

Brazil education minister resigns over CV 'lies'



Brazil's education minister resigned Tuesday only five days after he was appointed, amid accusations that he lied over his academic record. Carlos Alberto Decotelli was the first black person to be appointed to the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. Decotelli had claimed he held a Master's degree from Brazil's Getulio Vargas Foundation, a doctorate from Argentina's University of Rosario and a post-doctorate from Germany's Wuppertal University. As early as Friday, however, Rosario University's rector said Decotelli had not obtained a doctorate there and had never defended his thesis. On Monday, the minister explained the university jury had asked him to make changes to his thesis, but he had run out of money and had to return to Brazil. Wuppertal University said in a statement that Decotelli had not obtained any academic titles there.

PIA suspended in Europe over fake pilot licence scam

Regulators have barred Pakistan International Airlines from the European Union for six months after the state-run carrier grounded nearly a third of its pilots for holding fake or dubious licences, officials said. The EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) told PIA "it is still not sure" if all the remaining pilots are properly qualified, and "they have lost their confidence" in the airline, PIA spokesman Abdullah Khan told AFP. The suspension is the latest fallout for PIA after Pakistan's aviation minister told parliament last week that a government review had found 262 of the country's 860 active pilots held fake licenses or cheated on exams. More than half of them were from PIA, and the airline said it would immediately ground 141 of its 434 pilots. PIA is filing an appeal, Khan said. Flights to Britain, which is no longer in the EU, have also been suspended, Khan said.

India deploys chopper, drones to stop fast-spreading locusts

India has deployed a helicopter and a dozen drones spraying insecticide to stop desert locusts that have spread to nine heartland states of the world's second-biggest producer of rice and wheat. The move came after swarms invaded Gurugram, a satellite city of the capital New Delhi, during the weekend, prompting people to criticise authorities for not quickly containing the outbreak. The government has also placed an order for five new helicopter-mounted spray systems from Britain to install in Indian Air Force helicopters, Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said. The locust infestation has not caused significant damage so far because it has fallen in the lean season - the gap between the previous harvest and the next planting season. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has warned of a new wave of locusts coming across the Indian Ocean from Somalia just as farmers are planting an array of summer crops.

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP

400m jobs lost globally

Says UN as employment crisis deepens; EU reopens border as virus surges in US

AGENCIES

The coronavirus crisis has taken a much heavier toll on jobs than previously feared, the UN said Tuesday, warning that the situation in the Americas was particularly dire.

In a fresh study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that by the mid-year point, global working hours were down 14 percent compared to last December -- equivalent to some 400 million full-time jobs.

That is more than double the number forecast by the UN organisation back in April, when it expected 6.7 percent of working hours to be lost by the end of the second three-month period of the year.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

More than **47,000** cases announced across US
India reports **507** deaths, **18,653** new cases in 24hrs
Airbus plans to axe **5,000** jobs worldwide

It is also far higher than the ILO estimate in late May, when it expected 10.7 percent of global working hours to vanish during the period.

"Things are getting worse. The job crisis is deepening," ILO chief Guy Ryder told AFP in an interview. "We are not through this yet," he warned.



Job seekers stand outside a construction site for jobs in Eikenhof, south of Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The ILO said the new figures reflected the worsening situation in many regions in recent weeks, especially in developing economies.

Its report pointed out that 93 percent of the world's workers live in countries still affected by some sort of workplace closures, with the Americas experiencing the greatest restrictions.

The United States and Latin America are currently the areas hardest-hit by the pandemic, which has killed more than 511,000 people worldwide and infected more than 10 million.

Soaring transmission rates in the United States, which alone accounts for

a quarter of all infections and deaths globally, and in countries like Brazil, which accounts more than 1.3 million cases, have hit the labour market hard.

More than 47,000 cases announced across US in last 24 hours.

The crisis had also hit women harder, threatening decades of progress, said Ryder.

The European Union reopened its borders yesterday to visitors from 15 countries but excluded the United States, where coronavirus deaths are spiking once again.

The final list of nations safe enough to allow residents to enter the EU



Children watch a rally through a home window fence as Palestinians call for a 'day of rage' to protest against Israel's plan to annex parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, in Gaza City, yesterday. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Israel Wednesday against going ahead with plans to annex parts of the West Bank, calling them illegal and against the Jewish state's own interests.

PHOTO: REUTERS

China hits back at US amid media spat

Tells four news outlets to disclose finances, staff

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday ordered four US news outlets to disclose details of their staff and financial operations in the country within seven days, as a media row escalates between Washington and Beijing.

The Associated Press, United Press International, CBS and NPR must report the information -- as well as details of any real estate they hold in China -- in retaliation for Washington's crackdown on four Chinese state media outlets, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

The US State Department on June 22 reclassified four Chinese state media outlets as foreign missions in the United States, adding to five others designated in February.

After the first group of outlets were ordered to cut their Chinese staff working in the United States, Beijing hit back by expelling more than a dozen US nationals working for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post.

