



# CHINA DAILY

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## Successful landing



Technical staff work at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center late Tuesday as China's Chang'e 5 spacecraft successfully landed on the near side of the moon and its onboard cameras sent back a photo of the landing area (at right, below the computer-generated image of the lander). PROVIDED BY CNSA See story, page 3

## Li calls for enhanced Sino-Russian cooperation

By XU WEI  
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Premier Li Keqiang called on Wednesday for better alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the development strategies of Russia, in order to enable new breakthroughs in bilateral cooperation in the economy, trade, energy and agriculture.

Speaking during a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin via video link, Li urged the two nations to proactively foster new areas of openness and cooperation while consolidating the foundation of traditional cooperative areas.

The two sides must accelerate their pace of cooperation in manufacturing, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the digital economy and small and medium-sized enterprises, he said.

The meeting, which was the 25th regular meeting between the Chinese premier and the Russian prime minister, also included Vice-Premiers Han Zheng, Sun Chunlan and Hu Chunhua and their Russian counterparts.

To harness the foundation of popular support for bilateral relations, Li highlighted the need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges, saying that the two sides must work more closely together in education, tourism and the Winter Olympics.

China and Russia, as each other's largest neighbor, have always respected each other, maintained a good neighborly policy and remained committed to achieving win-win outcomes, he said.

The downturn in the global economy and sluggish world trade and investment have not slowed the

pace of bilateral cooperation, with new progress being secured in more areas, he said, adding that the two nations have developed even closer trade ties and cross-border e-commerce has blossomed.

The steady progress in major strategic programs such as energy and fresh outcomes in bilateral cooperation in the Far East and at the local level are also testament to the strong complementary nature and huge potential of China-Russia cooperation, the premier said.

Beijing is ready to work with Moscow to summarize the outcomes and experience from bilateral cooperation and give fresh impetus to the sustained and sound growth of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, he added.

It is in the interests of China,

Russia and the whole world for the two to safeguard the international order with the United Nations at its core, as well as multilateralism and free trade, he said.

China, as the world's largest developing country and a large market with immense growth potential, is willing to share with Russia its development cooperation, expand two-way opening up and deepen win-win cooperation, he said.

Mishustin said Russia is ready to stand with China in jointly fighting COVID-19 and bolstering cooperation in the research and development of vaccines and pharmaceuticals.

It is important to adopt effective measures to return bilateral trade and investment to a track of growth and explore new growth areas such as the digital economy, he said.

## Flip-flop by UK shows cost of banning Huawei

The people of the United Kingdom are being forced to pay for their government's flip-flop on Huawei Technologies.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has abandoned his electoral manifesto pledge to "give all homes superfast broadband by 2025".

The UK government launched its spending review on Nov 25, an event triggered as an emergency due to the overwhelming economic and financial cost of COVID-19. During the event, British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak committed over \$333 million to phase out Huawei from Britain's 5G telecommunications infrastructure, adding to a ban implemented earlier this year.

However, in doing so, the government subsequently slashed its investment in telecommunications infrastructure from \$5 billion (\$6.68 billion) to \$1.2 billion and quietly dumped Johnson's

**WORLD WATCH**  
By Tom Fowdy

electoral pledge, which, amid pressure to ban Huawei at the start of this year, was publicly defended in a BBC interview.

The British public is now paying for Johnson's Huawei U-turn. He knew that excluding the company would narrow the UK telecommunications market, drive up infrastructure costs and, as widely warned, put Britain in the digital slow lane. Here is real evidence of that.

However, the prime minister was strong-armed into making a purely political decision based on a case without evidence by the United States and right-wing fanatics in his party. It was a bad choice.

Now, as the UK faces severe economic depletion, a record GDP

decline and a record spending deficit, the government is wasting money by not upgrading its infrastructure yet removing Huawei.

Huawei matters hugely to the British economy. According to a study released by Oxford Economics business analysts, the company contributes £3.3 billion to the British GDP and 51,000 jobs. Its telecommunications equipment was the most affordable and state of the art. Not surprisingly, UK companies lobbied hard against such a ban.

