UN-supported campaign to immunize 150,000 Rohingya children against deadly diseases

Congolese flee fight amid Congo's growing Kasai violence

Children flee, fight amid Congo's growing Kasai violence

South Korea puts policy priority on tackling low birthrate

A number of thousands of Rohingya children — having fled violence in Myanmar — continue to arrive in Bangladesh, a United Nations-supported vaccination campaign has been initiated to prevent the spread of potentially deadly diseases. According to an update release by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the agency and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) are supporting the Bangladeshi government’s Health-lead health campaign targeting measles, rubella and polio to inoculate some 150,000 Rohingya children below the age of 15 in 68 refugee settlements near the country’s border with Myanmar, on any report.

The second-day campaign was planned by the UN health agency, which is also managing and monitoring its field implementation. UNICEF has provided vaccines, syringes and Vitamin A capsules.

Navaratnasamy Paraitheran, the head of WHO in Bangladesh, said, “We are happy that we were able to initiate the immunization campaign so quickly to protect the population from a possible measles outbreak.”

In addition to the vaccination campaign, the two UN agencies are also helping the government reinforce maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services, renovate delivery and newborn-care units, improve water, sanitation and hygiene in health facilities; and strengthen disease surveillance, early warning and health-related information systems.

In May this year, a study in the journal Nature said “excess” emissions from diesel vehicles encoding certification limits were associated with a substantial increase in the number of deaths globally in 2015.

The new study, published in the journal Environmental Research Letters, focuses on the perils for the planet.

The researchers from Norway, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands calculated that about 10,000 deaths in Europe per year can be attributed to small particulate pollution from light duty diesel vehicles.

Almost half of these would have been avoided if emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) from diesel cars on the road had matched levels measured in the lab.

Volkswagen admitted installing illegal software devices in cars that reduced emissions only for the duration of tests. If diesel cars emitted as little NOx as petrol ones, almost 4-5000 premature deaths would have been avoided, said the authors.

The countries with the heaviest burden are Italy, Germany, and France, who are seen as the ones that rely on big diesel vehicles and high share of diesel cars in their national fleets.

Touted as less polluting, the share of diesel cars in Europe rose fast compared to petrol since the 1990s, and now comprise about half the fleet.

There are more than 100 million diesel cars in Europe today, twice as many as in the rest of the world together, said the study authors.

5,000 ‘Dieselgate’ deaths in Europe per year

Emissions from diesel cars rigged to appear eco-friendly may be responsible for 3,000 air pollution deaths per year in Europe alone, according to a study published on Monday.

The numbers are in line with previous assessments of deaths due to so-called Dieselscandal, which erupted when carmaker Volkswagen admitted in 2015 to cheating on vehicle emissions tests. Many other carmakers have since fallen under suspicion.

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Diesel engines emit less planet-warming carbon dioxide than petrol ones, but significantly more NOx.

Road transport, said the study authors, contributed about 40 percent of NOx emissions in the countries of the European Union plus Norway and Switzerland.

Composed of toxic nitric and nitrogen dioxide, NOx gases contribute to acid rain and sulfate smog.

Through long-term exposure, they can cause breathing problems, eye irritations, lung cancer, heart attacks, and chronic respiratory lung function.

“Emissions reductions will continue into the future until LDDVs with high on-road NOx emissions have been replaced,” said the study authors.

Earlier this month, tougher emissions tests came into force in Europe.

PwC reveals black and Asian workers paid 13% less

Black, Asian and minority-ethnic staff (BAME) who work at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in the UK earn almost 13 percent less than other employees, according to figures provided by the professional services firm.

The firm said in BAME workers were statistically paid less because more of them worked in administrative and junior roles, rather than senior roles.

PwC said it had published the data to help it speed up progress on the issue.

Current reporting on BAME pay isn’t required under government regulations.

PwC said it hoped publishing the data would help the firm to tackle ‘effectively’ challenges.

PwC chairman Kevin Ellis said: "The more transparent we are with our diversity data the more we will build ourselves accountable to achieving real change.

The firm has been voluntarily publishing its gender pay gap figures since 2014, a move which it said had helped ‘shine a spotlight’ on gender issues.

“We’re hoping that BAME pay reporting can do the same for tackling ethnicity challenges,” it said.

It said that its gender pay gap for 2017 was 13.7 percent, down from 15.2 percent in 2016.

The company has also said that its new BAME figures alongside its annual results for the year to the end of June.

The firm has said while revenue has continued to rise to £3.6 billion for the year, profits had slipped by one percent to £822 million.

PwC’s consulting, tax and assurance business division all saw revenue rises, with income from its deals business fall by one percent.

Ellis said it was a “solid performance, with steady growth and complex market”.

He said he remained optimistic about the market outlook despite continuing uncertainty over the UK’s exit from the EU.

South Korea puts policy priority on tackling low birthrate

The South Korean government will make concerted efforts to tackle the decreasing low birthrate trend in a bid to boost the growth potential of Asia’s fourth-largest economy amid concerns about aging.

“The low birthrate is a pressing task that all government agencies should urgently deal with and get feedback from teachers and parents,” the minister said while he will put the issue high on the government agenda to address the country’s growth potential.

The low birthrate has been one of the most urgent issues for decades in South Korea, coupled with an increasing aging population. Many are worried that low birth rates will drag down the workforce in Asia’s fourth-largest economy and drag down welfare costs, undermining the growth potential of the economy as a whole.

The South Korean government has announced a series of plans including child subsidies and expanded maternity leave to encourage parents to have more babies, but most of them seem to have fallen short of expectations.

Last year, an all-time low of 406,300 babies were delivered, with the fertility rate reaching a seven-year low of 1.17 and go to school, but faces the risk of stigma and violent reprisals.

About 440,000 children in the Kasai region could not complete their schooling last year, largely due to violence and insecurity, UNICEF said. It has launched a campaign to get 150,000 children back into school.

Another boy, 16-year-old Edouard, went to taking exams when the fighting reached his hometown. His school is in the among the 400 that UNICEF says have been attacked.

“There was the noise of gunfire. We had never experienced that in our lives. When we heard it for the first time, we were scared and we ran,” he told the agency. He said he lived in the forest with his family, surviving on leaves and edible roots.

With so many lives affected, the UN and other humanitarian organizations have been trying to gain a foothold in the remote and impoverished Kasai region and security concerns soared after the murder of two UN experts in March.

The biggest needs are water, food and medicine, particularly for children, Edoumou said. But funding is low. A $64.5 million UN request for support is not even halfway funded, he said.

The company published the new BAME data in May this year, as part of its commitment to report on its gender pay gap.

The figures since 2014, a move which it said had helped ‘shine a spotlight’ on gender issues.

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