



Nations must fund WHO’s vaccine plan

Says UN chief

REUTERS, New York

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said yesterday it is time for countries to start using money from their national Covid-19 recovery and response plans to help fund the World Health Organization’s global vaccine plan.

The Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator programme and its Covax facility has so far received \$3 billion, but needs another \$35 billion. It aims to deliver two billion doses of coronavirus vaccines by the end of next year, 245 million treatments and 500 million tests.

“The ACT-Accelerator provides the only safe and certain way to re-open the global economy as quickly as possible. A national vaccine effort in a handful of countries will not unlock the doors to the global economy and restore livelihoods,” Guterres told a high-level virtual UN event.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 167 countries have joined Covax global vaccines facility, representing 70% of the world’s population. Guterres said the programme needed an immediate injection of \$15 billion to “avoid losing the window of opportunity” for advance purchase and production, to build stocks in parallel with licensing, boost research, and help countries prepare.

Guterres called on all countries to step up significantly in the next three months.



A demonstrator is detained by police during a protest after the death of a rape victim, on Rajpath near India Gate, in New Delhi, India, yesterday. Protests erupted in several parts of India yesterday after the authorities had the body of a gang rape victim cremated at a ceremony her family said took place without their permission. The 19-year-old victim from the Dalit community was attacked and raped on Sept 14 in a field near her home in Hathras district, 100 km (62-miles) from the capital, New Delhi, authorities said. She died in hospital on Tuesday from injuries sustained during the attack. Police have arrested four men in connection with the rape.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Invest \$500b a yr to protect nature

Attenborough leads call at UN meet

REUTERS, London

British broadcaster David Attenborough yesterday led a call from conservation groups for the world to invest \$500 billion a year to halt the destruction of nature, warning that the future of the planet was in “grave jeopardy”.

Attenborough, whose new film “A Life on Our Planet” documents the dangers posed by climate change and the extinction of species, issued the call as the United Nations convened a one-day summit aimed at galvanising action to protect wildlife.

“Our natural world is under greater pressure now than at any time in human history, and the future of the entire planet – on which every single one of us depends – is in grave jeopardy,” Attenborough, 94, said in a statement.

“We still have an opportunity to reverse catastrophic biodiversity loss, but time is running out.”

Opening the summit in New York, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that a million species were at risk of extinction and that climate change and the loss of biodiversity were “destroying Earth’s web of life”.

The world spends an estimated \$80-90 billion on conservation each year, but studies show that hundreds of billions of dollars may be needed to save ecosystems from collapse. Britain, Canada and others joined the European Union on Monday in pledging to protect 30% of their land and seas by 2030.

‘Herd-immunity’ still a far cry

Study in India says only 7.1pc of population may have been infected with Covid-19

AGENCIES

More than 60 million people in India -- 10 times the official figure -- could have contracted the novel coronavirus, the country’s lead pandemic agency said, indicating the so called herd-immunity is still a far cry from ground reality.

According to official data India, home to 1.3 billion people, is the world’s second most infected nation, with more than 6.1 million cases, just behind the United States.

But the real figure could be much higher, according to the latest serological survey -- a study testing blood for certain antibodies to estimate the proportion of a population that has fought off the virus.

“The main conclusions from this sero-survey are that one in 15 individuals aged more than 10 have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 by August,” Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) director-general Balram Bhargava said at a health ministry press conference.

The survey, conducted between August 17 and September 22, revealed that around 7.1 per cent of India’s adult population (aged 18 and above) showed evidence of past exposure to the virus so far, reported our New Delhi correspondent.

It also said that for every confirmed Covid-19 case in August there were 26 to 32 infections that

went undetected. Bhargava said evidence of virus exposure was more prevalent among people tested in urban slums (15.6 percent) and non-slum urban areas (8.2 percent), than in rural areas, where 4.4 percent of those surveyed had antibodies.

The first survey conducted in May found seropositivity was the highest in villages with 69.4 per cent compared to 15.9 per cent in urban slums and 14.6 per cent in non-slums.

TRUMP QUESTIONS INDIA DATA

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday also questioned the credibility of India’s statistics on Covid-19 deaths, lumping in the US partner with nemeses China and Russia during a fiery pre-election debate.

Trump was responding to heated criticism from his Democratic rival Joe Biden, who blamed Trump for the heavy Covid-19 toll in the United States which has recorded more than 200,000 deaths and more than seven million infections.

