

Mexico says Covid-19 has affected a fourth of its population

REUTERS, Mexico City

About a quarter of Mexico's 126 million people are estimated to have been infected with the coronavirus, the health ministry said on Friday, far more than the country's confirmed infections.

The 2020 National Health and Nutrition Survey (Ensanut) showed that about 31.1 million people have had the virus, the ministry said in a statement, citing Tonatiuh Barrientos, an official at the National Institute of Public Health.

The estimate was given as the country recorded 3,282 new cases and 243 more fatalities, taking its total number of confirmed infections to 2,448,820 and the death toll to 229,823.

The government has said previously the real number of cases was likely to be significantly higher.

According to Barrientos, not all of the people in the survey's estimate necessarily showed symptoms. The survey was based on interviews with people at 13,910 households between Aug. 17 and Nov. 14 last year, and confirmed preliminary results released in December.

Separate data published in March suggested Mexico's actual death toll was at least 60% above the confirmed figure.

People

FROM PAGE 14 intelligence, discovering that the larger the pupils, the higher the intelligence.

Differences in the baseline pupil size between those scoring highest and those scoring lowest on intelligence tests could be seen with the unaided eye.

The team say this could be due to people with larger pupils having better results regulation of brain activity in a region linked to intelligence and memory.

The pupil is the opening in the centre of the iris (the structure that gives our eyes their colour).

The function of the pupil is to allow light to enter the eye where it is then focused on the retina.

The black colour of the pupil is because light that passes through it and is then absorbed by the retina - meaning no light is reflected.

The size of the pupil and how much light enters it is controlled by muscles in the iris.

In low-light conditions, the pupil dilates so more light can reach the retina to improve night vision. In bright conditions, the pupil constricts to limit how much light enters the eye.

Researchers had 500 people aged 18 to 35 from Atlanta take part in a range of tests while having their pupil size monitored by an eye tracking device.

They found that those who had a larger 'baseline pupil size' performed better in the attention, memory and reasoning tests.

This suggests a strong link between the brain and the eye that the researchers hope to study in more detail in the future.

India cuts

FROM PAGE 14 During the second wave of the virus many people resorted to costly private treatment in what is still a low-income country.

Others paid twenty times the usual price for oxygen cylinders on the black market and huge sums to secure ambulances and hearses.

Experts have said millions of people remain vulnerable to new surges of infections, particularly in the countryside where two-thirds of the population lives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the government would take over the inoculation programme from Indian states and offer free doses to everyone over the age of 18.

The government would allow private hospitals to have 25% of all vaccine supplies, but not to charge more than 150 rupees (\$2.06) over the cost of the dose, he said.

Low form over Bay

FROM PAGE 14 to affect the maritime ports, North Bay and adjoining areas, the message adds.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice.

Meanwhile, light to moderate rains or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind are likely to occur at many places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions, according to regular weather bulletin by the Met office.

Moderate rains or thundershowers are also likely to occur at a few places over Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions.

The day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country, the bulletin adds.



People march the 7km from a crime scene to a mosque in memory of a Muslim family that was killed in what police call a hate-motivated attack in London, Ontario, Canada, on Friday. Thousands of people marched on Friday in support of the Canadian Muslim family run over and killed by a man driving a pick-up truck last Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Our victory

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and used to hold down the people of Bangladesh," said Tajuddin Ahmad.

Tajuddin Ahmad further said that the war of liberation was now in its 11th week and the valiant freedom fighters had put despair into Yahya's heart. The staggering casualty figures of the West Pakistani Army testified to the success of the defensive operations. The twin methods of massive terror and murder had not succeeded in breaking the will of a nation determined to fulfil its destiny to freedom.

In a special word to those Muslim and Arab countries, who had not yet found it possible to condemn the mass slaughter in Bangladesh, the prime minister said, "Their silence condones colonialism and barbarism, their support to Islamabad put them on the side of dictatorship and its well-documented crimes of arson, loot, rape and murder."

Tajuddin Ahmad wound up his

speech by congratulating the people of Bangladesh on their brave struggle and asking them to make sure that no exportable merchandise could fall into the hands of the enemy, to seek out collaborators and quislings and punish them, to maintain solidarity with the freedom fighters, and finally to have faith in the justness and invincibility of their cause. "Our victory is assured," he said.

BRITISH MP'S TEAM CONFERS WITH YAHYA

The three-member British parliamentary delegation conferred with Pakistan President Yahya Khan in Rawalpindi. The delegation would also visit Bangladesh to make a study of the conditions prevailing there. It would later acquaint the British government with the situation there to chalk out the type and quantum of relief aid to be given to Bangladesh.

