



A family member (L) mourns a Covid-19 victim, as the number of deaths increases, amid the spread of the coronavirus disease in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PANDEMIC DISRUPTIONS

1 in 2 people globally lost income: Gallup

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Nairobi

One in two people worldwide saw their earnings drop due to the coronavirus, with people in low-income countries particularly hard hit by job losses or cuts to their working hours, research showed yesterday.

US-based polling company Gallup, which surveyed 300,000 people across 117 countries, found that half of those with jobs earned less because of Covid-19 pandemic disruptions. This translated to 1.6 billion adults globally, it said.

Worldwide, these percentages ranged from a high of 76% in Thailand to a low of 10% in Switzerland, said researchers in a statement.

In Bolivia, Myanmar, Kenya, Uganda, Indonesia, Honduras and Ecuador, more than 70% people polled said they took home less than before global health crisis. In the United States, this figure dropped to 34%.

The Covid-19 crisis has hit workers across the world, particularly women, who are over-represented in low-paid precarious sectors such as retail, tourism and food services.

A study by the international charity Oxfam on Thursday said the pandemic had cost women around the world \$800 billion in lost income.

The Gallup poll found that more than half of those surveyed said they temporarily stopped working at their job or business - translating to about 1.7 billion adults globally.

In 57 countries including India, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, El Salvador, more than 65% of respondents said they stopped working for a time.

Countries where people were least likely to say they stopped working were predominantly developed, high-income countries.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Media must report fully': Indian SC on EC's protest

The media cannot be stopped from reporting any court hearing and 'must report fully' what happens in court, India's Supreme Court said yesterday as the Election Commission complained about being 'castigated without any evidence' on political rallies during the campaign for state elections.

2 rockets target Baghdad base housing US troops

Two rockets targeted an airbase at Iraq's Baghdad airport housing US-led coalition troops on Sunday, in the second such attack in 10 days, the Iraqi army said. One of the projectiles was intercepted by the C-RAM counter rocket, artillery and mortar system deployed to protect US troops in Iraq, a security source told AFP.

Saudi Arabia to lift travel curbs on 'immunised' citizens

Saudi Arabia will permit citizens immunised against Covid-19 to travel abroad from May 17, the interior ministry said Sunday, more than a year after Saudis were barred from external trips. The ministry said three categories of people would be considered immunised -- those who have received two doses of the coronavirus vaccine, those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior to travel, and people who have recovered from the infection within the last six months.

Palestinian woman killed, 2 Israelis hurt in West Bank

A Palestinian woman was killed and two Israelis were seriously wounded in two separate shooting incidents in the occupied West Bank on Sunday evening, Israeli and Palestinian officials said. An Israeli soldier shot a Palestinian woman who tried to carry out a stabbing attack, the military said. Palestinian officials said the woman, aged 60, died of her wounds.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS, NDTV

'Spine is straight' Mamata Banerjee on West Bengal voters after polls victory

West Bengal's soon-to-be three-time Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who pulled off a stupendous victory after an all-out fight by the BJP, yesterday declared that the BJP is "not all in all" and the people have put them in their place.



"The people have stopped the ruination... the spine is straight," added the chief minister, who ahead of the election had repeatedly told the people about the BJP will use money power to buy their votes.

"Take their money but vote as you please," she had declared in rally after rally.

She yesterday appealed to everyone to maintain peace and not indulge in any violence. "We know BJP and central forces have tortured us a lot but we have to maintain peace. At present, we have to fight Covid-19," Mamata said.

Violence broke out in parts of West Bengal on Sunday night. Houses and vehicles of some Bharatiya Janata Party candidates were allegedly attacked and a party office at Arambagh was set on fire. The vehicle of Suvendu Adhikari, who defeated chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram, was also attacked. The Union ministry of home affairs yesterday asked Bengal government for report over post-poll violence in state.

Meanwhile, party secretary general Partha Chatterjee said yesterday TMC chief will be sworn in Chief Minister for a third straight term tomorrow.

The decision was taken at a meeting Mamata had with TMC newly-elected lawmakers in the state in Kolkata.

Myanmar rebels 'down military copter' 4 people die in hospital after junta's artillery shells hit monastery in Kachin

REUTERS



The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of Myanmar's most powerful rebel groups, said yesterday it had shot down a helicopter after returning fire following air strikes by the military, an official at the group said.

The United Nations estimates that tens of thousands of civilians have fled their homes as a result of the fighting between the military and ethnic minority insurgents in remote northern and eastern frontier regions.

The conflict intensified after Myanmar's generals seized power on February 1, ousting the elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

The KIA's information department head, Naw Bu, said the helicopter was shot down around 10:20 am at a village near the town of Moemaik in Kachin province.

