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# Southern DAILY

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## California to allow private lawsuits against gun ban violators in swipe at Texas law

SACRAMENTO, Calif., July 22 (Reuters) - California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday signed a law that would allow private citizens to sue people who sell, manufacture or distribute assault weapons and guns made at home to avoid tracing.

The law is a swipe at a Texas law that allows individuals to sue anyone who helps a woman obtain an illegal abortion in the state.

Newsom, a Democrat who has been mentioned as a possible presidential contender, signed the California legislation on the same day he released an ad in Texas criticizing the state's reproductive rights policies.

"If Texas is going to use this legal framework to essentially outlaw abortion and harm women, all with the Supreme Court's blessing, California is going to use it to save lives and take AR-15s off our streets," said State Senator Robert Hertzberg, a Democrat who co-authored the bill.

Newsom has pushed for the law since last year, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Texas law allowing the vigilante-style lawsuits.

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"Our message to the criminals spreading illegal weapons in California is simple: you have no safe harbor here in the Golden State," Newsom, who signed the bill in Santa Monica, said in a news release. "California will use every tool at its disposal to save lives, especially in the face of an increasingly extreme Supreme Court."

In the ad placed in Texas newspapers, Newsom showed an anti-abortion quote by Republican Governor Greg Abbott that said abortion cost children their "right to life."

Newsom replaced the word abortion with the phrase "gun violence," changing the meaning of the quote to assert that gun violence was killing children rather than abortion.

He said the new California legislation was the state's answer to "Texas' perverse bill that placed bounties on doctors and patients."

Abbott did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

Newsom last week placed an ad in Florida criticizing that state's conservative Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, who, like Abbott, is considered likely to make a bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024. The ads, along with a recent trip to Washington, have prompted speculation that Newsom himself is planning to run for president. So far, he has said he is not intending to do so.



### Zelenskiy says no ceasefire without recovering land lost to Russia



July 22 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said a ceasefire with Russia without reclaiming lost territories would only prolong the war, according to an interview with the Wall Street Journal on Friday.

He warned that a ceasefire that allows Russia to keep Ukrainian territories seized since the invasion in February would only encourage an even wider conflict, giving Moscow an opportunity to replenish and rearm for the next round.

spoke about U.S.-supplied high mobility artillery

rocket systems (HIMARS), saying, "the Western supplies of Himars, while making a material difference, are much lower than what Ukraine needs to turn the tide."

"Freezing the conflict with the Russian Federation means a pause that gives the Russian Federation a break for rest," the Wall Street Journal reported, citing comments by Zelenskiy. (<https://on.wsj.com/3v9cOcQ>)

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He said, "Society believes that all the territories must be liberated first, and then we can negotiate about what to do and how we could live in the centuries ahead".

"A more pressing need is air-defense systems that could prevent Russia from raining long-range missiles on otherwise peaceful cities hundreds of miles from the front lines," Zelenskiy added.

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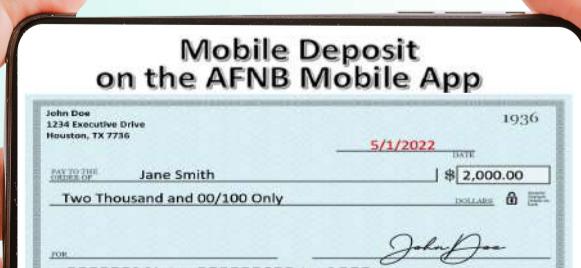
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**LOCAL NEWS**

# China plans 'great efforts' to consolidate economic recovery



BEIJING, July 22 (Reuters) - China will make great efforts to consolidate its economic recovery particularly in the crucial third quarter, putting a priority on stabilising employment and prices, state media reported on Friday after a regular cabinet meeting.

The world's second-biggest economy narrowly missed a contraction in the second quarter, growing just 0.4% year-on-year, weighed down by COVID-19 lockdowns, a weak property sector and cautious consumer sentiment. The government has set a 2022 growth target of around 5.5%.

Major hurdles in the second half include China's persistent zero-COVID policy that entails curbs and restrictions that could again disrupt local businesses, employment and consumption. To spur growth, authorities have dusted off an old playbook, issuing debt to fund big infrastructure projects.

