# RSF and partner hail Pakistani law protecting journalists but call for improvements

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and its partner, Freedom Network (FN), hail the adoption of a law protecting journalists by the legislative assembly in Sindh province, in southern Pakistan, but they propose essential improvements that should be incorporated into the law during its initial implementation phase.

The essence of the new law, passed unanimously by the Sindh assembly on 28 May, is summed up in this key article: "No person or institution, whether private or public, shall engage in any act that violates or threatens the right to life and security of any journalist or media practitioner."

The law will help Pakistan to implement the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, to which it signed up in 2014, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to which it agreed the following year.

"The very broad consensus that led to the Sindh Assembly's adoption of the law protecting journalists should serve as an example both in the rest of Pakistan and internationally," said Daniel Bastard, the head of RSF's Asia-Pacific desk. "It reflects the degree to which lawmakers have become aware of the absolutely dominant role that press freedom and the safety of journalists play in the functioning of democratic societies." General interest

FN executive director Iqbal Khattak said: "Freedom Network is thankful to the Sindh government for supporting and passing such an inspirational special law for which the journalist community, editors, RSF and Freedom Network worked hard to help devise a mechanism to end impunity for crimes against media and its practitioners."

The law says it aims to enable those responsible for crimes of violence against journalists to be brought to justice and to create an environment favourable to professional, independent journalism that serves the general interest.

When examining the original draft, the Sindh Assembly agreed to an amendment obligating the Sindh government to offer free legal aid to journalists facing threats or attacks who cannot afford a lawyer.

Despite this and other positive aspects, RSF and FN have identified several issues that the law has not addressed. If they continue to be neglected, the protective mechanisms it envisages will probably not suffice to combat impunity and provide journalists with full protection.

RSF and FN therefore ask the Sindh authorities to heed the following recommendations during the process of establishing the practical rules for implementing the law, known as "Rules of Business."

Recommendations

Special public prosecutor:

A special public prosecutor is needed to comply with the UN Plan of Action. The Sindh authorities must therefore ensure that the law creates the position of an independent special prosecutor with their own powers. This is the only way to counter the influence that individuals or groups may try to use to undermine police investigations and evidence collection, and thereby prevent crimes against journalists in connection with their work from being punished.

Representative decision-making body:

The composition of the Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals that is created by the law must be revised because, as it stands, only one of its nine members represents journalists and the other eight are government officials and representatives of media owners and editors. Journalists must be better represented.

Gender balance:

The law contains absolutely no provision regarding a gender balance, which will tend to perpetuate the discrimination to which women journalists are routinely subjected in Pakistan. FN and RSF insist that at least a third of the Commission's members are women.

Extend protection to families:

In view of the different kinds of threats or attacks to which journalists are subjected, and which sometimes also target family members, FN and RSF recommend extending the protection to families of the targeted journalists, when required. Rsf

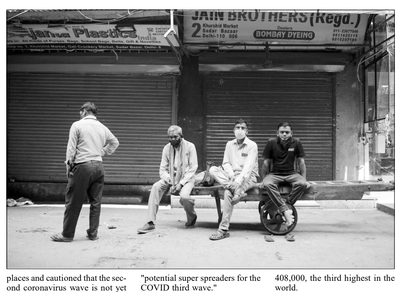
# India medical body says no to reopening tourism due to COVID-19 threat

Opening India's tourist destinations and allowing pilgrimage travel could act as COVID-19 "super spreaders" of a third wave of infections, the country's top doctor's body warned on Monday.

After a catastrophic second wave, driven largely by the more infectious and dangerous Delta variant, ravaged the country's health system, India is now reporting roughly a tenth of its peak daily numbers in May.

But experts worry that a third wave of infections is not far off as travel restrictions are eased in various parts of the country. read more

On Monday, the Indian Medical Association, India's top doctor's body, appealed to state governments and citizens to not lower their guard against COVID-19, saying a third wave was inevitable.




"It is painful to note, in this crucial time... in many parts of the country, both government and public are complacent and engaged in mass gatherings without following COVID protocols," the IMA said in a press release.

The comments from the IMA echoed those from senior government officials, who have urged citizens to avoid crowding at tourist places and cautioned that the second coronavirus wave is not yet over. read more

"Tourist bonanza, pilgrimage travel, religious fervour are all needed, but can wait for few more months," the IMA said, adding that opening up for these rituals and enabling unvaccinated people to go to these mass gatherings are "potential super spreaders for the COVID third wave."

India on Monday reported 37,154 new COVID-19 cases and 724 new deaths in the last 24 hours, health ministry data showed, compared to the peak of over 400,000 infections a day in May. The country has reported a COVID-19 death toll of over 408,000, the third highest in the world.

The pace of India's vaccination drive has also slowed down, with roughly 8% of the 950 million eligible adult population fully vaccinated. The country had vaccinated 3.7 million people on Monday as of 1240 GMT.