“When you talk about numbers you don’t know how many people died in China, you don’t know how many people died in Russia, you don’t know how many people died in India,” Trump said at the debate in Cleveland.

“They don’t exactly give you a straight count,” he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Kuwait’s new emir takes oath

Kuwait’s new emir was sworn in at parliament yesterday as the country prepared to lay to rest late ruler Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who helped steer the US-allied Gulf state through some of the Middle East’s most turbulent decades. The cabinet swiftly named designated successor Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah as ruler on Tuesday following the death of Sheikh Sabah, 91, whose body was due to arrive in Kuwait from the United States where he had been hospitalised since July. Nawaf, 83, pledged to work for the OPEC member country’s prosperity, stability and security after taking the oath of office, raising both hands to his head as lawmakers applauded.

Japan’s military seeks record \$52b budget

Japan’s defence ministry yesterday unveiled a record \$52-billion budget request in a push to maintain military readiness under pressure from China and North Korea. The Ministry of Defence is asking for 5.49 trillion yen (\$52 billion) for the fiscal year from April 2021, marking nine straight years of increases and a rise from the 5.3 trillion yen for the ongoing year to March. Among Japan’s planned big purchases are two frigates and a submarine, with money also going to the development of a next-generation fighter.

World’s first patient cured of HIV dies after cancer returns



Timothy Ray Brown, the first person known to have been cured of HIV when he had a unique type of bone marrow transplant, has died in California after relapsing with cancer, his partner said. Brown, born on March 11, 1966, became known as the “Berlin Patient” after his HIV was eradicated by treatment there in 2007. The American’s case fascinated and inspired a generation of HIV doctors as well as patients infected with the virus that causes AIDS, offering a glimmer of hope that one day a cure will be found that eventually ends the AIDS pandemic.

SOURCE: REUTERS

BABRI MOSQUE DEMOLITION



An Indian court yesterday acquitted top ruling party leaders of conspiracy related to the mob demolition of a flashpoint mosque 28 years ago that sparked communal riots which left more than 2,000 dead. Here is a timeline relating to the mosque dispute:

- 1528:** Babri Masjid built by Mir Baqi, commander of Mughal emperor Babur.
- 1885:** Hindu sage Raghuraj Das files plea in Faizabad district court seeking permission to build a canopy outside the disputed structure. Court rejects the plea.
- 1949:** Idols of Ram Lalla placed under central dome outside the disputed structure.
- 1959:** Hindu outfit Nirmohi Akhara files suit seeking possession of the site.
- 1961:** Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board files suit for possession of the site.
- 1986:** Local court orders the government to open the site to Hindu worshippers.
- 1989:** Allahabad HC orders status quo in respect of the disputed structure.
- December 6, 1992:** Babri Masjid demolished.
- 1992:** Two FIRs filed in the case. One against unknown kar sevaks for demolition of the mosque. The other names BJP leaders L K Advani, M M Joshi and others for allegedly giving communal speeches before the demolition.
- 1993:** CBI files composite charge sheet accusing Advani and others of conspiracy.
- 2001:** Special CBI court drops proceedings against Advani, Joshi, Uma Bharti, Bal Thackeray and others.
- Nov 2004:** CBI challenges before the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court the dropping of proceedings against BJP leaders on technical grounds. Court issues notices.
- May 2010:** High court dismisses plea. Says no merit in CBI’s revision petition.
- 2010:** In a 2:1 majority, HC rules three-way division of disputed area between Sunni Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla.
- 2011:** SC stays HC verdict on Ayodhya land dispute. CBI moves Supreme Court against high court order in the mosque demolition case.
- 2017:** Supreme Court indicates it may consider reviving conspiracy charge against the BJP leaders in Babri Masjid demolition case. Top court suggests fresh attempts to resolve Ayodhya dispute.
- April:** Apex court favours time-bound completion of trial in the case and reserves order on CBI’s plea. Restores criminal conspiracy charge against leaders including Advani, Joshi and Uma Bharti.
- 2019:** Top court grants entire disputed land in Ayodhya to deity Ram Lalla, directs govt to allot an alternative five-acre plot to Muslims to build mosque. PM Narendra Modi conducts “bhoomi puja” in Ayodhya, launches construction of Ram temple.
- Sep 30, 2020:** Special Judge S K Yadav delivers judgment in the mosque demolition case, all accused acquitted.

