## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

UK not 'institutionally racist'

Racism persists in Britain but the country is not "institutionally racist", according to a much-anticipated study to be published yesterday by a government commission, which drew immediate pushback from racial equality campaigners. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, created following last year's global Black Lives Matter protests, also controversially concluded that the UK could be regarded "as a model for other white-majority countries". Activists argued that the report ignored broad-based evidence pointing to pervasive structural racism. Focusing on outcomes in four key areas including education and employment, the commission found such claims were not supported by evidence, according to excerpts released ahead of its publication.

#### **Capitol police sue Trump** over January 6 riot

Two Capitol Police officers sued former US president Donald Trump Tuesday for inciting the January 6 insurrection that left dozens of their fellow officers injured and one dead. Officers James Blassingame and Sidney Hemby said they suffered "physical and emotional injuries" in the riot they said was fomented by Trump, when he was in his final weeks as president and refusing to accept his election defeat. The lawsuit compiles numerous instances in which it says Trump encouraged the insurrection. It accuses Trump of directing and abetting assault and battery and emotional distress, incitement to riot, and violating public safety statutes. The officers asked the court for compensatory damages of a minimum of \$75,000 each and an unstated amount in punitive damages.

#### Russia registers 'world's first' **Covid vaccine for animals**



Russia yesterday announced it had registered what it said was the world's first coronavirus vaccine for animals, describing the step as important to disrupting mutations. It said mass production of the vaccine could begin in April. The agriculture oversight agency Rosselkhoznadzor said in a statement that the vaccine called Carnivak-Cov had been tested beginning October on dogs, cats, mink, foxes and other animals and was proven to be effective. "All test animals that were vaccinated developed antibodies to coronavirus in 100 percent of cases," said Konstantin Savenkov, deputy head of Rosselkhoznadzor.



INTERNATIONAL

Ethnic Karen people take part in an anti-military coup demonstration in Hlaingbwe township, in eastern Myanmar's Karen state, yesterday. Daily protests demanding the restoration of the elected government have been met with a crackdown that has left more than 520 civilians dead in the weeks since the February 1 coup. PHOTO: REUTERS

### **GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT**

## Pandemic delays gender parity by a generation

The pandemic has rolled back years of progress towards equality between men and women, according to a report released Wednesday showing the crisis had added decades to the trajectory towards closing the gender gap.

A range of studies have shown that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, who have lost jobs at a higher rate than men, and had to take on much more of the extra childcare burden when schools closed.

The effects will be felt in the long-term, according to the World Economic Forum, which in its annual Global Gender Gap Report found that the goalposts for gender parity appeared to be moving further away.

The organization had found in its previous report, published in December 2019 right before the pandemic hit, that gender parity across a range of areas would be reached within 99.5 years. But this year's report shows the world is not on track to close the gender gap for another 135.6 years.

"Another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity," the WEF said in a statement.

The Geneva-based organisation's annual report tracks disparities between the sexes in 156 countries across four areas: education, health, economic opportunity and political empowerment.

On the plus side, women appear to be gradually closing the gender gap in areas such as health and education.

But inequality in the workplace is still not expected to be erased for another 267.6 years.

It was in the political sphere that the march towards gender parity did the biggest about-face, the WEF study found. Women still hold just over a quarter of parliamentary seats worldwide, and only 22.6 percent of ministerial positions. On its current trajectory, the political gender gap is not expected to close completely for another 145.5 years, the report found.

# US vows to defend rights everywhere

The United States will speak out about human rights everywhere including in allies and at home, Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Tuesday, turning a page from Donald Trump as he bemoaned deteriorations around

Presenting the State Department's first human rights report under President Joe Biden, the new top US diplomat vowed to stand up for human rights everywhere for "America's interests".

Blinken voiced alarm over abuses around the world including in China, again speaking of "genocide" being committed against the Uyghur community. He said the Biden administration was prioritizing coordination with allies, pointing to recent joint efforts over Xinjiang, China's clampdown in Hong Kong and Russia's alleged poisoning of dissident Alexei Navalny.

Blinken also voiced alarm over the Myanmar military's deadly crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, attacks on civilians in Syria and a campaign in Ethiopia's Tigray.

