

## OVERHAUL OF HK'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

## China passes new 'patriot' polls law

AFP, Beijing

Chinese leaders endorsed a sweeping overhaul of Hong Kong's electoral system yesterday, creating powers to vet anyone standing for public office and slashing the number of directly elected politicians.

The new measures, which bypassed Hong Kong's legislature and were imposed directly by Beijing, are the latest move aimed at quashing the city's democracy movement after huge protests.

President Xi Jinping signed the new law after it was unanimously approved by China's top decision-making body. One of the most dramatic changes is the introduction of a committee that will vet anyone hoping to enter Hong Kong politics for their patriotism.

The body will include background checks by Hong Kong's new national security apparatus and its decisions cannot be legally challenged.

When Hong Kongers are allowed to vote in limited local elections, they tend to do so overwhelmingly for pro-democracy candidates, something that has rattled authoritarian Beijing.

Under the new measures, Hong Kong's legislature will be expanded from 70 to 90 seats. But only 20 of those seats will now be directly elected, down from 35. That brings direct representation down from half to less than a quarter of seats.

The majority -- 40 seats -- will be chosen by a reliably pro-Beijing committee. The remaining 30 will be chosen by "functional constituencies" -- bodies representing certain industries and special interest groups that have also been historically loyal to Beijing.



Hindu devotees take part in 'Huranga', a game played between men and women a day after Holi, the festival of colours, at Dauji temple near the northern city of Mathura, India, yesterday. India's Covid-19 situation is turning from "bad to worse," a senior government official said yesterday, as infections surge across several states.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Kim's sister slams South's Moon as US 'parrot'

Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, slammed South Korea's president as "a parrot raised by America" for calling the North's recent missile test "concerning", state media KCNA reported yesterday. North Korea launched two ballistic missiles into the sea near Japan last week, underscoring steady progress in its weapons programme and ramping up pressure on the United States. Following the launches, South Korean President Jae-in Moon said the South, the North and the United States should make efforts to continue dialogue. Kim Yo Jong called Moon's remarks disgraceful for agreeing with the United States. "Such illogical and brazen-faced behaviour of South Korea is exactly the same as the gangster-like logic of the US," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by KCNA.

## Nepal's schools close as air pollution hits alarming levels

Nepal has ordered schools to close for four days after air pollution climbed to hazardous levels, forcing millions of students to stay home across the country. Over the weekend, pollution levels hit their highest in the capital, Kathmandu, since the government began keeping records in 2016, government official Shankar Paudel told Reuters. Education ministry spokesman Deepak Sharma said about eight million students have been affected by the closures. The 24-hour average level of PM2.5, fine particulate matter that can reach deep into the lungs, was 214 micrograms per cubic metre in the upscale area of Bhaishapati in Kathmandu on Sunday, Department of Environment data showed. That compares with the government's standard level of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. People must stay safe indoors and not come out except for emergencies, the health ministry said. manufactured by the firm at US ports of entry.

## Thai billionaire charged with royal insult over vaccine video



A billionaire Thai opposition figure was charged yesterday with defaming the monarchy after he questioned the government's alleged over-reliance on coronavirus vaccines from a company linked to the royal family. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, founder of the now-dissolved Future Forward Party, posted a video on Facebook in January in which he queried whether Thailand was leaning too heavily on Siam Bioscience for its vaccination campaign. The company is owned by the Crown Property Bureau, which manages the royal family's multi-billion-dollar fortune. A Bangkok criminal court yesterday charged Thanathorn with lese majeste and a computer crime over that video. Those convicted under Thailand's strict royal defamation laws can face up to 15 years in jail per charge.

## Forced labour: US to seize gloves made by Malaysia firm

The United States will seize products made by Malaysia's Top Glove after concluding the firm uses forced labour, officials said, dealing a fresh blow to the world's biggest surgical glove maker. Top Glove's profits and stock price surged last year as countries worldwide rushed to buy protective gear during the Covid-19 pandemic. But the firm, which can produce more than 96 billion gloves a year, has been rocked by a series of scandals including a virus outbreak in dormitories that infected thousands of migrant workers. US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) had already banned gloves from two of Top Glove's subsidiaries last year after saying it suspected the company was committing labour abuses. It went a step further on Monday, announcing it had "sufficient information" to conclude that Top Glove uses forced labour. The federal agency said it would seize any gloves manufactured by the company.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## We can't wait for the next one

## Global leaders push for pandemic preparedness treaty

AFP, Geneva

World leaders pushed Tuesday for a new international treaty to prepare for the next global pandemic -- and avoid the unseemly scramble for vaccines hampering the Covid-19 response.