Beijing also ordered the papers, as well as Voice of America and Time magazine, to declare in writing their staff, finances, operations and real estate in China.

NEWSIN brief

South Korea pushes for Trump-Kim meet

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in yesterday said that US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un should meet once more before the US presidential election in November, a Seoul official said. Moon made the remarks during a video conference on Tuesday with European Council President Charles Michel, saying another summit between Trump and Kim would help resume stalled negotiations over North Korea's nuclear programmes, an official at the presidential Blue House told reporters.

Powerful explosion kills 19 in Tehran

AFP, Tehran

A powerful explosion at a clinic in northern Tehran killed at least 19 people yesterday, Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency reported. The blast at Sina At'har health centre caused damage to buildings in the vicinity. Fifteen of the dead were women, state television said. Authorities said the explosion occurred as gas canisters caught fire in the clinic's basement. An investigation has been launched to find out the reasons behind the explosion, authorities have said.

Japan begins charging for plastic bags

AFP, Tokyo

Retailers in Japan began charging for plastic bags yesterday, a move aimed at curbing Japanese consumers' love for packaging and finally bringing the country in line with other major economies. Shops including ubiquitous convenience stores can decide how much to charge customers for the bags, with a common price being three yen (around three US cents). In 2018, Japan vowed to reduce its annual 9.4 million tonnes of plastic waste by a quarter by 2030.



Nepal ruling party leaders demand PM's resignation

PTI, Kathmandu

Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's recent remarks that efforts are being made to oust him after his government redrew Nepal's political map has backfired, with top leaders of the ruling Nepal Communist Party demanding his resignation on Tuesday.

As soon as the powerful Standing Committee meeting of the ruling party started at the PM's official residence at Baluwatar on Tuesday, former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' slammed Oli for the remarks he made on Sunday.

"The Prime Minister's remarks that India was conspiring to remove him was neither politically correct, nor diplomatically appropriate," he said.

"Such a statement by the Prime Minister may damage our relations with the neighbour," he warned.

Prime Minister Oli on Sunday said that there have been various kinds of activities in the "embassies and hotels" to remove him from power. He said some Nepalese leaders were also involved in the game.

Besides Prachanda, senior leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal and Narayan Kaji Shrestha also asked Prime Minister Oli to provide evidence of his accusation and asked to quit the power.

10,000 flee homes in Rakhine

Says UN rights chief as Myanmar army begins ops in restive state

REUTERS, Geneva

The United Nations human rights chief said on Tuesday that up to 10,000 people had fled their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine state after what she described as heavy fighting in the past week between government troops and ethnic insurgents.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) later said at least 2,800 people had fled according to early estimates but the true number could be "significantly higher" as the "scope and impact" of the reported clashes was not yet fully known.

Government and military spokesmen did not answer phone calls by Reuters seeking comment on the number of people who had fled or the reported fighting between the army, known as the Tatmadaw, and Arakan Army insurgents.



"Estimates indicate as many as 10,000 residents have already fled as the Tatmadaw advanced and heavy fighting commenced," Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the Human Rights Council, a Geneva-based forum, during a debate on Myanmar. UN agencies cited "reports by local partners and public sources" for the estimates of numbers of displaced people.

It was not possible for Reuters to independently verify the reports of

fighting and displacement. Access for humanitarian workers is tightly limited in Rakhine. Journalists are banned, making it hard to verify reports from the region.

The reported flight of civilians came after a local administrator, in a letter seen by Reuters, last week warned dozens of village leaders in Rathedaung township that the army planned "clearance operations" against insurgents and urged them to go.

A government spokesman later said in a Facebook post that an evacuation order had been sent to local administrators by border-affairs officials but had later been revoked.

The spokesman did not specify why, but said that the government had instructed the military not to use the term "clearance operation". Myanmar's border affairs ministry acknowledged to Reuters that it had issued the evacuation order, but said that it affected only a few villages.

Thrust renewed to boost yield

FROM PAGE 1

The government provided about Tk 33 crore for distribution of seed and fertiliser among small and marginal farmers to encourage them to grow rice during the Aus season and cultivate summer onion.

It also targets expanding cultivation area of Aman rice this monsoon.

Aman, the second biggest crop after Boro in terms of production, provided 39 percent of the total 3.63 crore tonnes of rice output in the last fiscal year.

However, in terms of acreage, it is the biggest crop and the government seeks to expand Aman cultivation to 58.95 lakh hectares this season, up from 58.83 lakh hectares in the previous season, the Department of Agricultural Extension says.

Bangladesh annually consumes 3.2 crore tonnes of rice and 55 lakh tonnes of wheat, according to Food and Agriculture Organization estimate.

The country meets almost the entire requirement of rice through domestic production but it has to meet nearly 80 percent of wheat requirement through imports. However, as the nation does not produce enough surplus of the cereal,

rice market becomes volatile in case of crop losses for natural disasters like flood, cyclones, data shows.

