochtimes)



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

People Got Tired Of All The Restrictions

People Got Fed Up With Flu Pandemic Measures One Hundred Years Ago – And Paid A Price



Armistice Day celebrations on Nov. 11, 1918, worried public health experts as people crowded together in cities across the U.S. (AP Photo)

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

Picture the United States struggling to deal with a deadly pandemic. State and local officials enact a slate of social-distancing measures, gathering bans, closure orders and mask mandates in an effort to stem the tide of cases and deaths. The public responds with widespread compliance mixed with more than a hint of grumbling, pushback and even outright defiance. As the days turn into weeks turn into months, the strictures become harder to tolerate. Theater and dance hall owners complain about their financial losses. Clergy bemoan church closures while offices, factories and in some cases even saloons are allowed to remain open. Officials argue whether children are safer in classrooms or at home. Many citizens refuse to don face masks while in public, some complaining that they’re uncomfortable and others arguing that the government has no right to infringe on their civil liberties. As familiar as it all may sound in 2021, these are real descriptions of the U.S. during the deadly 1918 influenza pandemic. In my research as a historian of medicine, I’ve seen again and again the many ways our current pandemic has mirrored the one experienced by our forebears a century ago.



No mask, no service on streetcar in 1918. (Photo/Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second year, many people want to know when life will go back to how it was before the coronavirus. History, of course, isn’t an exact template for what the future holds. But the way Americans emerged from the earlier pandemic could suggest what post-pandemic life will be like this time around. **Sick and tired, ready for pandemic’s end**
Like COVID-19, the 1918 influenza pandemic hit hard and fast, going from a handful of reported cases

in a few cities to a nationwide outbreak within a few weeks. Many communities issued several rounds of various closure orders – corresponding to the ebbs and flows of their epidemics – in an attempt to keep the disease in check. These social-distancing orders worked to reduce cases and deaths. Just as today, however, they often proved difficult to maintain. By the late autumn, just weeks after the social-distancing orders went into effect, the pandemic seemed to be coming to an end as the number of new infections declined.



People were ready to be done with masks as soon as it looked like the flu was receding. (PhotoQuest/Archive Photos via Getty Images)

People clamored to return to their normal lives. Businesses pressed officials to be allowed to reopen. Believing the pandemic was over, state and local authorities began rescinding public health edicts. The nation turned its efforts to addressing the devastation influenza had wrought. For the friends, families and co-workers of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who had died, post-pandemic life was filled with sadness and grief. Many of those still recovering from their bouts with the malady required support and care as they recuperated. At a time when there was no federal or state safety net, charitable organizations sprang into action to provide resources for families who had lost their breadwinners, or to take in the countless children left orphaned by the disease. For the vast majority of Americans, though, life after the pandemic seemed to be a headlong rush to normalcy. Starved for weeks of their nights on the town, sporting events, religious services, classroom interactions and family gatherings, many were eager to return to their old lives. Taking their cues from officials who had – somewhat prematurely – declared an end to the pandemic, Americans overwhelmingly hurried to return to their pre-pandemic routines. They packed into movie theaters and dance halls, crowded in stores and shops, and gathered with friends and family.

How many extra deaths occurred in 1918-1920 pandemic?
Excess deaths in the state of Michigan over the course of the influenza pandemic reflect the disease surges that occurred across the nation – an initial wave in

spring 1918, a second bigger wave in fall of that year, another that extended into that winter and a final wave at the start of 1920. Excess deaths are those above the average amount public health officials expect for the time of year, based on what’s happened normally in the past.

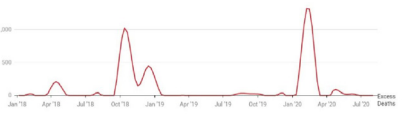


Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND Source: Siddharth Chandra, Julia Christensen, Madhur Chandra, Nigel Paneth, “Pandemic Reemergence and Four Waves of Excess Mortality Coinciding With the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Michigan: Insights for COVID-19”, American Journal of Public Health 111, no. 3 (March 1, 2021): pp. 430-437.

Officials had warned the nation that cases and deaths likely would continue for months to come. The burden of public health, however, now rested not on policy but rather on individual responsibility. Predictably, the pandemic wore on, stretching into a third deadly wave that lasted through the spring of 1919, with a fourth wave hitting in the winter of 1920. Some officials blamed the resurgence on careless Americans. Others downplayed the new cases or turned their attention to more routine public health matters, including other diseases, restaurant inspections and sanitation. Despite the persistence of the pandemic, influenza quickly became old news. Once a regular feature of front pages, reportage rapidly dwindled to small, sporadic clippings buried in the backs of the nation’s newspapers. The nation carried on, inured to the toll the pandemic had taken and the deaths yet to come. People were largely unwilling to return to socially and economically disruptive public health measures.



No matter the era, aspects of daily life go on even during a pandemic. Chicago History Museum/Archive (Photos via Getty Images)

It’s hard to hang in there
Our predecessors might be forgiven for not staying the course longer. First, the nation was eager to celebrate the recent end of World War I, an event that perhaps loomed larger in the lives of Americans than even the pandemic.

Second, death from disease was a much larger part of life in the early 20th century, and scourges such as diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis, typhoid, whooping cough, scarlet fever and pneumonia each routinely killed tens of thousands of Americans every year. Moreover, neither the cause nor the epidemiology of influenza was well understood, and many experts remained unconvinced that social distancing measures had any measurable impact.

Finally, there were no effective flu vaccines to rescue the world from the ravages of the disease. In fact, the influenza virus would not be discovered for another 15 years, and a safe and effective vaccine was not available for the general population until 1945. Given the limited information they had and the tools at their disposal, Americans perhaps endured the public health restrictions for as long as they reasonably could.



The COVID-19 vaccine won’t end the pandemic right away.

A century later, and a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understandable that people now are all too eager to return to their old lives. The end of this pandemic inevitably will come, as it has with every previous one humankind has experienced. If we have anything to learn from the history of the 1918 influenza pandemic, as well as our experience thus far with COVID-19, however, it is that a premature return to pre-pandemic life risks more cases and more deaths. And today’s Americans have significant advantages over those of a century ago. We have a much better understanding of virology and epidemiology. We know that social distancing and masking work to help save lives. Most critically, we have multiple safe and effective vaccines that are being deployed, with the pace of vaccinations increasingly weekly. Sticking with all these coronavirus-fighting factors or easing off on them could mean the difference between a new disease surge and a quicker end to the pandemic. COVID-19 is much more transmissible than influenza, and several troubling SARS-CoV-2 variants are already spreading around the globe. The deadly third wave of influenza in 1919 shows what can happen when people prematurely relax their guard. (Courtesy <https://theconversation.com/>)