Leaders from 25 countries, the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) sought to get the ground rules down in writing to streamline and speed up the reaction to future global outbreaks.

The treaty would aim to ensure that information, virus pathogens, technology to tackle the pandemic and products such as vaccines are shared swiftly and equitably among nations.

"The time to act is now. The world cannot afford to wait until the pandemic is over to start planning for the next one," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

The call came in a joint article

published in international newspapers on Tuesday, penned by leaders from five continents.

The signatories included Germany's Angela Merkel, Britain's Boris Johnson, France's Emmanuel Macron, South Korea's Moon Jae-in, South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa, Indonesia's Joko Widodo and Chile's Sebastian Pinera.

## FUTURE PANDEMICS

"Nations should work together towards a new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response," the article said.

"We must be better prepared to predict, prevent, detect, assess and effectively respond to pandemics in a highly coordinated fashion."

"We are, therefore, committed to ensuring universal and equitable access to safe, efficacious and affordable vaccines, medicines and diagnostics for this and future pandemics."

Leaders from key world powers including the United States, China, Russia and Japan are not among the signatories so far. But Tedros insisted it was not a problem that they had not yet signed up. He hoped to have a resolution squared up in time for the World Health Assembly in May.

The push to bolster common efforts comes as the planet struggles to combine forces to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic that has killed almost 2.8 million people worldwide.

The spread of the virus has seen blame traded between capitals and accusations that rich nations have hoarded vaccines.

According to an AFP count, some 53 percent of the Covid-19 vaccine doses administered so far have been in high-income countries accounting for 16 percent of the global population. Just 0.1 percent have been administered in the 29 lowest-income countries, home to 9 percent of the world's population.

## EFFECT OF INDIA'S EXPORT CURBS ON COVAX

## Asian countries seek alternative sources

REUTERS, Seoul/Manila

Several Asian countries sought alternative sources for Covid-19 inoculations after export restrictions by manufacturer India left a World Health Organization-backed global vaccine sharing programme short of supplies.

The export curb deepens the problems facing the Covax scheme, relied on by 64 poorer countries, and adds to previous setbacks that include production glitches and a lack of funding contribution from wealthy nations. The Serum Institute of India was due to deliver 90 million vaccine doses to Covax over March and April.

South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam are among countries to be hit by shipment delays to vaccines they have promised under the Covax programme.

Both the Philippines and Indonesia are currently relying heavily on vaccines from China's Sinovac Biotech to run their inoculation drives. The Philippines and Vietnam have both approved Russia's Sputnik V vaccine, along with more than 50 other countries, mainly developing nations. The Philippines expects to receive its first batch of Sputnik V in April.

Nepal yesterday said it was set to restart Covid-19 inoculations after receiving 800,000 doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine from China.

Pakistan said it will import more coronavirus vaccines made by China's CanSino Biologics next month, equivalent to 3 million doses.



## Benefits of 'drastic' climate action outweigh costs

Say more than 700 economists from around the globe; India balks at carbon neutral target

AGENCIES

The cost of global warming will far outweigh the cost of rapidly cutting greenhouse gas emissions, more than 700 economists from around the world said yesterday in an unprecedented call to climate action.

A major international survey found that nearly three-quarters of the economists responding believed that "immediate and drastic" action was needed to limit the fallout of climate change, warning that the costs of failing to slash carbon pollution would rapidly balloon to reach trillions of dollars every year.

Nearly nine out of 10 (89 percent) said they believed that climate change would worsen global inequality, and they were nearly unanimous in believing that the benefits of net-zero emissions by mid-century would vastly outweigh the costs.

The consensus reached by survey respondents suggested that the projected economic fallout from climate change would reach \$1.7 trillion annually by 2025 and roughly \$30 trillion per year by 2075.

By contrast, 65 percent of respondents said that the costs of renewable energy technology such as wind and solar would

continue to fall over the next decade and estimated that half of the world's energy mix would be green by 2050.

Meanwhile, India is unlikely to bind itself to a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions goal by 2050, government sources told Reuters, despite diplomatic pressure from the United States and Britain to do so to help slow global warming.

India is the world's third-biggest carbon emitter after China and the US and thus is vital in the fight against climate change.

China has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2060 while US is expected to announce a 2030 target for reducing emissions at a summit next month.

But India's energy demand is projected to grow by more than any other nation over the next two decades and the worry is that it may have to cut back on consumption if it were to tie itself to a hard emissions deadline, two sources involved in the discussions told Reuters.