Agriculture Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman said, "Our main target is to increase production and ensure that no farmland remains fallow. We will try to replace old varieties as much as possible with the latest high yielding varieties to boost yields."

The renewed focus on increasing production of rice comes amid concerns that food supply may fall short as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to hamper economic and social life globally.

The Daily Star contacted the secretary in the wake of a high-level meeting held on June 15 at the agriculture ministry that took a series of decisions to boost production of Aman.

The meeting was also attended by the top officials of various relevant government agencies.

Meanwhile, more than 20 countries have already imposed restrictions on export of food products such as rice, wheat, pulses, soybeans, onions and garlic to ensure sufficient supply in their domestic markets, according to Covid-19 Food Trade Policy Tracker by the International Food Policy Research

Institute. In April, the World Food Programme warned about "multiple famines of biblical proportions" for the global health pandemic.

Officials mentioned that the agriculture ministry's decisions included bringing fallow lands in Sylhet, Chattogram, Noakhali and Barishal regions under Aman cultivation and encouraging farmers to plant high yielding varieties (HYVs) in place of local varieties during the season.

The ministry also decided to expand cultivation of newly released HYVs by state-sponsored plant breeding agencies -- BRRI and Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA).

The agriculture secretary mentioned that the BADC also reduced prices of seeds for this Aman season.

"We are providing Tk 20 crore subsidy for seeds," he said, adding that farmers would also get backing for supplementary irrigation.

He hoped increased cultivation of new varieties, timely plantation and supplementary irrigation will increase Aman output.

Contacted, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute Director General

Md Shahjahan Kabir, said, "We have had good production of Boro rice and we have scope to increase yield during the Aman crop season."

He claimed that the level of thrust given on Aman planting and increasing yields this year was not seen ever in the past.

BADC Chairman Md Sayedul Islam said the state agency would supply 21,000 tonnes of HYV and hybrid seeds of rice for Aman season. "We have reduced prices of seed by 25 percent."

DAE Director General Abdul Mueyed said farmers in Barishal and Pirojpur are fond of growing local varieties. The DAE encourages them to grow BRRI Dhan-76 and BRRI Dhan-77.

This year it targets expanding cultivation of the two varieties fast in those areas. It is also trying to expand cultivation of a new variety, BRRI Dhaka-87, which has potential to be popular like BR-11, said Mueyed, when contacted.

"In short, we aim to replace low-yielding, traditional varieties by high yielding ones and pest resistant varieties. We have given utmost importance to bringing all farming technologies to farmers to ensure bumper yields of Aman," he added.

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday played down the threat of a new swine flu strain with pandemic potential that researchers discovered in pigs, saying the study is "not representative".

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic, which has now infected more than 10 million people worldwide, first emerged in China and is thought to have originated in bats and jumped to humans through an unknown intermediary animal.

The new swine flu strain found in China, according to the study published Monday in the US science journal PNAS, had "all the essential hallmarks" to infect humans and raised fears over another potential pandemic.

But China's foreign ministry moved to downplay fears yesterday.

"The G4 virus mentioned in the relevant report is a subtype of the H1N1 virus," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in a routine briefing. "Experts have

concluded that the sample size of the report is small and not representative."

Zhao added that "relevant departments and experts" will continue to step up monitoring of the disease, send warnings and handle it in a timely manner.

The new G4 swine flu strain is genetically descended from the H1N1 strain that caused a pandemic in 2009, according to the study, which was authored by scientists at Chinese universities and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

G4 was observed to be highly infectious, they said, replicating in human cells and causing more serious symptoms in ferrets than other viruses.

So far, there has been no evidence of human-to-human transmission. China did not elaborate further on how many had been infected by G4.

According to the study, 10.4 percent of pig slaughterhouse workers tested had already been infected.

Indonesia set to see a 'pandemic' baby boom

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

Stay home and make babies? As condoms and other forms of birth control are unavailable to a growing number of Indonesians during the Covid-19 pandemic, the world's fourth-most populous nation may see a baby boom.

The National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), the authority overseeing the country's family planning programmes, found that in March, about 10 per cent more of its acceptors face difficulty in accessing birth control, based on reports it received from 34 provinces. BKKBN has 28 million acceptors of its family planning methods nationwide.

The one-month decline in contraceptive use alone could push up pregnancies by 15 per cent, or around 420,000 pregnancies, within a month to three months, according to its estimate. A further drop within three months will increase pregnancies by up to 30 per cent, or above 800,000, within another few months.

Indonesia, home to nearly 270 million inhabitants, annually welcomes 4.8 million births.

The decrease in the contraceptive use occurred across all kinds of methods, including contraceptive implant, injection and vasectomy, the board's chief, Mr Hasto Wardoyo, said. Implants were down by 40 per cent, for instance, while vasectomies plunged by 90 per cent.