"We will make great efforts to consolidate the foundation of economic recovery, strive to stabilise the economy and keep the economic operation within a reasonable range, give priority to ensuring the achievement of the goal of stabilising employment and prices," state media quoted the cabinet as saying.

The nationwide survey-based jobless rate eased

A man walks in front of the skyline of the Central Business district in Beijing, China, July 14, 2022. REUTERS/Thomas Peter

workers who returned to the provinces had found jobs, an official at the agriculture and rural affairs ministry said this week, without giving a specific number for those who remained jobless.

to 5.5% in June from 5.9% in May, but youth unemployment hit a record 19.3%. Blue-collar migrant workers were also forced to leave cities and return home due to job losses. [read more](#)

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 2.5% from a year earlier in June, the highest in 23 months, reflecting imported pressures despite China's domestic price controls. [read more](#)

To fund infrastructure projects and support growth, authorities have given policy banks 800 billion yuan (\$118 billion) in new credit quotas and allowed them to issue 300 billion yuan in bonds.

There is still considerable room for policies, such as financing instruments via policy banks, to play a role in boosting investment, the cabinet was quoted as saying.

Local governments were urged to speed up construction of infrastructure projects and create employment opportunities for migrant workers, state media said.

At the end of June, 90.7% of migrant

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## Editor's Choice



Stranded trucks are seen by the Route 7 as they wait for better climate conditions to cross into Chile through Cristo Redentor international pass, in Pedriel, Mendoza, Argentina July 15. REUTERS/Maximiliano Rios



Germany's Lea Meyer falls during the women's 3000 meter steeplechase at the World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Oregon, July 16. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



SENSITIVE MATERIAL. THIS IMAGE MAY OFFEND OR DISTURB Relatives react during a funeral ceremony for 4-year-old Liza Dmitrieva, who was killed during a recent Russian missile strike in Vinnytsia, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, Ukraine, July 17. REUTERS/Oleksandr Lapin



People look at plumes of smoke caused by a wildfire in Malaga, seen from Playa del Bajondillo beach in Torremolinos, Spain, July 15. REUTERS/Hannah McKay



Women cover their faces as a health worker fumigates a residential neighborhood during a drive to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne diseases following recent rainfall and water logging, in Ahmedabad, India, July 20, 2022. REUTERS/Amit Dave



A helicopter refills water while working to extinguish a wildfire in Alhaurin el grande, Spain, July 15. REUTERS/Jon Nazca

# Covid-19 Public Health Emergency Has Been Extended In The U.S.

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



Last Friday the Biden administration extended the Covid-19 public health emergency for another three months. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra officially renewed the declaration, extending it through October 13, 2022.

The emergency declaration has been in place since January 2020, and the latest renewal comes as the Omicron offshoot BA.5, the most contagious variant yet, continues to claim its US. Daily case rates, though vastly undercounted, are the highest they've been in months, as are Covid-19 hospitalizations and deaths.

Data published this week by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that more than half of the country's population lives in a county with a "high Covid-19 Community Level," where the health care system is at risk of becoming overburdened and universal indoor masking is recommended.

"The Public Health Emergency declaration continues to provide us with tools and authorities needed to respond to the highly transmissible COVID-19 subvariants that are currently circulating around the country," a Biden administration official told CNN. "The PHE provides essential capabilities and flexibilities to hospitals to better care for patients, particularly if we were to see a significant increase in hospitalizations in the coming weeks."

Indeed, ensemble forecasts from the CDC published this week do predict that hospitalizations in the US will rise over the next month. It's the first time in weeks that the forecasts have predicted an increase in hospitalizations, instead of a stable outlook.

 "Without the PHE in place, we would be limited in our ability to provide broad and equitable access to life-

saving treatments through our Test to Treat initiative, for example, which relies on flexibility for telehealth and operations," the official said. "Not renewing the PHE would leave us with fewer tools to respond and mean more Americans would get severely ill and end up in the hospital."

The public health emergency declaration allows many Americans to obtain free Covid-19 testing, therapeutic treatment and vaccines. Once it ends, people could face out-of-pocket costs depending on whether they

will be covered by Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance. But vaccinations would generally continue to be free for those covered by Medicare and private insurance, while state Medicaid programs would determine whether to continue covering vaccinations for their enrollees.

