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Pandemic Cancels Texas African Business Summit



Inside C2

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

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Trust in Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine low: U.S. poll



WASHINGTON, April 26 (Xinhua) -- Fewer than half of Americans considered the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine as safe and barely more than a fifth of those not yet vaccinated would be willing to take the vaccine, according to a latest poll of ABC News/Washington Post.

About 46 percent of interviewees think the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine is very or somewhat safe, compared with more than

7 in 10 for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, according to the poll results released on Monday.

About 73 percent of those not yet vaccinated said they were unwilling to receive Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 shot.

Vaccine hesitancy in the United States remains substantial, according to the poll. Nearly 1 in 4 Americans, 24 percent, are disinclined to get any of the coronavirus vaccines.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) determined to lift the pause regarding the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine last Friday, allowing its resumed use for adults.

The two agencies said the decision was made following a thorough safety review, including two meetings of the CDC's Advisory Committee on

Immunization Practices.

The pause was recommended on April 13 after reports of six cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals following administration of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

Cumulative cross-border renminbi settlement in China's Yunnan

KUNMING, April 26 (Xinhua) -- The cumulative cross-border renminbi settlement in southwest China's Yunnan province has reached nearly 608 billion yuan (about 93.8 billion U.S. dollars) as of March, according to a local branch of the country's central bank.

In the first quarter of this year, the total cross-border renminbi

settlement in Yunnan reached 19.4 billion yuan, up 51.56 percent year on year, the Kunming branch of the People's Bank of China said on Monday.

Of the total amount, the cross-border renminbi settlement under current accounts exceeded 11.5 billion yuan, up 14.38 percent year on year, mainly due to the increase in trade settlement

with Vietnam and other countries.

The settlement under capital accounts reached nearly 7.9 billion yuan, soaring 188.76 percent year on year, mainly due to the substantial increase in cross-border investment and financing by enterprises.

Yunnan has established cross-border renminbi business with 106 countries and regions, including 40 along the Belt and Road.



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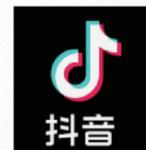
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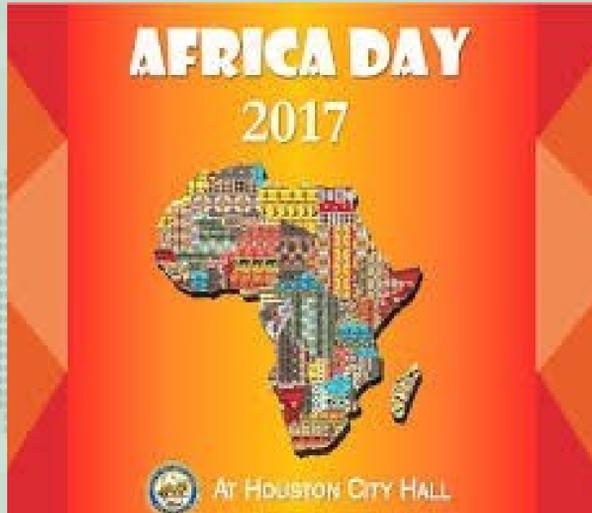
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Africa Day Is Coming



Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner has invited all the African ambassadors in Washington, D.C. to celebrate Houston Africa Day.

As the letter of invitation pointed out, Houston is Africa's largest U.S. trade partner and Houston is home to a large number of African residents. This event will help honor the many African communities in Houston to help the greater Houston community connect with the

diverse African communities and to raise awareness about the importance of intercultural dialogue, diversity and inclusion.

Africa Day also will be kicking off the African Business Forum that is aimed to highlight the various regions in Africa and their many business opportunities. Mayor Turner also will host a lunch reception with all the ambassadors.

This is the first time Mayor Turner has hosted an event after the pandemic. We are all very glad that Africa Day will represent all the businesses in Houston doing business with Africa.

After I was appointed as Honorary Consul of Guiana in Houston I was always planning to promote the culture and economic

relations between Texas and Guiana, especially in the areas of agriculture, education and infrastructure. Because of the pandemic delay, we still plan to visit with our business partners at the end of October of this year.

Mr. Mayor, we are very grateful for your efforts to promote Africa in our city.