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Chinese man held at border

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that he reached Dhaka on June 2 with a business visa and stayed here with a Chinese friend.

He further claimed that he went to Sona Masjid in Chapainawabganj on June 8 and stayed in a hotel. On June 10, he was caught by the BSF troops while entering India.

He said he entered India "by mistake", as there was no sign marked in the border.

Han added he had visited India four times in the past -- Hyderabad in 2010 and Delhi and Gurugram thrice after 2019.

He said some of his colleagues in the Gurugram hotel are from China and rest are Indian.

He also said that when he was in Hubei, one of his business partners -- Sun Jiang -- sent him the numbers of 10-15 Indian mobile phone SIMs after a few days, which were received by him and his wife. Sun was arrested by the Anti-Terrorism Squad of Uttar

Pradesh police recently on a number of charges, including transporting Indian SIM cards to China.

Claiming his arrest to be a big achievement, BSF in a statement said that Han had so far taken around 1,300 Indian SIM cards illegally from India to China, hiding them in undergarments.

These SIM cards were allegedly used to commit financial fraud.

Han could not get an Indian visa due to the ATS case and, hence, decided to get a Bangladeshi business visa to enter India illegally from Bangladesh.

The Indian border force seized an Apple Laptop, two iPhones, one Bangladeshi SIM card, one Indian SIM card, two Chinese SIM cards, two pen drives, three batteries, two small torchlights, five money transaction devices, two debit cards, US dollars, Bangladeshi Taka as well as Indian currency from his possession.

Positivity rate highest since April 22

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As of yesterday afternoon, there were 131 Covid-19 patients under treatment against a 100-bed capacity. Besides, 13 patients were in ICU in the hospital.

During a visit to KMCH, our correspondent witnessed a queue of over a hundred people to give samples for Covid-19 test in front of the hospital.

Due to a shortage of beds in nearby districts, including Satkhira and Jashore, patients have continued rushing to KMCH.

Al Manum, 38, an auto rice mill manager of Satkhira's Itagacha area, was admitted to the Covid unit five days ago. However, he had tried to get admission to Satkhira Medical College. Due to lack of space, he came to KMCH.

Dr Mehedi Nawaz, vice principal of KMC and convener of the Corona Prevention Committee in Khulna district, told The Daily Star, "We are at a loss regarding how to handle the situation as patients from nearby districts are coming here every day."

He said they have sent a proposal to the health ministry to turn the Khulna Sadar Hospital into a Covid-19 unit.

In the last 24 hours, one Covid-19 positive patient and four with Covid-19 symptoms died in KMCH. Against a total of 376 tests yesterday, the positivity rate was 34.93

percent in the division. Among those who tested positive for Covid-19, 116 were from Khulna, 13 from Bagerhat, three from Satkhira, two from Jashore and one from Pirojpur.

To check transmission, Khulna district administration has imposed a fresh one-week long restriction on public transport movement from last night.

In Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, four people died of Covid-19 -- the lowest single-day death toll in a week -- in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, reports our correspondent from Rajshahi.

Of them, one was Covid positive, while the rest had symptoms of the infection, RMCH Deputy Director Dr Saiful Ferdous told The Daily Star.

The doctor said the person who died of the virus was a resident of Chapainawabganj, while the three others were from Rajshahi.

A total of 366 samples were tested at the hospital yesterday. Of them, 143 tested positive.

The positivity rate was 39.07 percent.

In total, 289 patients are undergoing treatment at the RMCH's coronavirus unit at the moment.

The ongoing restriction on movement in Rajshahi district has stepped into its second day yesterday.

Fails to pay back BCTF's overdue funds

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from the interest segments of its FDRs kept with different banks, it said in the letter to Padma Bank on May 20, which was also forwarded to the central bank and the ministries of environment, forest, and climate change.

The Daily Star has a copy of the letter.

"The bank has not repaid any interest last year against the FDRs," Ahmed said.

Contacted, Md Ehsan Khasru, managing director of Padma Bank, said the bank officials would sit with

the BCTF today to resolve the issue.

He declined to comment further on the issue.

Established in 2013, the bank became a hotbed for financial irregularities within less than three years of operation. More than Tk 3,500 crore was siphoned out from the bank between 2013 and 2017, found a Bangladesh Bank investigation.

When allegations of corruption against Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir and Md Mahabubul Haque Chisty, the then board chairman and chairman of the audit committee respectively,

became deafening, depositors, which included government agencies, started pulling out money.

The two were forced to resign in November 2017, and the government stepped in to rescue the bank in 2018.

The state-owned financial institutions Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Agrani Bank and Rupali Bank bought 60 per cent stakes in the bank for Tk 715 crore.