Industry warnings were widespread against the consequences of excluding the Shenzhen company from Britain's 5G rollout and, most staggeringly, Johnson himself knew this.

However, the world changed. The government capitulated to a tidal wave of anti-China sentiment from within the right-wing media, Conservative Party backbenchers (who were also lobbying for Washington's line) and a US Trump administration that advocated Cold War strategies against Beijing.

As a result, the government caved in and decided to ban Huawei

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## Hurdles remain to be cleared as UK fires starting gun on mass vaccination

By ANGUS McNEICE  
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Next week will mark a momentous occasion in the brief and recent history of the COVID-19 pandemic, as vaccines are distributed throughout the United Kingdom for the first time.

Health workers who have weathered so much on the front line of the battle against the virus will be among the first to receive an injection, as will people in the older age groups, where thousands of lives have already been lost.

The UK is the first nation to greenlight the use of the COVID-19 vaccine from pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech.

The nation's drug regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, or MHRA, approved the vaccine on Wednesday, just weeks after Pfizer announced the conclusion of its Phase 3 trial in late November, from which results suggested the vaccine is 95 percent effective at protecting against infection.

"The vaccine will begin to be made available across the UK from next week," Prime Minister



A dose of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination of BioNTech and Pfizer is pictured in this undated handout photo, as Britain became the first western country to approve a COVID-19 vaccine, in Mainz, Germany. BioNTech SE 2020, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

ter Boris Johnson said on Twitter. He said vaccines "will ultimately allow us to reclaim our lives and get the economy moving again".

The speed at which the vaccine was developed and approved is unprecedented, especially considering the treatment itself relies on a novel messenger RNA technology, rather than the traditional approach that involves weakened viral particles.

English vaccinology pioneer Richard Moxon, whose work in the 1990s led to the development of the first genome-based vaccines, said the breakthrough is a "bit like going to the moon".

"It is a great triumph for science and for all the people who have done the groundwork," Moxon told China Daily. "This is really good news, not

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Vaccine: More choices and public uptake important for immunity

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only for coronavirus, which is obviously the pressing concern at the moment, but it also is so encouraging for all the other people making vaccines along these lines, and it opens up as a proof of concept the possibility of using these kinds of mRNA vaccines against many other infectious diseases.”

But scientists warn that much work lies ahead. It may be worth asking the question: What if developing the vaccine was the easy part? The logistical challenge of manufacturing and disseminating treatments is enormous, especially in the case of the Pfizer vaccine, which requires storage at ultra-cold temperatures.

Developed countries like the UK will have an easier time distributing the Pfizer jab than nations that do not have robust cold-chain infrastructure, according to Robert Lechler, president of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

“The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine does come with challenges such as storage at around minus 70 C which is why I am pleased that there are other promising vaccines that could be approved for use soon,” Lechler said.

Some other COVID-19 vaccine candidates can be stored at higher temperatures for longer periods, including the so-called Oxford vaccine, which was shown to provide up to 90 percent protection in interim Phase 3 results published last month.

Chinese manufacturers have several vaccine candidates in the pipeline that do not require ultra-cold storage, including a treatment developed by Sinovac that produced a strong immune response in Phase 1 and Phase 2 testing, with results from large-scale Phase 3 testing coming soon.

Vaccine makers from China have already agreed to deliver tens of millions of doses to numerous developing nations around the globe.

“Really, the way we are going to deal with this pandemic globally is by having a variety of vaccines available using different technologies, and, crucially, some of those need to not have cold-chain issues,” said Andrew Catchpole, chief scientist at London-based vaccine testing lab hVIVO. “And this is not uncommon, most infectious diseases for which we have vaccines are actually collectively delivered by a number of different vaccine manufacturers.”

Scientists have warned it is still unclear for how long the vaccine will provide protection, or whether people who are vaccinated will still be able to spread the virus.

“Today is a good news day, however, we do have to acknowledge several key things,” said Stephen Evans, who is a professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. “We will not be able to change distancing, mask-wearing etcetera for quite some time, months at least, and we don’t yet know when or whether that will stop.”