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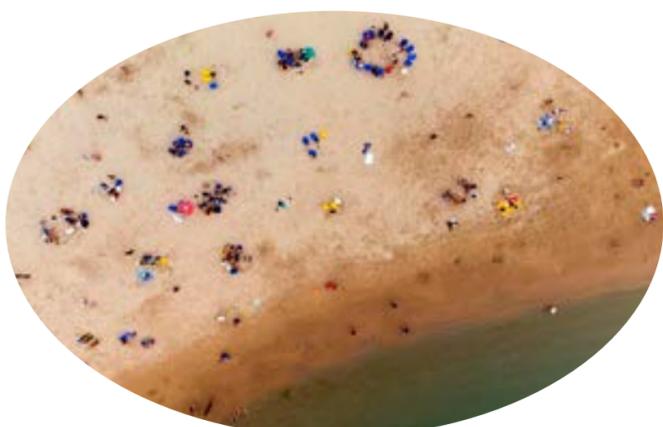
Editor's Choice



Director/Producer Chloe Zhao, winner of the award for best picture for "Nomadland," poses in the press room at the Oscars in Los Angeles. Chris Pizzello/Pool



People cremate the bodies of victims of the coronavirus at a crematorium ground in New Delhi, India. REUTERS/Danish Siddiqui



Israelis enjoy the beach of the Mediterranean during a heat wave as coronavirus restrictions ease around the country, in Ashkelon Israel. REUTERS/Amir Cohen



A blue whale model hangs with a band aid on its fin above a pop up vaccination site at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton



Halle Berry arrives to the Oscars red carpet for the 93rd Academy Awards in Los Angeles. Chris Pizzello/Pool



Debris from the Indonesian Navy KRI Nanggala-402 submarine, which was found sunken a day later, is displayed during a media conference at Ngurah Rai Airport in Bali, Indonesia. REUTERS/Johannes P. Christo

Covid-19: Kent Virus Variant Is 'On Course To Sweep World'



Key Point

The coronavirus variant first found in Kent could become the world's dominant strain, the head of the UK's genetic surveillance program has predicted.

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

Prof Sharon Peacock told the BBC's Newscast podcast the new variant has "swept the country" and "it's going to sweep the world, in all probability". She said her team's work sequencing variants of the virus could be required for at least 10 years. The Kent variant has already been detected in more than 50 countries. It was first detected in September 2020 in south-east England and its rapid spread over the following months was cited as the reason for the introduction of new lockdown rules across the UK in January. Prof Peacock, director of the Covid-19 Genomics UK consortium, said: "What's really affected us at the moment is transmissibility." She added: "Once we get on top of [the virus] or it mutates itself out of being virulent - causing disease - then we can stop worrying about it. But I think, looking in the future, we're going to be doing this for

years. We're still going to be doing this 10 years down the line, in my view." She explained this was not because she thought the pandemic would go on for 10 years, but she believed they would be sequencing new variants for that length of time. Current vaccines were designed around earlier versions of coronavirus, but scientists believe they should still work against the new ones, although perhaps not quite as well. Prof Peacock said the vaccines approved for use in the UK appeared to work well against the existing variants of the virus in the country.



Sharon Peacock is also Professor of

Public Health and Microbiology at Cambridge University Sharon Peacock is also Professor of Public Health and Microbiology at Cambridge University

The Covid-19 Genomics UK Consortium is a network of public health bodies and labs and currently analyses more than 20,000 positive tests a week. In recent weeks, it has been explained that about 5-10% of positive tests are selected randomly to be sent on for further genome analysis but the consortium says, as the number of cases falls below its capacity, its aim is to genetically screen every positive coronavirus test. Prof Peacock told Newscast that while it is normal to see variants, only a very small number have "special features". These can make them more transmissible, avoid the immune response and affect vaccination, or have the potential to cause more severe disease. "These are the things we are looking out for. I'd say it happens vanishingly rarely but we have to be on the look out for it," the expert, who was previously director of the government's National Infection Service, said. (Courtesy bbc.com)

Related

UK Variant Found In 31 Of 39 Water Treatment Plants, City Says



Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner Answers Questions At A Press Conference On UK Variant in Houston.

Key Point

The city's health authority said on Feb. 8, the U.K. variant was found in 31 of the city's 39 wastewater treatment plants. Fourteen days later, that number has grown.

