

MORE NEWS

UAE says 100pc of population received one Covid jab

One hundred percent of the United Arab Emirates' population has received at least one dose of a vaccine against Covid-19, the health ministry has said. The announcement late Friday came amid growing global concern over a new Covid variant dubbed Omicron that was first detected by South Africa. The World Health Organization said the new variant is more infectious than the dominant, highly transmissible Delta strain, and several countries, including the UAE, have restricted travel from a number of south African countries. A total of 21,802,032 doses of Covid vaccine have been administered in the Gulf Arab nation.

China conducts drills near Taiwan Strait

The Chinese army has carried out a "naval and air force combat readiness patrol" near the Taiwan Strait following a contentious visit to the island by a group of American lawmakers, a spokesperson said. Tensions between Beijing and Washington have soared over the fate of democratic self-ruled Taiwan, which China has vowed to one day retake, by force if necessary. A group of American lawmakers arrived on the island Thursday offering support for the Taiwanese authorities, who Beijing accuses of seeking independence for the island. In response, the Chinese army on Friday carried out "a naval and air force combat readiness patrol in the direction of the Taiwan Strait," a spokesperson for the Eastern Theater Command said in a statement.




Two students, driver killed in Kosovo bus shooting

A gunman opened fire late Friday on a bus in Kosovo carrying school students, killing a boy and a girl and the driver, police said. Another 14 year-old student was wounded but is in stable condition, Skender Dreshaj, the head of a nearby local hospital told the state-run RTK television channel. According to local media, the shooter was wearing a mask and carried an AK-47. The bus was packed with children returning from school, the head of Glogjan village Mustafa Selmani told RTK. The motives for the shooting were unclear. Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani condemned the attack and called the police to find the perpetrators as soon as possible and bring them to justice. "Attacking bus with students is a blow to our security and order," Osmani said on Facebook.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Quote of the day



In all probability...I am concerned. We support Ukraine's territorial integrity. We support Ukraine's ability to govern itself."

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN ON GROWING TENSION OVER A RUSSIAN MILITARY BUILD-UP AND AN ALLEGED COUP PLOT



Migrant children pose for a photo at the transport and logistics centre Bruzgi on the Belarusian-Polish border, in the Grodno region, Belarus yesterday. Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko told migrants stranded at the border with Poland that his country would help them to return home if they wanted but would not force them.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Vaccines likely to work

Say researchers, stress the need for further studies to determine how much of the shots' effectiveness may be reduced

AGENCIES

Scientific experts at the World Health Organization warned Friday that a new coronavirus variant discovered in southern Africa was a "variant of concern," the most serious category the agency uses for such tracking. The designation, announced after an emergency meeting of the health body, is reserved for dangerous variants that may spread quickly, cause severe disease or decrease the effectiveness of vaccines or treatments. The last coronavirus variant to receive this label was Delta, which now accounts for virtually all cases in the US. The WHO said the new version, named Omicron, carries a number of genetic mutations that may allow it to spread quickly, perhaps even among the vaccinated. Independent scientists agreed that Omicron warranted urgent attention but also pointed out that it would take



more research to determine the extent of the threat. Although some variants of concern, like Delta, have lived up to initial worries, others have had a limited impact. Researchers said that vaccines will most likely protect against Omicron, but further studies are needed to determine how much of the shots' effectiveness may be reduced, reports New York Times. Omicron first came to light in

Botswana. So far, six people have tested positive for Omicron there, according to an international database of variants. Around the same time, researchers in South Africa stumbled across Omicron in a cluster of cases in the province of Gauteng. Researchers found more than 30 mutations on a protein, called spike, on the surface of the Omicron coronavirus. The spike protein is the chief target of antibodies that the immune system produces to fight a Covid-19 infection. So, many mutations raised concerns that Omicron's spike might be able to evade antibodies produced by either a previous infection or a vaccine. Still, vaccines are expected to provide some protection against Omicron because they stimulate not only antibodies but immune cells that can attack infected cells. Mutations to the spike protein do not blunt that immune cell response.

South Africa 'punished' for detecting the strain

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa complained yesterday that it is being "punished" for detecting a new Covid-19 variant Omicron which the World Health Organization has termed a "variant of concern" and is more transmissible than the dominant Delta strain. The decision by a number of countries around the world to ban flights from southern Africa following the discovery of the variant "is akin to punishing South Africa for its advanced genomic sequencing and the ability to detect new variants quicker," the foreign affairs ministry said in a statement. "Excellent science should be applauded and not punished," it said. The ministry pointed out that new variants had been discovered in other parts of the world. "Each of those cases have had no recent links with Southern Africa, but the reaction to those countries is starkly different to cases in Southern Africa," it said. Israel and Belgium announced after South Africa that they also had detected cases of Omicron. Government insisted that South Africa's "capacity to test and its ramped-up vaccination programme, backed up by a world-class scientific community should give our global partners the comfort that we are doing as well as they are in managing the pandemic". With more than 2.95 million cases and 89,783 deaths, South Africa is the worst-hit country in Africa by the pandemic.