Vaccine uptake is another major concern. Achieving herd immunity will require vaccinating an estimated 70 percent of the population, and new data suggest that vaccine hesitancy is on the rise. In a November survey, London-based consultancy Kantar found that just 43 percent of UK respondents would “definitely” agree to treatment, which was down from 50 percent in June.

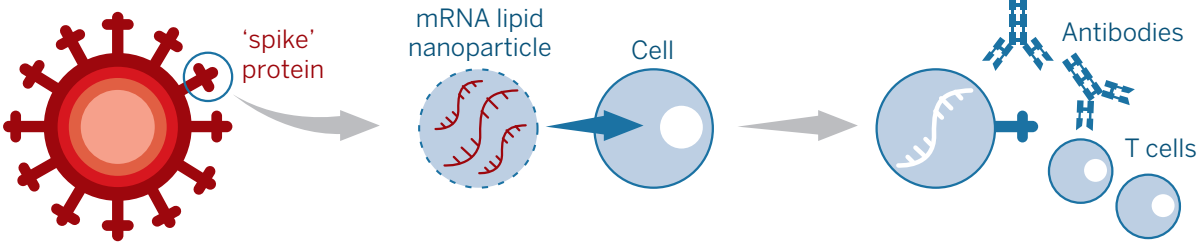
“Making vaccination available is not enough; people need to be convinced so that they do accept being vaccinated,” said Evans.

Vaccine hesitancy exists outside the so-called antivax movement, including among people who are wary of the speed at which treatments have become available.



How the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine works

mRNA vaccines give the immune system genetic instructions to recognize the virus



Scientists focus on the genetic sequence for the virus’s ‘spike’ protein. This is used to synthesize an mRNA sequence - instructions that cells can use to make the ‘spike’ protein

Source: Pfizer

“We are seeing more vaccine hesitancy, because people are questioning how a vaccine can be licensed to the market and be safe within that sort of timeframe, when we all know prior to the pandemic it takes many years,” said Catchpole, who has had direct involvement with UK regulators on COVID-19 clinical trials.

“People need to understand that anything to do with COVID that lands on the regulator’s desk is sent

to the top of the pile,” Catchpole said. “We need to reassure people there have not been shortcuts taken in the approvals of these vaccines. What we are seeing is a massive expediting of the processes.”

Lechler said governments must invest in education and messaging around the benefits of approved treatments.

“To ensure good uptake of COVID-19 vaccines, it is essential that

public health messages around vaccination reach all parts of society, regardless of age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, or language,” Lechler said. “The best way to do this is work hand-in-hand with different communities to understand the questions they have, to co-produce effective messages, and understand the best ways to share them.”

Moxon also cautions that, while the vaccine was shown to be safe

in trials, there is a small possibility that adverse side-effects may appear once mass vaccination campaigns begin. He points to the example of a rotavirus vaccine that was withdrawn from the market in the 1990s, after it was linked to a rare intestinal disorder.

“We must have in place ways of being able to pick up rare events that would only be seen after millions of treatments,” Moxon said.

BRETT DIETRICH / CHINA DAILY



Prime Minister Boris Johnson, wearing a hair net and face covering, views last-minute quality testing at the ‘fill and finish’ stage of the manufacturing process of COVID-19 vaccines during a visit to a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Wrexham, Wales on Monday.

PAUL ELLIS / POOL VIA REUTERS

Delivering the jab

United Kingdom health authorities have revealed who will be offered the first COVID-19 vaccinations from Pfizer, after drug regulators approved the treatment on Wednesday. Residents and workers in care homes will be prioritized, according to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization, or JCVI, which oversees UK vaccine strategy. Older people and so-called frontline workers will also be among the first to receive treatment.

“Residents in care homes for older adults and care home workers are the highest priority, following that are those 80 years of age and above alongside frontline health and social care workers,” Lim Wei Shen, who is COVID-19 chair for the JCVI, said at a government briefing. “The JCVI advice is aimed at maximizing benefit from vaccines and therefore it’s aimed at the most vulnerable people – which are people in care homes,” Lim said. “Whether or not the vaccine itself can be delivered to care homes is obviously an important point, and there will be some flexibility in terms of operational constraints.”