HOUSTON, Texas -- According to Hous-

ton's health authority Dr. David Perse, the U.K. variant is being found "in large amounts" and is spreading throughout the city fast. He said on Feb. 8, the U.K. variant was found in 21 of the city's 39 wastewater treatment plants. Fourteen days later, on Feb. 22, he said the variant was found in 31 out of 39 treatment plants. "19% of all the virus that has been tested in the wastewater across the city has the genome that's consistent with the U.K. variant," said Perse. "That does not mean that 19% of the people in Houston are infected with the U.K. variant ... it does not mean that. We know that there is a fairly large amount of the U.K. variant in our community and it is spreading."

Sylvester Turner @SylvesterTurner Our doctors and those in the medical field are concerned about a fourth #COVID19 wave. With places opening to 100%, we are concerned. Please continue to keep your mask on while you are around others and continue to take the necessary precautions that will combat this virus.

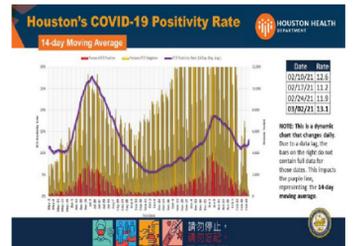
WHAT ABOUT OTHER VARIANTS? As of Monday afternoon, Perse said the wastewater is being tested for other COVID-19 variants, such as the Brazilian and South African variants. However, the measurements have not been concluded, therefore new data was not available to report, Perse said.



UK variant spread tracked to Houston's wastewater system.

"We are concerned about people dropping their guard and not wearing their masks and gathering in ways in which they wouldn't," he said. "Remember,

the U.K. variant is the one that spreads much more easily. Those viruses are in the community so, the race is on to get as many people vaccinated as possible before the U.K. variant is able to take over and cause us to have another surge" As of last week, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said the positivity rate across the city is now 13.1%, which has increased since last week. The city's health department said this is the second week in a row in which the positivity rate has seen a slight uptick. In addition, the city has reported 318 new coronavirus cases, making the total case count 175,150. The death toll now stands at 2,018. "We continue to make progress [and] getting people vaccinated, but we are nowhere near landing herd immunity," said Turner.



The Texas' mask mandate lift and the several "mask-off parties" has caused concerns of other similar events from other states coming to Texas. Turner said promoters in states that are not allowed to operate at 100% and forced to wear a mask, are promoting bringing those events to cities like Houston, Dallas and Austin.

"This is not the time to drop our masks or drop our guard in the fight against the pandemic," said Turner. (Courtesy https://abc13.com/)

Shots In Little Arms: COVID-19 Vaccine Testing Turns To Kids



In this image from video provided by Duke Health, Alejandra Gerardo, 9, looks up to her mom, Dr. Susanna Naggie, as she gets the first of two Pfizer COVID-19 vaccinations during a clinical trial for children at Duke Health in Durham, N.C. In the U.S. and abroad, researchers are beginning to test younger and younger kids, to make sure the shots are safe and work for each age. (Shawn Rocco/Duke Health via AP)

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

The 9-year-old twins didn't flinch as each received test doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine -- and then a sparkly bandage to cover the spot. "Sparkles make everything better," declared Marisol Gerardo as she hopped off an exam table at Duke University to make way for her sister Alejandra. Researchers in the U.S. and abroad are beginning to test younger and younger kids to make sure COVID-19 vaccines are safe and work for each age. The first shots are going to adults who are most at risk from the coronavirus, but ending the pandemic will require vaccinating children too. "Kids should get the shot," Marisol told The Associated Press this week after the sisters participated in Pfizer's new study of children under age 12. "So that everything might be a bit more normal." She's looking forward to when she can have sleepovers with friends again. So far in the U.S., teen testing is furthest along: Pfizer and Moderna expect to release results soon showing how two doses of their vaccines performed in the 12 and older crowd. Pfizer is currently authorized for use starting at age 16; Moderna is for people 18 and older. But younger children may need different doses

than teens and adults. Moderna recently began a study similar to Pfizer's new trial, as both companies hunt the right dosage of each shot for each age group as they work toward eventually vaccinating babies as young as 6 months.