The report, written in dry, factual language, did not spare longstanding US allies. It pointed to allegations of unlawful killings and torture in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, quoting human rights groups that said Egypt is holding between 20,000 and 60,000 people chiefly due to their political beliefs. The latest report also detailed incidents in India under Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, an increasingly close US ally. However, the report continued using the term "Israel, West Bank and Gaza", not "Israel and Occupied Territories".

# Criticism unethical, biased

Says China as West, WHO chief doubt Covid origin report

China yesterday slammed "unethical" critics as it faced mounting pressure origins of the Covid-19 pandemic, after the World Health Organization chief revived the theory that the coronavirus may have leaked from a Chinese lab.

WHO-backed experts had judged it "extremely unlikely" that the virus was leaked from a Chinese lab after a politically sensitive mission to the ground-zero city of Wuhan, but the WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed Tuesday that "all hypotheses are open" and "warrant complete and further studies".

The United States also led a chorus of concern over the findings, with China riled by swirling accusations that it failed to give proper access and data to the investigators.

"This practice of politicising the search for the origins of the virus has spiked again in many parts of extremely unethical," Chinese the world, including Europe, where companies said in a statement.

#### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

France mulls lockdown as Europe reels from surges

Pfizer vaccine safe, 100pc effective on adolescents in trial

foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a press briefing, stressing that full access was granted to the Wuhan lab.

China was slammed last year by former US president Donald Trump, who had promoted the theory that the virus could have leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology and accused Beijing of not being transparent about the initial outbreak.

As governments bicker and point fingers over its origins, the virus

French President Emmanuel Macron will address the nation to respond to criticism that he has let Covid-19 run out of control. A nationwide lockdown is on the cards, sources said. The known global Covid-19 death

toll has exceeded 2.8 million, and the

virus has gained fresh, devastating momentum in many countries. A host of European countries have already imposed curbs on movements and restricted borders facing new surges. Meanwhile, Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE yesterday said their Covid-19

vaccine was safe and effective and produced robust antibody responses in 12- to 15-year olds, paving the way for school reopening. In the trial of 2,260 adolescents

aged 12 to 15, there were 18 cases of Covid-19 in the group that got a placebo shot and none in the group that got the vaccine, resulting in 100% efficacy in preventing Covid-19, the

## Global rainforest loss 'relentless' in 2020

Primary forest loss jumped about 12pc from 2019; Brazil worst offender, SE Asia bright spot

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Kuala Lumpur

Tropical forest losses hit their third-highest level in almost two decades last year, despite improved conservation in parts of Southeast Asia, researchers said yesterday, warning of rising deforestation risks as nations restart pandemichit economies. The loss in 2020 of 4.2 million hectares

(10.4 million acres) of primary forest - intact areas of old-growth trees - equalled the size of the Netherlands, according to data from Global Forest Watch (GFW) and the University of "2020 was supposed to be this landmark year

for all of these international commitments ... and actually we're seeing things moving in the wrong direction," said Mikaela Weisse, a project manager at the GFW forest monitoring service, run by the World Resources Institute (WRI), a Washington-based think-tank. A group of global household brands missed

a 2020 target to buy only sustainably produced commodities, while a goal backed by more than 200 countries, companies and green groups to



was not met.

WRI said primary forest loss, which hit a record high in 2016 and 2017, was about 12% higher in 2020 than in 2019. Agricultural expansion, wildfires, logging, mining and population growth all fuel deforestation, researchers said.

The top three countries for primary forest loss last year were Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Bolivia.

Brazil once more topped the list for annual primary forest loss with 1.7 million hectares in 2020, more than three times the next-highest country and a hike of 25% from 2019, they said. Neighbouring Bolivia rose to number three

with nearly 276,900 hectares lost, mainly due to cut natural forest loss by at least half by 2020 fires. As in Brazil, most fires were likely set by

people to clear land but burned out of control due to drought and hot weather.

Meanwhile, in Colombia, ranked sixth, primary forest loss rose in 2020 to nearly 166,500 hectares after a dip in 2019.