The Pfizer vaccine presents a logistical challenge as it requires ultra-cold temperatures for long-term storage. However, distribution is partly made easier as the vaccine remains viable for short periods at higher temperatures.

“We did obviously look at the stability of the vaccine, as you said it is stored at -70 degrees,” Munir Pirmohamed, chair of the Commission on Human Medicine Expert Working Group, said from the briefing. “But we were able to look at stability data and there’s stability data showing that it is stable for a short period of time at 2 to 8 C, which allows it to be transported to the relevant vaccination sites.”

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the UK is prepared to begin the vaccination campaign. “Fifty hospitals across the country are already set up and waiting to receive the vaccine as soon as it’s approved, so that can now happen,” he said. Hancock said that, beyond hospitals, the treatment will be made available from mass vaccination centers as well as general practitioners and pharmacists offering the vaccines to prioritized individuals.

JCVI priority list for the first phase of vaccination in the UK

- 1 - Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- 2 - All those aged 80 and older. Frontline health and social care workers
- 3 - All those aged 75 and older
- 4 - All those aged 70 and older. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- 5 - All those aged 65 and older
- 6 - All individuals aged 16-64 with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
- 7 - All those aged 60 and older
- 8 - All those aged 55 and older
- 9 - All those aged 50 and older

Two groups will not receive the vaccine

- 1 - Pregnant women
- 2 - Most children under 16

ANGUS MCNEICE

Sweden makes COVID policy U-turn

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
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Sweden’s public health authority has made another policy U-turn amid growing evidence that the nation faces a dangerous winter with the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Contradicting earlier advice, the agency now says children who live with somebody infected by the coronavirus should stay at home and not go to school or nursery.

It comes as the latest data showed the nation is now fighting a second wave in the pandemic and critics

argue that Sweden has underestimated the potential for asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19.

Last month Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven was forced to change strategy, implementing new measures that also include a ban on public gatherings of more than eight people.

Also last month, State epidemiologist Anders Tegnell, who has advocated the country’s liberal approach to the outbreak, admitted that Sweden has seen no signs of herd immunity slowing the spread of COVID-19 as new infection numbers soar.

The high-profile scientist had claimed that Sweden would fare better than other countries in the second wave after building up a higher level of immunity.

But Tegnell now says it is still not clear to what extent transmission rates are reduced when more people have been exposed to the virus.

In an interview with Bloomberg on Tuesday, Tegnell said it is “very hard” to understand. He said: “It’s obvious that it does slow down transmission, but it’s been difficult to understand how large that effect is and how it should be weighed against other factors that speed up transmission.” That “balance may

have been different than I and many others believed.”

Sweden’s main ruling party, the Social Democrats, saw a significant decline in support in a fresh poll, adding to signs that voters are worried about the nation’s COVID-19 strategy.

In total, 6,681 people have died with COVID-19 in the country, one of the highest per capita death rates in Europe, and a higher rate than neighbors Norway, Denmark and Finland. Sweden reported 517 deaths with COVID-19 in the two weeks to Friday.

Observers say the government is now sidelining the controversial Tegnell. “There’s certainly a split, and I’m pretty sure that many in the government have rather lost faith in the public health agency,” said Nicholas

“We’ve now got exactly the same level of spread of the virus that we had in the spring,”

Nicholas Aylott, a researcher at Stockholm’s Sodertorn University

6,681 people have died with COVID-19 in Sweden

Aylott, an associate politics professor at Stockholm’s Sodertorn University, quoted by the Daily Telegraph.

“By some counts, we’ve now got exactly the same level of spread of the virus that we had in the spring, and that’s about as clear a refutation of Tegnell’s strategy as you could wish for.”

Joachim Rocklov, an epidemiologist at the Umea university, told the Financial Times the country had suffered a “systemic failure”, in large part due to it underplaying the risks of asymptomatic transmission.

“There’s been no testing of asymptomatic people, not even those returning from holidays abroad. It’s a mistake,” he said.

Rocklov said it looked like Sweden was now changing strategy. “People are realizing that it has been dangerous guesswork over the second wave being less severe. It’s starting to change public opinion.”