Pfizer has started to test its Covid-19 vaccine in children ages six months to 11 years old. In this video, some of the first recipients -- twin sisters from North Carolina -- receive their vaccinations. (Photo: Shawn Rocco/Duke Health)

Last month in Britain, AstraZeneca began a study of its vaccine among 6- to 17-year-olds. Johnson & Johnson is planning its own pediatric studies. And in China, Sinovac recently announced it has submitted preliminary data to Chinese regulators showing its vaccine is

safe in children as young as 3. Getting this data, for all the vaccines being rolled out, is critical because countries must vaccinate children to achieve herd immunity, noted Duke pediatric and vaccine specialist Dr. Emmanuel "Chip" Walter, who is helping to lead the Pfizer study. Most COVID-19 vaccines being used around the world were first studied in tens of thousands of adults. Studies in children won't need to be nearly as large: Researchers have safety information from those studies and subsequent vaccinations of millions of adults. And because children's infection rates are so low -- they make up about 13% of COVID-19 cases documented in the U.S. -- the main focus of pediatric studies isn't counting numbers of illnesses. Instead researchers are measuring whether the vaccines rev up youngsters' immune systems much like they do adults -- suggesting they'll offer similar protection. Proving that is important because while children are far less likely than adults to get seriously ill, at least 268 have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. alone and more than 13,500 have been hospitalized, according to a tally by the American Academy of Pediatrics. That's more than die from the flu in an average year. Additionally, a small number have developed a serious inflammatory condition linked to the coronavirus. Apart from their own health risks, there still are questions about how easily children can spread the virus, something that has complicated efforts to reopen schools. Earlier this month, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, told Congress he expected that high school students likely would begin getting vaccinated in the fall. The elementary students, he said, may not be eligible until early 2022.



In North Carolina, Marisol and Alejandra made their own choice to volunteer after their parents explained the opportunity, said their mother, Dr. Susanna Naggie, an infectious disease special-

ist at Duke. Long before the pandemic, she and her husband, emergency physician Dr. Charles Gerardo, regularly discussed their own research projects with the girls. In the first phase of the Pfizer study, a small number of children receive different doses of vaccine as scientists winnow out the best dosage to test in several thousand kids in the next phase. "We really trust the research process and understand that they may get a dose that doesn't work at all but may have side effects," said Naggie, describing the decision-making that parents face in signing up their children. But 9-year-olds have some understanding of the pandemic's devastation and "it's nice to participate in something where it's not just about yourself but it's about learning," Naggie added. "They do worry about others and I think this is something that really, you know, struck home for them." For Marisol, the only part that was "a bit nerve-wracking and scary" was having to give a blood sample first. The vaccination itself was "really easy. If you just sit still during the shot, it's just going to be simple," she said. (Courtesy apnews.com)

Related

Covid-19 Shots for Children Hold Key to Herd Immunity

Vaccinating children will likely be necessary to reach herd immunity, experts say, but vaccines aren't authorized for kids yet Countries are racing to immunize adults against Covid-19 and move toward a more normal future. To achieve the vaccination rates that health authorities are aiming for, the shots must eventually reach the arms of children and teenagers, too.

Children aren't going to be vaccinated for several months at least, however, because drug-makers are still testing shots in younger ages. That means health authorities can't be confident of securing community protection against the virus, known as herd immunity, until later this year at the earliest, because children under 18 make up a significant proportion of many countries' populations. "We definitely need to get kids vaccinated if we want to be as close to normal as we can," said Octavio Ramilo, chief of infectious diseases at Nationwide Children's Hospital, in Ohio. Children and adolescents make up 22% of the

U.S. population, according to the Census Bureau's latest projections, and 18% of the population of the European Union.



Children and adolescents make up 22% of the U.S. population, according to the Census Bureau's latest projections. (PHOTO: CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S)

Drugmakers first tested Covid-19 vaccines in older ages. As a result, the shots have been authorized only for the oldest teenagers and adults so far. The shot from Pfizer Inc. and partner BioNTech SE is cleared in the U.S. for people 16 years and older, while vaccines from Moderna Inc. and Johnson & Johnson for 18 years and up. A vaccine from AstraZeneca PLC and the University of Oxford is in use in the U.K. and EU for ages 18 and over. Pfizer has enrolled more than 2,000 children from ages 12 to 15 years in one study and expects to submit the data from that study to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in weeks. The FDA could authorize use by the fall, Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla said at The Wall Street Journal's Health Forum on Tuesday. (Courtesywsj.com)