The DRC, in second place, lost 490,000 hectares of primary forest in 2020. Like previous years, the majority was caused by the expansion of small-scale agriculture and wood energy demand.

Indonesia, which has the world's third-largest tropical forests, fell from third to fourth place with primary forest loss at just over 270,000 hectares, showing a fourth straight year of declines. Strong government policies and effective law enforcement were instrumental behind the success.

Forest loss also dropped for the fourth year in neighbouring Malaysia, ranked ninth place, to nearly 73,000 hectares. The downward trend in Indonesia and

Malaysia was not visible in other Southeast Asian countries, however, with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar showing sustained or higher levels of deforestation.

Armed police officers stand guard outside the gate of national police headquarters following a suspected militant attack, in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday. Indonesian police shot dead a woman who had opened fire at officers at the national police headquarters in Jakarta yesterday in an attack inspired by the Islamic State, the police chief said. The incident came three days after a husband and wife carried out a suicide bombing at a cathedral on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi on Palm Sunday, wounding 20 and killing only themselves. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Are we doing our part?

strains, threatening lives, livelihoods, and our vulnerable public health system again.

Yesterday, the health directorate reported the highest number of infections recorded in a single day, 5,358, with a positivity rate of 19.90 percent. The number of deaths rose too. Yesterday, 52 deaths from Covid-19 were reported, the highest in seven months. The death toll is now 9,046. The government and health experts alike have

been urging people to maintain health safety guidelines, wear masks and maintain social distancing and hygiene. To curb the spread, the government, albeit late, has come up with 18 instructions on people's

been sounding alarm for quite a while. They have

movement that will remain in force for at least for two weeks. This begs the question: Have the authorities created enough public awareness about the virus and its impact on people's lives and livelihood?

The answer is no. For example, the UK variant was detected in January and disclosed by the media in March. The mandatory quarantine for returnees,

contact tracing, rigorous testing were never in place to contain the new threat. The government seemed to have had its priorities mixed-up.

It needed to build its capacity - more ICUs, oxygen supply -- and re-energise its frontlines ahead of a fresh battle.

But that was not done. The people will hold the government responsible if it fails to ensure the measures, be it healthcare services or financial assistance,

required to tackle the situation. But as citizens, we have our part to play to suppress this pandemic too. Are we doing those? Are we, the people, heeding to the advice

seriously? A few people are following the guidelines religiously, but the majority don't even think twice before flouting them. It is as if the fear has gone

and everything is back to the pre-pandemic time.

Events like mass congregations, parties or social get-togethers are being held like they used to before the pandemic. Or in other words, we have become too careless to take the matter seriously.

Even at this crucial juncture, we are unfortunately seeing a lack of social responsibility among all sections of our society, illiterate, semiliterate, educated and highly skilled professionals. Ask anyone about the refusal to follow health guidelines and you will hear: "I don't need a mask as I've already had Covid" or "It's not going to make much of a difference" or "Covid only infects rich people".

The most worrying of the excuses is: "I already got the vaccine, so I don't need a mask"

There have been other disturbing reports like eople escaping from quarantine in hospitals. Even when things are normal, we tend to flout laws and social norms, be it traffic or others, without thinking about the consequences or inconvenience caused to others.

In this crucial time, we need to understand the consequences of our actions. It is not only for us, but for others as well. We have a huge number of senior citizens and middle-aged people vulnerable to Covid-19 as they have comorbidities like cardiac conditions, diabetes, and asthma.

And a single instance of irresponsible behaviour could not only cost us our loved ones, but also take a heavy toll on our fellow citizens, our neighbours, and our country.

With the government immunisation programme going slow, we must understand that t will take many months to inoculate everyone eligible for the shots.

This new crisis requires us to reset our expectations and make behavioural changes. The government is doing what it can, but in the given situation we, the citizenry, should also understand our roles and responsibilities to stop the transmission.

### FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

## T cells respond to new virus variants

REUTERS, Chicago

A critical component of the immune system known as T cells that respond to fight infection from the original version of the novel coronavirus appear to also protect against three of the most concerning new virus variants, according to a US laboratory study released on Tuesday. Several recent studies have shown that certain variants of the novel coronavirus can undermine immune protection from antibodies and vaccines.