The bank though is yet to get back on its feet despite a raft of measures by the government, including a ban on fresh loan disbursement for three-

and-a-half years starting from January 2017.

In 2020, the bank managed to narrow down its losses to Tk 151 crore.

At the end of the first quarter of 2021, it faced a capital shortfall of Tk 382 crore, up from Tk 310 crore a quarter earlier, according to data from the central bank.

As of December last year, default loans in bank stood at Tk 3,455 crore, which is 61.6 per cent of its total outstanding loans.

A year earlier, as much as 72.3 per cent of its outstanding loans were soured ones: Tk 3,989 crore.

Hardline Pakistani cleric detained for threatening Malala

Aff, Peshawar

A firebrand Pakistani scholar has been detained for making death threats against Nobel prize laureate Malala Yousafzai over her comments on marriage, officials said Friday.

Since surviving an assassination attempt by the Taliban at aged 15 in rural northwest Pakistan, the Oxford graduate has become a

global figure promoting education for girls.

But a recent interview with the fashion magazine Vogue stirred debate in her home country -- where she is already a divisive figure -- when she questioned whether a legal union between a couple was necessary.

The issue was debated by MPs in her home province of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, who said her comments were against Islam.

"Malala is dreaming to become the country's prime minister but promoting obscenity," cleric Sardar Ali told students of a local seminary in the northwestern city of Lakki Marwat last week.

He added that he would blow her up in a suicide attack if she returned.

Police official Wasim Sajjad told

AFP Sardar Ali had been charged with making threats, hate speech, and inciting terrorism.

The arrest was confirmed by a second senior police official, Muhammad Imran.

Last year Yousafzai called out Prime Minister Imran Khan on Twitter, after a Taliban militant who claimed to have been behind her attack escaped from detention.

Teen girls suicide attempts up dramatically in pandemic: study

AFP, Washington

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Friday that emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts by teenage girls rose significantly last year compared to 2019, highlighting the mental health impact of the pandemic.

"By early May 2020, ED visit counts for suspected suicide attempts began increasing among adolescents aged 12-17 years, especially among girls," the health agency said in a report.

Between July 26 to August 22, 2020, the average number of visits in girls of this age was 26 percent higher than the same period in 2019.

During February 21 to March 20, 2021, it had shot up an alarming 51 percent compared to the same period in 2020. For boys of the same age, the rise in emergency room visits was four percent.

Past research prior to the pandemic has also found self-reported suicide attempts are consistently higher among adolescent females than among males.

But "the findings from this study suggest more severe distress among young females than has been identified in previous reports during the pandemic, reinforcing the need for increased attention to, and prevention for, this population," the authors wrote.

The study was not designed to tease out the risk factors leading to increased suicide attempts.

But it said: "Young persons might represent a group at high risk because they might have been particularly affected by mitigation measures, such as physical distancing (including a lack of connectedness to schools, teachers, and peers)."

It also noted barriers to mental health treatment, increases in substance use, and anxiety about family health and economic problems, as possible risk factors.

According to the data tracking site Burbio, two percent of US school students are attending classes completely virtually, 70 percent have gone back to in-person learning, and 28 percent are learning via a hybrid of both.

Azerbaijan hands Armenia 15 captive troops

AFP, Baku

Azerbaijan yesterday handed over to Armenia 15 prisoners of war captured during last year's hostilities over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, the foreign ministry in Baku said.

The ministry also said that under the deal mediated by Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, Yerevan reciprocated by providing Baku with maps of minefields in the conflict zone.

Fighting broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia in September 2020 over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, claiming some 6,000 lives over six weeks.

The war ended in November with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that saw Yerevan cede swathes of territory it had controlled for decades.

On Saturday, "Azerbaijan handed over to Armenia 15 detained Armenians in exchange for the map of 97,000 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines in the Agdam district," one of the territories Armenia has ceded to Baku, Azerbaijani foreign ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also thanked the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, top US diplomat for Europe Philip Reeker, the European Council President Charles Michel, and the OSCE Swedish chairmanship for their role in negotiations.

New Air Force

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paid homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital.

He also laid wreaths at Shikha Anirban to pay homage to the Armed Forces members who were martyred during the Liberation War in 1971.

Rab arrests

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one of the most important members of the trafficking racket from Sreepur of Gazipur around 1:30am yesterday.

The elite force members also seized gold ornaments and Tk 224,405 cash from his possession.

According to Rab, Robbil transacted a huge amount of money through different bank accounts.

The victims of the trafficking racket were kept at a safe house in India's Kolkata and would be returned to Bangladesh soon, the Rab official added.

The arrestees are being interrogated at Rab office in Mymensingh as of filing this report. They will be handed over to Sreepur Police Station later, Rab source said.