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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Tuesday, October 18 2022

## China's Xi talks up security, reiterates COVID stance as congress opens

BEIJING, Oct 16 (Reuters) - Chinese President Xi Jinping called for accelerating the building of a world-class military while touting the fight against COVID-19 as he kicked off a Communist Party Congress by focussing on security and reiterating policy priorities.

Xi, 69, is widely expected to win a third leadership term at the conclusion of the week-long congress that began on Sunday morning, cementing his place as China's most powerful ruler since Mao Zedong.

Roughly 2,300 delegates from around the country gathered in the vast Great Hall of the People on the west side of Tiananmen Square amid tight security and under blue skies after several smoggy days in the Chinese capital.

Xi described the five years since the last party congress as "extremely uncommon and abnormal", during a speech that lasted less than two hours - far shorter than his nearly three-and-a-half-hour address at the 2017 congress, because he did not read out the entire work report, which he did five years ago.

Xi Jinping has silver linings for rest of world  
 China's 20th Communist Party Congress: What you need to



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know  
 EU should treat China more as a competitor, says diplomat chief  
 The 2017 and 2022 work reports are roughly the same length.

"We must strengthen our sense of hardship, adhere to the bottom-line thinking, be prepared for danger in times of peace, prepare for a rainy day, and be ready to withstand major tests of high winds and high waves," he said.

Xi called for strengthening the ability to maintain national security, ensuring food and energy supplies, securing supply chains, improving the ability to deal with disasters and protecting personal information.  
 The biggest applause came when Xi restated opposition to Taiwan independence.

In the full work report, Xi used the terms "security" or "safety" 89 times, up from 55 times in 2017, according to a Reuters count, while his use of the word "reform" declined to 48 from 68 mentions five years ago.

In his decade in power, Xi has set China on an increasingly authoritarian path that has prioritised security, state control of the economy in the name of "common prosperity", a more assertive diplomacy, a stronger military and intensifying pressure to seize democratically governed Taiwan.

Analysts generally do not expect significant change in policy direction in a third Xi term.

Alfred Wu, associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the

National University of Singapore, said that as China's economy has slowed, Xi is attempting to shift the basis of legitimacy from economic growth to security.

"His narrative is - China faces many dangers, the country is in a war-like state, figuratively, and he is the saviour. With this narrative, he can get people to unite around him," Wu said.

CONTINUITY

Chinese President Xi Jinping attends the opening ceremony of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China October 16, 2022. REUTERS/Thomas Peter

In recent days, China has repeatedly emphasised its commitment to Xi's zero-COVID strategy, dashing hopes among countless Chinese citizens as well as investors that Beijing might begin exiting anytime soon a policy that has caused widespread frustration and economic damage.

Xi said little about COVID other than to reiterate the validity of a policy that has made China a global outlier as much of the world tries to coexist with the coronavirus, which emerged in central China in late 2019.

"We have adhered to the supremacy of the people and the supremacy of life, adhered to dynamic zero-COVID ... and achieved major positive results in the overall prevention and control of the epidemic, and economic and social development," Xi said.



## 美南電視 15.3

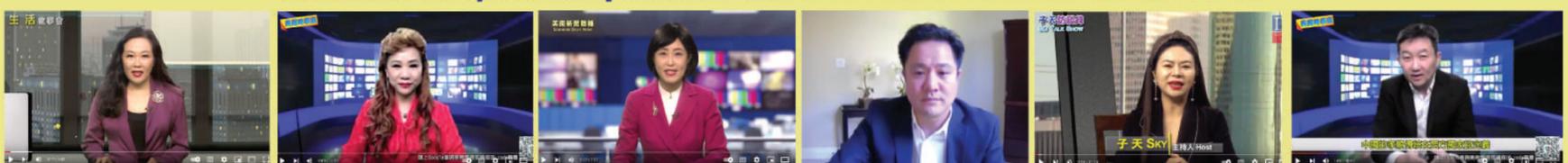
每周一至五每晚7點專題節目

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》
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- 每周五晚7點，主持人：蓋軍，《美南時事通》

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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

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

10/15/2022

## The Urgency Of Forming A Political Action Group



The midterm election is coming. Many candidates will be here at our compound today. We will not hesitate to let them use our compound in order to show our support.

Over the years, many of our community leaders have been very enthusiastic about participation in various political activities. They donate money, wave the flag and shout for politicians. But often, after all the passion, many politicians disappear.

Today we really need to form a political action group to integrate all of our human and financial resources that can be mobilized and take collective action to support the most qualified candidates. In fact, the closest relationships with us should be the mayor and our city council, commissioners and congressmen.