"The military council launched air strikes in that area since around 8 or 9 this morning ... using jet fighters and also fired shots using a helicopter so we shot back at them," he said by telephone. He declined to say what weapons were used.

The news portals MizimaDaily and Kachinwaves also reported the downing of the helicopter next to photographs showing a plume of smoke coming from the ground.

A resident in the area, who declined to be named, said by telephone that four people had died in hospital after artillery shells hit a monastery in the village.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports and a military spokesman did not answer a phone call seeking comment.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the coup, with protests almost daily against military rule across the country.

On Sunday, Myanmar security forces opened fire on some of the biggest protests in days, killing eight people, media reported.

The protests, after a spell of dwindling crowds and what appeared to be more restraint by the security forces, were coordinated with demonstrations in Myanmar communities around the world to mark what organisers called "the global Myanmar spring revolution".

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners advocacy group said security forces have killed at least 765 protesters since the coup. Reuters is unable to confirm the toll.

Talks on to make Oxford vaccines here

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Asked whether Beximco could import the doses in bulk and put them in ampules here, Papon said, "This will not be a viable option for us."

Serum CEO Adar Poonawalla recently said he was planning to launch production in other countries to keep up with the demands.

"There's going to be an announcement in the next few days," Adar Poonawalla was quoted as saying by The Times in an interview on Friday.

The Covax Facility, a global vaccine alliance, was supposed to receive from Serum a total of 1.1 billion doses of the AstraZeneca or Novavax, with 200 million committed, and the rest on option, reports Reuters.

It had expected a total of more than 100 million doses from Serum between February and May, excluding supplies for India, but has so far received only about 18.2 million. Bangladesh is supposed to receive 6.8 crore vaccine shots from Covax by the end of 2021.

Bangladesh started the mass inoculation campaign with the AstraZeneca vaccine it purchased from Serum. But the campaign stumbled as Serum failed to fulfil its commitment of supplying 50 lakh doses

each month for six months in a row.

Bangladesh purchased 3 crore doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from Serum. But the country has so far received only 70 lakh in two shipments.

Serum delivered the first shipment of 50 lakh doses properly but the second shipment contained only 20 lakh. Serum has not provided Bangladesh any doses since. Bangladesh also received 33 lakh doses of the vaccine from the India government as a present.

The Indian government restricted export of vaccines amid rising demands at home and the dearth of raw materials.

Serum has the capacity to produce 65 million doses of the vaccine each month.

The Bangladesh government has recently given China's Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V emergency use authorisation and there are talks of local co-production.

Contacted, Md Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology at Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "We welcome such initiatives. But the more the state and academia will be engaged in such initiatives, the more welfare of the people will be ensured."

The government has already requested AstraZeneca to authorise production of its Covid-19 vaccine in Bangladesh.

SAMYA ROSE STUMO FELLOWSHIP FOR GLOBAL HEALTH... ThinkWell is launching the Samya Rose Stumo Fellowship for Global Health. The fellowship is for extraordinary young women change-makers who have inventive ideas that look to revolutionize global health.

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No homegoing for Eid

FROM PAGE 1 "If any of the markets or malls is found flouting the guidelines, it will be shut if necessary."

He also said the Shop Owners Association has assured the government that it will cooperate with the administration in this regard and also see that the health safety guidelines are properly followed at markets.

Anwarul warned that action will be taken if anyone is found outside without a mask.

About inter-district transport, he said public transport operators will have to ensure that the health safety guidelines are followed properly.

"Transport operators have given us assurance in this regard... But if there is any violation of the guidelines, we will shut the transport service."

He also mentioned that no organisations -- public or private -- will be allowed to grant extra holidays to their employees for the Eid.

The cabinet secretary said this when it was pointed out that a large number of factory workers leave the capital en masse during the Eid holiday.

"The government has decided not to extend the holiday. The three-day holiday will start on Thursday, and the remaining two days are weekends -- Friday and Saturday," he added.

Following the meeting, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, "Once the infection rate shoots up, it takes a long time to bring it down... Now if we lift the lockdown, all our achievements will go in vain."

He referred to high infection and death rates in cities, including Dhaka, Chattogram and Khulna, and said these city corporation areas will be monitored strictly.

In reply to a query, he said around five lakh doses of Covid vaccine will arrive from China by May 10.

"We've sent a proposal to China for procuring more vaccines," he said, adding that the government has a plan to buy 5-6 crore doses.

Last week, Bangladesh government approved emergency use of China's Sinopharm vaccine.

Earlier in the day, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said public transports cannot cross the boundaries of cities and districts by any means.

"Transport owners must keep half of the seats in vehicles vacant..." he said, adding that transport workers and passengers must wear masks and use hand sanitizers.

The buses must be disinfected after every trip, he mentioned.

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