SOURCE: STAR

FIRST US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE IN QUOTES

It was messy and there was a lot of shouting and insults, but President Donald Trump and Democratic rival Joe Biden managed during their 90-minute debate to touch on some of the crucial issues facing American voters in November. Here are most of them:



SUPREME COURT NOMINATION

“We won the (2016) election. . . . As far as a say is concerned, the American people have already had their say. . . . I’m not elected for (just) 3-1/2 years.” **Trump**

“We should wait, we should wait and see what the outcome of this election is.” **Biden**

HEALTHCARE AND CORONAVIRUS

“... We’ve done a great job. But I tell you, Joe, you could never have done the job we’ve done. You don’t have it in your blood.” **Trump**

“Everybody here knows he’s a liar. . . . You picked the wrong guy on the wrong night at the wrong time.” **Biden**

RACIAL TENSIONS

“Radical left got you wrapped around their finger, Joe, to a point where you don’t want to say anything about law and order.” **Trump**

“This is a president who has used everything as a dog whistle to try to generate racist hatred, racist division. . . . He just pours gasoline on the fire.” **Biden**

ELECTION INTEGRITY

“Don’t tell me about a free transition. This is going to be a fraud like you’ve never seen. This is not going to end well.” **Trump**

“If I win, that will be accepted. If I lose, that will be accepted. If we get the votes, he’s going to go. He can’t stay in power.” **Biden**

RUSSIA AND CHINA

“China ate your lunch, Joe. And no wonder, your son goes in, and he takes out billions of dollars.” **Trump**

“I’ve gone head to head with Putin, and made it clear to him -- we’re not going to take any of this stuff. He’s Putin’s puppy.” **Biden**

PERSONAL INSULTS

“He was the lowest or almost the lowest in your class. Don’t ever use the word smart with me. Because you know what, there’s nothing smart about you, Joe.” **Trump on academic performance at the University of Delaware.**

“If you could get the crowds, you would have done the same thing” **Trump on Biden when the latter criticized him for flouting social-distancing rules at campaign events.**

“You’re the worst president America has ever had. . . . It’s hard to get any word in with this clown, excuse me, this person” **Biden after a heated exchange with Trump on his taxes**



“Well, frankly you’ve been doing more interrupting.” **Fox News moderator Chris Wallace to Trump**

TAX DEBATE

“I don’t want to pay tax. . . . Like every other private person, unless they’re stupid, they go through the laws and that’s what it is.” **Trump**

WHITE SUPREMACISTS

“Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.” **Trump dodges an opportunity to condemn white supremacists.**

CLIMATE CHANGE

“The first thing I will do, I will rejoin the Paris Climate Accord.” **Biden makes his intention clear on climate**

INTERRUPTIONS

“Will you shut up, man? This is so unpresidential.” **Biden**



ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN DISPUTE

Rivals vow to keep fighting

Death toll surpasses 100

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia and Azerbaijan vowed to keep fighting and rejected international calls for negotiations yesterday as clashes over the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region raged for a fourth day.

Armenian and Azerbaijani forces are engaged in the heaviest fighting in years over Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian province that broke away from Azerbaijan in the 1990s during the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The long-simmering conflict erupted on Sunday with the two sides trading heavy fire and blaming each other for the outbreak of violence.

The confirmed death toll surpassed 100 people including civilians yesterday and both sides are claiming to have inflicted heavy losses on opposing forces.

In the Armenian capital Yerevan, dozens of men -- some already wearing military fatigues -- lined up outside a recruitment office to join the fight.



Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev promised his military would keep fighting until Armenian troops withdraw fully from Karabakh.

If “the Armenian government fulfils the demand, fighting and bloodshed will end, and peace will be established in the region,” he said during a visit with wounded soldiers.

Baku and Yerevan have ignored mounting international pressure for a ceasefire, as fears grow that the conflict could escalate into all-out war and draw in regional powers like Turkey and Russia.

The Armenian defence ministry yesterday accused Turkish aircraft of performing “provocative flights” along their shared border and of violating Armenia’s airspace, a day after Yerevan said a Turkish jet had downed one of its warplanes.

Moscow, which has a military pact with Armenia but also good ties with Azerbaijan, has repeatedly called for an end to the fighting and offered to help with negotiations.

But Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said talks with Azerbaijan were not yet on the table.

“It isn’t very appropriate to speak of a summit between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia at a time of intensive hostilities,” Pashinyan said.