The role of democratic politics consists of two pillars: one is of ballots and the other is money. Both of them are essential and indispensable.

We as the Asian American community need to unite to protect our rights. The solution is that we must organize a political action committee. Today's chaotic and uncertain political climate demands that we do it.



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**Southern DAILY** Make Today Different

## Editor's Choice



Chinese President Xi Jinping waves as he arrives for the opening ceremony of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China. REUTERS/Thomas Peter



A member of the public drags an activist who is blocking the road during a "Just Stop Oil" protest, in London, Britain. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



Cast member Janelle Monae attends the premiere of 'Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery' during the closing night gala at the BFI London Film Festival in London, Britain. REUTERS/Toby Melville



A Ukrainian serviceman takes cover as an air-raid siren sounds during a Russian drone strike, which local authorities consider to be Iranian-made unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) Shahed-136, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich

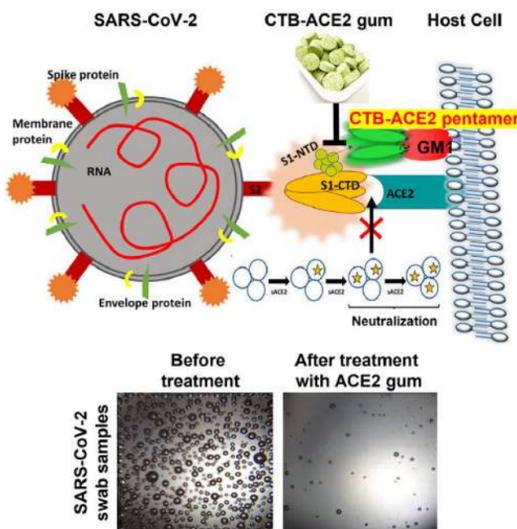


Karina Joseph, 19, comforts her 2-year-old child Holanda Sineus as she receives treatment for cholera in a tent at a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Cite Soleil, a densely populated commune of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo



A couple covered in foam kiss as they take part in the traditional "Raisin Weekend" in the Lower College Lawn, at St Andrews in Scotland. REUTERS/Russell Cheyne

## A Chewing Gum That Could Reduce SARS-CoV-2 Transmission?



### Key Points

**In experiments using saliva samples from COVID-19 patients, the gum, which contains the ACE2 protein, neutralized the virus, according to research led by School of Dental Medicine scientists.**

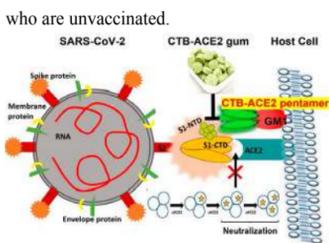
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A chewing gum laced with a plant-grown protein serves as a "trap" for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, reducing viral load in saliva and potentially tamping down transmission, according to a new study.

The work, led by Henry Daniell at Penn's School of Dental Medicine and performed in collaboration with scientists at the Perelman School of Medicine and School of Veterinary Medicine, as well as at The Wistar Institute and Fraunhofer USA, could lead to a low-cost tool in the arsenal against the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study was published in the journal Molecular Therapy.

"SARS-CoV-2 replicates in the salivary glands, and we know that when someone who is infected sneezes, coughs, or speaks some of that virus can be expelled and reach others," says Daniell. "This gum offers an opportunity to neutralize the virus in the saliva, giving us a simple way to possibly cut down on a source of disease transmission."

Vaccinations for COVID-19 have helped change the course of the pandemic but haven't stamped out transmission. Even people who are fully vaccinated can still become infected with SARS-CoV-2 and, according to recent research, can carry a viral load similar to those

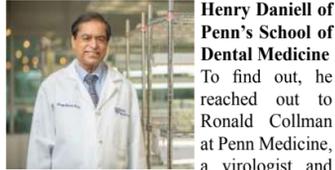


**Penn Dental Medicine's Henry Daniell and colleagues used a plant-based protein drug production platform to grow the ACE2 protein, which was then infused in chewing gum. By either blocking the ACE2 receptor or binding to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, the ACE2 in the gum appears to be able to reduce viral entry into cells. (Image: Courtesy of the researchers)**

Prior to the pandemic, Daniell had been studying the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) protein in the context of treating hypertension. His lab had grown this protein, as well as many others that may have therapeutic potential, using a patented plant-based production system. By bombarding

plant material with the DNA of target proteins, they coax plant chloroplasts to take up the DNA and begin growing the proteins. The plant material, freeze-dried and ground-up, could be used as a means of delivering the protein. This system has the potential to avoid the usual obstacles to protein drug synthesis: namely, an expensive production and purification process.