India will instead stick to the Paris pledge to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030 and is aiming to outperform those goals, the source said.

## Risking lives for a better future

AFP, Panama City

The number of US-bound migrant children crossing the dangerous Darien jungle in Panama on foot has increased more than 15-fold in recent years and is likely to rise further during the pandemic, the UN children's agency has warned.

Children accounted for just two percent of these migrants in 2017 but that had risen to more than 25 percent in 2020, UNICEF said in a statement.

The Darien Gap jungle, the only land corridor between Colombia and Panama, is "one of the most dangerous routes in the world due to the mountainous terrain, wildlife and insects, as well as the presence of criminal organizations," the agency added.

Crossing the vast, roadless Darien Gap rainforest is the only option for US-bound migrants traveling overland from South America. Most of those making the crossing are Haitians and Cubans, but there are also some Asians and Africans.

"I've seen women step out of the jungle carrying their babies in their arms after walking for more than seven days without water, food or any kind of protection," said Jean Gough, UNICEF regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Over the past four years, more than 46,500 migrants, including 6,240 children and adolescents, have crossed the inhospitable jungle. The number of minors increased from 109 to 1,653 between 2017 and 2020, UNICEF said.

Experts believe more and more migrants are choosing to travel with their families, including young children and pregnant women, to avoid being deported to the different countries they pass through.



Migration across the dangerous jungle is likely to increase in the next months due to the economic crisis and unemployment generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with violence and climate change, UNICEF said.

## Three women polio workers shot dead in Afghanistan

AFP, Jalalabad

Gunmen killed three Afghan women involved in a nationwide polio immunisation programme yesterday, officials said, a day after authorities launched a new drive against the crippling disease.

The three women were killed in two separate attacks in the eastern city of Jalalabad, officials said.

"They were all on duty going from house to house to vaccinate children," supervisor Wahidullah told AFP. A spokesman for the ministry of health said the vaccination drive had been temporarily suspended in Nangarhar.

Polio has been eradicated across the world apart from Afghanistan and Pakistan, where distrust of vaccines is rife. The Taliban and religious leaders often tell communities that vaccines are a Western conspiracy aimed at sterilising Muslim children, and a plot to spy on militant activities.



## বাংলাদেশ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কল্যাণ ট্রাস্ট

স্বাধীনতা ভবন

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## আইন উপদেষ্টা নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কল্যাণ ট্রাস্টের বিভিন্ন মামলা/মোকদ্দমা/চুক্তিপত্র/অংশীদারী চুক্তিপত্র/ডেভেলপারের সাথে সম্পাদিত চুক্তিপত্র/আমোক্তারনামা ডাকটিং এর কাজে আইনগত মতামত/সহযোগিতা প্রদানের জন্য ০১(এক) জন আইন উপদেষ্টা নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। আগ্রহী ও যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন প্রার্থীদেরকে তাঁদের জীবন বৃত্তান্ত ও প্রয়োজনীয় সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি, সদ্যতোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবিসহ আগামী ১১/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখের অফিস সময়ের মধ্যে সচিব, বাংলাদেশ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কল্যাণ ট্রাস্ট, স্বাধীনতা ভবন, ৮৮ মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-এর নিকট আবেদন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। উল্লেখ্য বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানকে এই নিয়োগে অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হবে। তবে মুক্তিযোদ্ধার প্রমাণ স্বরূপ অবশ্যই মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের সনদপত্র ও গেজেট আবেদনের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।

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১। অবসরপ্রাপ্ত অতিরিক্ত সচিব/অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বিজ্ঞ জেলা জজ হিসেবে বর্ণিত কাজে অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

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## জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সম্মানিত গ্রাহকদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ব্যাংকের সিস্টেম আপগ্রেডেশনের জন্য আগামী ০১ এপ্রিল ২০২১ইং রোজ বৃহস্পতিবার হতে ০৩ এপ্রিল ২০২১ইং রোজ শনিবার পর্যন্ত ব্যাংকের প্রধান কার্যালয়, সকল শাখা, উপশাখা, কার্ড সার্ভিস, এটিএম বুথ এবং এজেন্ট ব্যাংকিংসহ সকল প্রকার ব্যাংকিং কার্যক্রম বন্ধ থাকবে। ০৪ এপ্রিল ২০২১ইং রোজ রবিবার হতে ব্যাংকের সকল কার্যক্রম পুনরায় চালু হবে।

গ্রাহকদের উন্নত সেবা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে এই সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য আমরা আন্তরিকভাবে দুঃখ প্রকাশ করছি।

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