Also, Medicare has relaxed the rules governing telehealth so that many more beneficiaries can access such services during the declaration. Telehealth services are no longer limited just to those living in rural areas, and enrollees can conduct visits at home, rather than having to travel to a health care facility, and they receive a wider array of services via telehealth. These flexibilities will end for most beneficiaries after the emergency expires.

**Related:** Bill Gates Hopes World Leaders Will Fund A Global Health Team To Prevent The Next Pandemic

Bill Gates wants world leaders to create a Global Epidemic Response and Mobilization team — or GERM, for short, to help prevent future pandemics.

In a video interview from the Kirkland offices of his private investment firm, he said that for an estimated \$1 billion a year, with the U.S. likely chipping in \$250 million, the team would be "the best bargain you'll ever see."

Bill Gates envisions a global health team to prevent the next pandemic.

## Southern DAILY

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# Threat Of A Vaccine-Proof Variant Only 'A Few Mutations Away?'



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

July 30, 2021 -- CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, made a dire prediction during a media briefing this week that, if we weren't already living within the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, would sound more like a pitch for a movie about a dystopian future.

"For the amount of virus circulating in this country right now largely among unvaccinated people, the largest concern that we in public health and science are worried about is that the virus... [becomes] a very transmissible virus that has the potential to evade our vaccines in terms of how it protects us from severe disease and death," Walensky told reporters on Tuesday. A new, more elusive variant could be "just a few mutations away," she said.

"That's a very prescient comment," Lewis Nelson, MD, professor and clinical chair of the Division of Medical Toxicology at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark, tells Medscape Medical News.

"We've gone through a few mutations already that have been named, and each one of them gets a little more transmissible," he says.

"That's normal, natural selection and what you would expect to happen as viruses mutate from one strain to another."

"What we've mostly seen this virus do is evolve to become more infectious," says Stuart Ray, MD. "That is the remarkable feature of Delta — that it is so infectious."

He says that the SARS-CoV-2 has evolved largely as expected, at least so far. "The potential for this virus to mutate has been something that has been a concern from early on."

"The viral evolution is a bit like a ticking clock. The more we allow infections to occur, the more likely changes will occur. When we have

lots of people infected, we give more chances to the virus to diversify and then adapt to selective pressures," says Ray, vice-chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics and professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Technology to the Rescue?**

The flexibility of mRNA vaccines is one potential solution. These vaccines could be more easily and quickly adapted to respond to a new, more vaccine-elusive variant.

"That's absolutely reassuring," Nelson says.

For example, if a mutation changes the spike protein and vaccines no longer recognize it, a manufacturer could identify the new protein and incorporate that in a new mRNA vaccine.

"The problem is that some people are not

taking the current vaccine," he adds. "I'm not sure what is going to make them take the next vaccine."

**Nothing Appears Certain**

When asked how likely a new strain of SARS-CoV-2 could emerge that gets around vaccine protection, Nelson says, "I think [what] we've learned so far there is no way to predict anything" about this pandemic.

"The best way to prevent the virus from mutating is to prevent hosts, people, from getting sick with it," he says. "That's why it's so important people should get immunized and wear masks."

Both Nelson and Ray point out that it is in the best interest of the virus to evolve to be more transmissible and spread to more people. In contrast, a virus that causes people to get so sick that they isolate or die, thus halting transmission, works against viruses surviving evolutionarily.

Some viruses also mutate to become milder over time, but that has not been the case with SARS-CoV-2, Ray says.

**Mutations Not the Only Concern**

Viruses have another mechanism that produces new strains, and it works even more quickly than mutations. Recombination, as it's known, can occur when a person is infected with two different strains of the same virus. If the two versions enter the same cell, the viruses can swap genetic material and produce a third, altogether different strain.

Recombination has already been seen with influenza strains, where H and N genetic segments are swapped to yield H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2 versions of the flu, for example.

"In the early days of SARS-CoV-2 there was so little diversity that recombination did not matter," Ray says. However, there are now distinct lineages of the virus circulating globally. If two of these lineages swap segments "this would make a very new viral sequence in one step without having to mutate to gain those differences."

"The more diverse the strains that are circulating, the bigger a possibility this is," Ray says.

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