Daniell's past work on ACE2 proved fortuitous in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The receptor for ACE2 on human cells also happens to bind the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Other research groups have shown that injections of ACE2 can reduce viral load in people with severe infections. Meanwhile, another line of work by Daniell and Penn Dental Medicine colleague Hyun (Michel) Koo has involved research to develop a chewing gum infused with plant-grown proteins to disrupt dental plaque. Pairing his insights about ACE2 with this technology, Daniell wondered if such a gum, infused with plant-grown ACE2 proteins, could neutralize SARS-CoV-2 in the oral cavity.



**Henry Daniell of Penn's School of Dental Medicine**

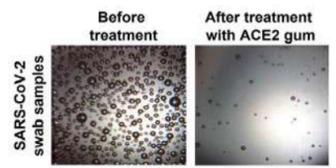
To find out, he reached out to Ronald Collman at Penn Medicine, a virologist and pulmonary and critical care doctor whose team, since the early stages of the pandemic, had been collecting blood, nasal swabs, saliva, and other biospecimens from COVID patients for scientific research.

"Henry contacted me and asked if we had samples to test his approach, what kind of samples would be appropriate to test, and whether we could internally validate the level of SARS-CoV-2 virus in the saliva samples," Collman says. "That led to a cross-school collaboration building on our microbiome studies."

To test the chewing gum, the team grew ACE2 in plants, paired with another compound that enables the protein to cross mucosal barriers and facilitates binding, and incorporated the resulting plant material into cinnamon-flavored gum tablets. Incubating samples obtained from nasopharyngeal swabs from COVID-positive patients with the gum, they showed that the ACE2 present could neutralize SARS-CoV-2 viruses.

Those initial investigations were followed by others at The Wistar Institute and Penn Vet, in which viruses, less-pathogenic than SARS-CoV-2, were modified to express the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. The scientists observed that the gum largely prevented the viruses or viral particles from entering cells, either by blocking the ACE2 receptor on the

cells or by binding directly to the spike protein.



Finally, the team exposed saliva samples from COVID-19 patients to the ACE2 gum and found that levels of viral RNA fell so dramatically to be almost undetectable. The research team is currently working toward obtaining permission to conduct a clinical trial to evaluate whether the approach is safe and effective when tested in people infected with SARS-CoV-2.

"Henry's approach of making the proteins in plants and using them orally is inexpensive, hopefully scalable; it really is clever," Collman says.

Though the research is still in early stages of development, if the clinical trials prove the gum is safe and effective, it could be given to patients whose infection status is unknown or even for a dental check-ups when masks must be removed, to reduce the likelihood of passing the virus to caregivers.

"We are already using masks and other physical barriers to reduce the chance of transmission," says Daniell. "This gum could be used as an additional tool in that fight." (Courtesy <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news>)

### Related

**COVID-19 Omicron Variant Detected In Houston Wastewater**



**'Omicron in Houston is cause for concern but not panic,' Houston's chief medical officer said. (Photo/Godofredo A. Vásquez, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer)**

The Stadler lab at Rice University's Brown School processes approximately 200 samples of waste water to figure out which variant and what amount of the COVID-19 virus is found. Health authorities say a sample from Houston's wastewater system tested positive for the Omicron variant of COVID-19 on Monday, the same day a woman separately tested positive for the variant in northwest Harris County.

In Houston, there's no confirmed case just yet — but the positive wastewater indicates one could crop up soon. Mayor Sylvester Turner in a press release Monday said the

news is an important reminder to schedule a booster shot for the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Vaccines help protect us, our loved ones, friends, and colleagues in the work environment," Turner said. "As the holidays approach, I encourage everyone to remain vigilant about their health and safety."

**Facilitating omicron here in Texas: Our abysmal vaccination rates. Only 55% 2 shots, but in Central Texas or East Texas only 40%, many counties 30%. Booster shots? You can imagine...Since the 2010s Texas has been the epicenter of the anti-vaccine movement <https://t.co/ml2mz3BCY9>**

— Prof Peter Hotez MD PhD (@PeterHotez) December 7, 2021

In Harris County, only 56 percent of the county's 4.6 million people are considered fully vaccinated, according to the Houston Chronicle.

The Omicron finding came during routine sweeps of the city's wastewater for the virus that causes COVID-19, according to the Houston Health Department. That testing includes several variants of the virus, as traces of it can be found in feces of those who are infected. City health officials were also testing wastewater outside a few elementary schools across Houston, according to KHOU's Ugochi Iloka.

**HAPPENING NOW: Crews with @HoustonHealth are testing waste water at local schools for Covid-19 variants like Omicron and Delta. They plan to test near 30 schools in the Houston area today @KHOU pic.twitter.com/veKMRfPNbT — Ugochi Iloka KHOU (@UgochiKHOU) December 7, 2021**

The consensus on the Omicron variant's potential impact remains unsettled. Health authorities in the federal government are working to determine if it is any more transmissible or lethal than other strains, according to the Houston Health Department.