But antibodies - which block the coronavirus from attaching to human cells - may not tell the whole story, according to the study by researchers at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). T cells appear to play an important additionally protective role.

"Our data, as well as the results from other groups, shows that the T cell response to Covid-19 in individuals infected with the initial viral variants appears to fully recognize the major new variants identified in the UK, South Africa and Brazil," said Andrew Redd of the NIAID and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine who led the study.

The researchers analyzed blood from 30 people who had recovered from Covid-19 before the emergence of the new more contagious variants.

From those samples, they identified a specific form of T cell that was active against the virus, and looked to see how these T cells fared against the concerning variants from South Africa, the UK and Brazil.

They found the T-cell responses remained largely intact and could recognize virtually all mutations in the

The findings add to a prior study that also suggested T cell protection appears to remain intact against the

The NIAID researchers said larger studies are needed to confirm the findings.



## গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর শিক্ষা সহায়তা ট্রাস্ট উপ-পরিচালক মহোদয়ের শাখা মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা বিভাগ, শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয় বাড়ি নং-৪৪, সড়ক নং-১২/এ, ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা-১২০৯ www.pmeat.gov.bd; ফ্যাব্রঃ ০২-৮১৯১০১৯



১৭ চৈত্ৰ, ১৪২৭ বঙ্গাব্দ ৩১ মার্চ, ২০২১ খ্রিস্টাব্দ ফেলোশিপ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়ঃ ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর শিক্ষা সহায়তা ট্রাস্ট থেকে এম.ফিল. ও পিএইচ.ডি. কোর্সে ফেলোশিপ ও বৃত্তি প্রদানের আবেদন আহ্বান।

মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা বিভাগ, শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর শিক্ষা সহায়তা ট্রাস্টের আওতায় দেশের অভ্যন্তরীণ সরকারি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়সমূহে উচ্চতর শিক্ষায় (এম.ফিল. ও পিএইচ.ডি.) ফেলোশিপ ও বৃত্তি প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে নিমুবর্ণিত শর্ত ও নীতিমালা অনুযায়ী দরখান্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

ক্রমিক	গবেষণার অধিক্ষেত্র
٥.	সামাজিক বিজ্ঞান (Social Science)
ર.	জীবন সম্পর্কিত বিজ্ঞান (Life Science)
౷.	ভৌত বিজ্ঞান (Physical Science)
8.	সমুদ্র বিজ্ঞান (Marine Science)
œ.	তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি (Information and Communications Technology)
৬.	টেকসই উন্নয়ন লক্ষ্যে মাত্রা (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs)
٩.	কলা, মানবিক, বাণিজ্য ও আইন (Arts, Humanities, Commerce and Law)
ъ.	জলবায়ু, বন ও পরিবেশ বিজ্ঞান (Climate, Forest and Environmental Science)
৯.	শিক্ষা ও উন্নয়ন (Education and Development)
খ) আবেদনের নিয়ম ও শর্তাবলীঃ	

১. ২০২০-২১ অর্থবছরে ট্রাস্ট থেকে এম.ফিল. ও পিএইচ.ডি কোর্সে ফেলোশিপ ও বৃত্তি প্রদান নীতিমালায় বর্ণিত শর্ত, যোগ্যতা এবং অন্যান্য বিষয়াদি অনুসরণপূর্বক গবেষককে **কেবলমাত্র অনলাইনের মাধ্যমে (114.13**0.116.50/mnp) **আবেদন করবেন**। ২. আগামী ০১ এপ্রিল ২০২১ তারিখ হতে ৩০ এপ্রিল ২০২১ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত আবেদন গ্রহণ করা হবে। নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময়ের পর কোনো আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

৩. প্রার্থীগণ স্ব-স্ব শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করবেন এবং সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/সায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের কর্মরত প্রার্থীগণ যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করবেন

কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোনো সময় এ বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাতিল/পরিবর্তন এবং যে কোনো ফেলোর আবেদন বিবেচনা/বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ

নাসরীন আফরোজ ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক (অতিরিক্ত) ই-মেইলঃ md@pmeat.gov.bd