Reuters

# Chinese run illegal factories in Bangladesh creates risk

The recent incident of massive fire in a factory near Dhaka has brought to the fore existence of illegal factories many of which are run by Chinese nationals.

For the last seven years illegal factories have been established in Bangladesh for manufacturing batteries.

These factories are run by Chinese businessmen.

Although there is no legal papers for operating this kind of illegal factories but they are not being touched by the govt administration, ET has learnt.

The news is about the Narayanganj Moukuli Bazar factory which was earlier a textile mill but for the last 4 years the factory is being used illegally for the manufacturing of battery.

There is no signboard outside the factory and no body knows the name of the battery.

The people in nearby area are aware that this factory belong to Chinese businessmen.

Local TV channel Ekkator TV reported some locals are working along side Chinese nationals in the factory responsible for massive pollution.

As Chinese nationals cannot purchase land in Bangladesh and influential person are helping Chinese nationals to set up factories.

There is no legal work permit available with the Chinese Nationals and all the factories are running illegally.

Meanwhile police in Bangladesh have arrested on murder charges the owner of a factory where at least 52 people died in last Friday's massive fire, as it emerged that children as young as 11 had been working there.

Four of the owner's sons were also among the eight people detained overall on Saturday over the inferno that broke out on Thursday and raged for more than a day.

A separate inquiry has been launched into the use of child labour at the facility.

indiatimes

# US doses arrive as Nepal struggles to vaccinate population

A shipment of 1.5 million doses of Johnson and Johnson vaccine donated by the United States arrived Monday in Nepal, which is struggling to inoculate its population against the coronavirus.

"Today's delivery of the single-dose vaccine means that this single donation is enough to protect over 1.5 million people in Nepal," U.S. Ambassador Randy Berry said at Kathmandu airport.

The U.S. is also donating vaccines to several other Asian countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Health Minister Krishna Gopal Shrestha said the shipment, obtained through the U.N.-backed COVAX vaccine facility, would be given to people between the ages of 50 and 54.

Though situated between India and China, which are among the biggest producers of vaccines, Nepal has been struggling to obtain doses.

It began its vaccination campaign in January, but less than 3% of its population has been fully inoculated. The campaign stalled after India was hit by a devastating coronavirus outbreak and cut off exports of Indian-made vaccines, including 1 million doses which Nepal had already paid for.

Since then, China has donated 1.8 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine and is selling Nepal about 4 million more doses this month.

Nepal faced its own coronavirus outbreak in April which prompted authorities to impose a two-month lockdown. That brought down the number of cases, but an easing of restrictions now is raising concern about a new outbreak with so few people vaccinated. Thousands of people also cross the border with India every day without health checks to seek work there or return home.

There are official checkpoints on the main routes across the 1,800-kilometer (1,125-mile) border, but it is easy to walk across much of the unguarded portion.

"We are very likely to be hit by a third wave of COVID-19 because we have a very porous border and only a small number of people have received the vaccine," said Dr. Rajan Pandey of Bheri Hospital in the border city of Nepalgunj, 360 kilometers (225 miles) southwest of the capital, Kathmandu.

In May, the city was the first in Nepal to be hit by the new outbreak and the hospital was overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases. Patients lined up outside its doors and many were turned away or treated in ambulances or in corridors. Even doctors and nurses fell sick. apnews

# Cost of doing business in Uzbekistan 2021

A new publication 'Cost of Doing Business in Uzbekistan 2021' (PDF 6 MB) provides a "one-stop-shop" for investors looking for an authoritative source for startups and established businesses. Initiated by the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Cost of Doing Business in Uzbekistan 2021 was released today in cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), PricewaterhouseCoopers, and the United Nations Development Programme.

The publication outlines a comprehensive overview of the major costs, including enterprise registration, labor costs, taxes and tax incentives, licensing, foreign trade procedures, customs payments and preferences, business services, logistics, and other types of business information relevant to Uzbekistan. It also includes a general guide for foreign trade, highlighting a united automated information system of the State Customs Committee of Uzbekistan, most favored nation treatments, and countries that have effective Free Trade Agreements with Uzbekistan.

"USAID supports the Government of Uzbekistan in expanding trade and undertaking trade policy reforms and accession to the World Trade Organization by revising legislation, building institutional capacity, and making firms more competitive. Availability of transparent and reliable data in the Cost of Doing Business in Uzbekistan 2021 is a huge step towards more sustainable investments and an enabling business environment in the country," said USAID Mission Director in Uzbekistan Mikaela Meredith.

Uzbekistan occupied the 69th place in global ranking among 190 economies in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 study and was listed among the top-20 improvers in Doing Business 2020 worldwide. The inclusion in the top 20 improvers was due to Uzbekistan taking steps to protect minority investors, pay taxes, enforce contracts, and increase trade across borders.

USAID partners with the Government of Uzbekistan to diversify the country's economy and increase regional trade, address serious health threats – including COVID-19– and build the government's capacity to respond to the population's needs.

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