"Omicron in Houston is cause for concern but not panic," said Dr. David Persse, Houston's chief medical officer. "It's important to remember that vaccination is our best tool to reduce cases, prevent serious illness and death, and slow the emergence of new variants."

The city of Houston provides free COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, to anyone 5 and older. A list of vaccination sites can be found on the city's website. (Courtesy The Houston Chronicle)

## 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 emergency medicine and chief 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.



"The problem is if the virus changes in such a way that the spike protein — which the antibodies from the vaccine are directed against — are no longer effective at binding and destroying the virus, and the virus escapes immune surveillance," Nelson says. If this occurs, he says, "we will have an ineffective vaccine, essentially. And we'll be back to where we were last March with a brand-new disease."

### 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.



### Protected, for Now

Walensky's sober warning came at the same time the CDC released new guidance calling for the wearing of masks indoors in schools and in any location in the country where COVID-19 cases surpass 50 people per 100,000, also known as substantial or high transmission areas.

On a positive note, Walensky says: "Right now, fortunately, we are not there. The vaccines operate really well in protecting us from severe disease and death." (Courtesy [www.washpost.com](https://www.washpost.com))

### Related

**Is The Lambda Variant Vaccine Resistant?**

**KEY POINTS**  
Japanese researchers found the lambda variant could be resistant to COVID-19 vaccines. Three mutations in the lambda variant's spike protein allow the variant to resist antibodies.

As the delta variant surges across the United States, there is a new COVID-19 variant that is just as transmissible, but could also be more resistant to vaccines. The lambda variant, first detected in Peru in August 2020 and spreading through South America, made its way to the U.S. for the first time on July 22 in a Houston hospital.

There are 1,053 cases of the lambda variant in the U.S. since the first case was detected, according to GISAID, an initiative dedicated to promoting COVID-19 data through genomic sequencing. The U.S. ranks second in cases behind Chile, and 41 countries have reported at least 1 lambda case.

The threat of lambda comes as the delta variant is the dominant variant of COVID-19 in the U.S. — it now accounts for 93% of cases, up from the previous rate of 83%, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



**Houston Methodist Hospital, which operates eight hospitals in its network, said the first lambda case was confirmed last week. Here's what we know about the lambda variant so far.**

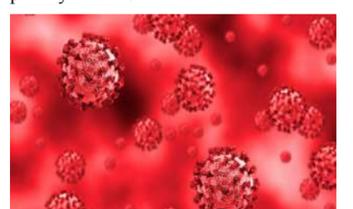
Japanese researchers at the University of Tokyo posted a lambda variant study that shows it is highly infectious and more resistant to COVID-19 vaccines. This study posted on July 28 on bioRxiv, a database for unpub-

lished preprinted studies, has not been peer reviewed or published.

The study shows three mutations in the lambda variant's spike protein — RSYLT-PGD246-253N, 260 L452Q and F490S — which allow for the variant to resist vaccine-induced neutralizing antibodies. Two other mutations — T76I and L452Q — are responsible for the variant to resist antibodies. Spike protein is the part of the virus that helps it penetrate cells in the human body — which is what vaccines target.

**How does the lambda variant compare to delta?**

The lambda variant isn't showing signs to spark concern about it becoming the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the United States like delta, said Dr. Abhijit Duggal, a staff ICU physician and director for critical care research for the medical ICU at the Cleveland Clinic. Since the lambda variant was first detected in Peru, it hasn't spread globally at the same pace as the delta variant. It has, however, become widespread in South America, but this could be due to the "founder effect," according to Dr. S. Wesley Long, medical director of diagnostic biology at Houston Methodist, where the case was identified in the U.S. The founder effect means the variant first took hold in a densely populated and geographically restricted area, making it the primary variant over time.



**How concerned should you be about the lambda variant?**

On June 14, the World Health Organization flagged the lambda variant as a "variant of interest" versus a "variant of concern." A variant of interest depends on evidence about a unique outbreak cluster or limited expansion in the U.S. or other countries, according to the CDC. A variant of concern shows widespread evidence of treatments, vaccines and transmissibility.

The University of Tokyo study said, "Because the Lambda variant is a (variant of interest), it might be considered that this variant is not an ongoing threat compared to the pandemic (variants of concern). However, because the Lambda variant is relatively resistant to the vaccine-induced (antibodies), it might be possible that this variant is feasible to cause breakthrough infection." (Courtesy <https://www.tennessean.com/news/>)