

### COVID likely to lock India's women out of job market for years



Savitri Devi has been searching for work since she lost her job at a garment factory in India's capital New Delhi, along with her coworkers, who also plummeted at the start of the coronavirus pandemic last year.

The 44-year-old is used to work regularly, and unsuccessfully, but her loss in 2020 at an industrial hub with thousands of small factories and workshops, where there was previously plenty of makeshift jobs for women, cut her life in two. "I am ready to take a salary cut but there is no work," Devi said outside her one-room home in a suburb about 50 kilometers from New Delhi.

Devi is one of approximately 11 million women who have almost made a living in an economy made up of small, informal and predominantly male-owned and -operated enterprises.

Most informal women in India are in low-skilled work, such as farm and factory labor and domestic help, sectors that have been hit hard by the pandemic.

That has been worsened by an unexpected slow economic recovery, the closure of thousands of factories and a sluggish vaccination rate, which affects women more.

These factors are expected to undermine their attempts to return to the workforce.

"Whatever social and economic support India women had made in the last decade, it has been largely wiped out during the COVID period," said Neelima Khatun, general secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress, one of the largest trade unions in India.

The number of women in the non-agricultural workforce is expected to drop in 2021, with a further decline in 2022, according to a report by the International Labour Organization.

With the vast majority of Indian women working in the informal sector, precise estimates of job losses are difficult.

But in a country without a comprehensive welfare system or pandemic-related support for small businesses, several industry bodies have reported widespread redundancies over the past year.

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), which represents more than 100 large firms, said more than 10 million small firms and 100 million workers lost their jobs.

A report by the Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University found that 17 percent of women workers who lost their jobs between March and December before the second wave of the virus hit in April were made permanently redundant.

### Covid-19: Uzbekistan allows employers to suspend unvaccinated staff

Uzbekistan has passed a law allowing employers to prevent staff from working if they are not vaccinated against the coronavirus, according to the law signed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The measure comes as Uzbekistan and other countries in the former Soviet region struggle with their vaccination campaigns with the Delta variant of the virus on the rise.

### Lockdown extended again in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley with increased vigilance

The authorities in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley on Tuesday decided to extend the ongoing lockdown by seven more days in the South Asian country, following rising COVID-19 cases in recent days.

As decided jointly by the Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts in the valley, the lockdown will be extended from August 11 by continuing all the measures in restrictive measures made in past weeks.

Under the new rules, in-person meetings or training programs are banned, a reversal of a previous decision allowing such activities with the presence of no more than 12 people.

"We extended the lockdown but have increased restrictions, but we dropped the seven-day rule to drop the seven-day rule in COVID-19 cases," said Prasad Parajuli, chief district officer of Kathmandu, said Xinhua.

Since Nepal first imposed lockdown in March last year during the first wave of COVID-19, some 660,000 people have been fined for violating the prohibitory orders, according to the District Administration Office of Kathmandu.

The Health Ministry said on Tuesday that 1,434 new COVID-19 cases and 24 deaths had been reported in Nepal in the previous 24 hours, bringing the total confirmed cases to 70,077 and the death toll to 9,922.

### Work of Turkmenistan's oil gas enterprises reviewed

The work of the oil and gas enterprises in Turkmenistan is being reviewed by the President's Commission for the Development of the Oil and Gas Sector.

The meeting was held in the presence of the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, and the members of the Commission.

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### Pakistan, Indonesia among biggest beneficiaries of over 110 mn vaccines donated by US

The United States has donated over 110 million doses of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines to more than 60 countries, the White House announced on Tuesday.

The White House said in a statement that the number of doses donated by the US is more than the donations of all other countries combined, "except the United States as the global leader in COVID-19 vaccine donations."

US President Joe Biden has promised the country will be an "arsenal of vaccines" for the world amid a fear of inequitable vaccine distribution in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

Biden is expected to discuss the milestone later Tuesday, providing an update on his administration's strategy to stop the spread of COVID-19 abroad.

Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Africa received the largest chunk of the vaccines donated by the US.

While Pakistan and Bangladesh received 5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, Indonesia received 8 million vaccines.

The Philippines and South Africa are also major beneficiaries, getting 4.2 million and 3.6 million doses respectively.

The White House stressed that these donations will not be used to boost losses from other countries.

"The Administration looks to a variety of factors, including COVID-19 case rates, death rates and hospitalizations, current vaccination rates, response to requests and a country's ability to receive vaccines and put them into use," it added.

The United States has made the vaccine donation largely through a global vaccine program called COVAX.

The White House noted that the US will not support 500 million doses of Pfizer vaccine at the cost of August, that it has pledged to donate to 100 low-income countries by June 2022.

The announcement comes as the US has started vaccinating a fresh surge in infections, mostly among the unvaccinated. The administration is encouraging states to vaccinate people as per vaccine guidelines.

The vaccination drive, especially in the southern states, is expected to be a success.

### Seylan Bank opens new data center in Colombo, Sri Lanka

The structure or so-called Seylan Tower was designed by consultant Theodor Morsing and built by V S Information Systems.

It will host the bank's core application servers, storage, network and security, and connectivity infrastructure.

"There was a need to centralize our data center infrastructure operations for efficient management, high availability, safety and cost reduction," said Seylan Bank CEO Harsha Wasinganayake.

The new data center is a state-of-the-art facility built by Seylan Bank in Sri Lanka, as well as new data centers in other countries.

"The Administration looks to a variety of factors, including COVID-19 case rates, death rates and hospitalizations, current vaccination rates, response to requests and a country's ability to receive vaccines and put them into use," it added.

The new facility will improve SBI operating efficiency and provide better service to customers.

The new facility will also enable a greater assurance of systems availability and service level assurance.

The foundation of our data center is based on making digital banking for our customers, secure and reliable.

The project is a joint venture between Seylan Bank and its partners.

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### Upgraded combat vehicles arrive for Russia's military base in Tajikistan

Upgraded BMP-2M infantry fighting vehicles that will take part in the opening drills of the military base in Tajikistan, the press officer of the General Military Directorate reported on Tuesday.

"A batch of 17 upgraded BMP-2M infantry fighting vehicles has arrived for the 20th Russian military base stationed in Tajikistan. The new combat vehicles will replace the outdated BMP-1 and BMP-2 vehicles," he said.

The BMP-2M will be equipped in the near future of Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan that will take part in the opening drills of the military base in Tajikistan.

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