'The reality is severer than ever'

Japan PM to step up defence of his country amid growing threats from China, North Korea

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has renewed his pledge to consider "all options," including acquiring enemy base strike capability to protect the country amid growing threats from China and North Korea. Kishida said at his first troop review yesterday that the security situation in the region is rapidly changing and that "the reality is severer than ever," with North Korea continuing to test-fire ballistic missiles while advancing its capability, and China pursuing a military buildup and increasingly assertive activity in the region. "I will consider all options, including possessing so-called enemy base strike capability, to pursue strengthening of defence power that is necessary," Kishida said in an address to hundreds of Ground Self-Defense Force members in olive-coloured helmets and uniforms. Kishida, who took office in October, served as top commander for the first time at yesterday's Self-Defense Force troop review held at the main army base Camp Asaka, north of Tokyo. About 800 troops gathered for the inspection, according to the Ministry of Defense.

"The security environment surrounding Japan has been rapidly changing at an unprecedented speed. Things that used to happen only in science-fiction novels are today's reality," Kishida said. He said his government will lead "calm and realistic" discussions to determine what is needed to protect people's lives and gain their understanding. The possibility of possessing so-called enemy base strike capability has been a divisive issue because opponents say it violates Japan's war-renouncing constitution. Kishida has shifted his dovish stance to a more hawkish one, apparently to please influential leaders within his governing party, including former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and to strengthen his grip on power. He now advocates increasing Japanese military capability and spending. On Friday, Kishida's Cabinet approved a 770 billion Japanese yen (\$6.8bn) request for an extra defence budget through March to expedite the purchase of missiles, anti-submarine rockets and other weapons amid rising concern over the escalation of military activities by China, Russia and North Korea.



Civil organisations hold a protest calling for Burkina Faso's President Roch Kabore to resign and for departure of French forces that patrol the country, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



People try to return a whale to the sea after it beached itself at the shores of the fisherman's cove Lenga, near Hualpen, Chile on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Widow of S Korean dictator apologises for husband's rule

AFP, Seoul

The widow of a South Korean dictator who brutally crushed opponents until mass demonstrations forced him from power apologised yesterday for the "pains and wounds" of her husband's rule. Chun Doo-hwan died Tuesday at his home in Seoul aged 90 and remains among the country's most reviled figures. A general in the military, he effectively took control of South Korea in a coup after the 1979 assassination of strongman Park Chung-hee. He was president from 1980 to 1988, ruling with an iron fist, and became known as the "Butcher of Gwangju" for ordering his troops to put down an uprising against his rule in the southwestern city in 1980. "On behalf of my husband, I would like to deeply apologise to those who suffered pains and wounds during his time in office," Lee Soon-ja said on the final day of Chun's five-day funeral service. The apology was brief and did not specify Chun's wrongdoings. Chun never apologised during his lifetime for his atrocities and became mired

in court battles in his final years. His reign was marked by the widespread use of torture against dissidents and stifling of freedom of expression. Around 200 people were killed or went missing during the uprising in Gwangju, according to official figures, but activists say the toll may have been three times as many. He was convicted of treason and condemned to death in 1996 but his execution was commuted on appeal and he was released following a presidential pardon. Lee Jae-myung, the ruling Democratic Party's candidate for next year's presidential election, said Lee had "insulted" the people of Gwangju by not specifically mentioning the uprising and its victims in her apology. But Min Jeong-ki, a long-time aide to Chun, told local media that Lee's apology did not cover the uprising because it took place before Chun officially took office as president. On Wednesday, a day after Chun's death, a group of 70 Gwangju survivors filed a lawsuit against the government seeking compensation for emotional damage.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



SEPTEMBER 28

1912 - Albania declared its independence after more than 400 years of Turkish rule.

1943 - Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met in Tehran to chart the future Allied course for World War Two and decide a post-war future.

1971 - Black September agents assassinated Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi Tell outside a hotel in Cairo during an official visit.

2004 - Jordan's King Abdullah relieved his half-brother Prince Hamza of his duties.

SOURCE: REUTERS