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**John Robbins** 281-965-6390  
**Jun Gai** 281-498-4310

**Publisher:** Wea H. Lee  
**President:** Catherine Lee  
**Editor:** John Robbins

**Address:** 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072  
**E-mail:** News@scdaily.com

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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## Women left U.S. workforce last month, but in fewer numbers than a year ago



A Wendy's restaurant displays a "Now Hiring" sign in Tampa, Florida, U.S., June 1, 2021. REUTERS/Octavio Jones/File Photo

Oct 8 (Reuters) - The job market recovery for U.S. women faced a setback in September, much as it did about a year ago after many school districts switched to online learning. But the drop-off in the number of women working or looking for a job last month was much smaller than in 2020 as more schools reopened this year.

The data, included in the monthly U.S. employment report released by the Labor Department on Friday, shows that women continue to face a lumpier labor market recovery after being disproportionately affected by job losses during the coronavirus pandemic. It also raises a question over whether the reopening of schools, which likely contributed to this year's improvement from September 2020, is enough on its own to narrow a workforce participation gap between the sexes that widened during the pandemic.

About 350,000 women aged 20 and older left the workforce in September and August of this year, while 321,000 men in the same age group came on board.

That leaves the labor force for women aged 20 and older down by roughly 2 million from February of 2020, roughly twice the deficit for men in the same age bracket.

"Women face tremendous headwinds as they try to reenter the workforce post-pandemic," C. Nicole Mason, president and chief executive officer of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, said in a statement. "It will take time to see how women navigate what is hopefully a waning pandemic and what that means for their jobs and careers."

Still, the report was an improvement from last year, when the labor force for women aged 20 and up dropped by more than 1 million in August and September after many school districts reopened with virtual learning only, requiring many children to study from home.

This year, more women are returning to work as hiring resumes in some of the sectors they are overrepresented in and a larger number school districts reopen for in person instruction.

But some mothers are still navigating

hurdles that make it difficult for them to work, including challenges securing childcare amid a shortage of workers and temporary school closures in some districts with elevated COVID-19 infection rates.

The pace of hiring slowed further in September, when the U.S. economy added 194,000 jobs, following a gain of 366,000 jobs in August.

Employment in leisure and hospitality, an industry that is disproportionately staffed by women, rose by 74,000 in September. However, hiring at restaurants and bars was little changed for the second straight month.

The number of new U.S. coronavirus cases has been declining since mid-September, a shift that is expected to help the labor market heal more smoothly in the coming months.

## U.S., Mexico bid to reset ties during Blinken visit, forge new security accord

MEXICO CITY, Oct 8 (Reuters) - The United States and Mexico on Friday discussed a new joint security plan to help fight drug cartels as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Mexico's president on a visit aimed to patching up frayed ties.

The Biden administration is increasingly reliant on its southern neighbor to stem the flow of Latin American migrants heading to the United States.

Overhauling an earlier security plan, known as the Merida Initiative, is expected to take many months as the two sides work out how best to work together following a period of strained cooperation. The United States has channeled about \$3.3 billion since 2007 to help Mexico fight crime under the previous accord.

Blinken's visit is part of the Biden administration's first U.S.-Mexico High-Level Security Dialogue,

where the delegations sought to sketch out how to tackle everything from drug flows to the United States to the smuggling of U.S.-made guns into Mexico.

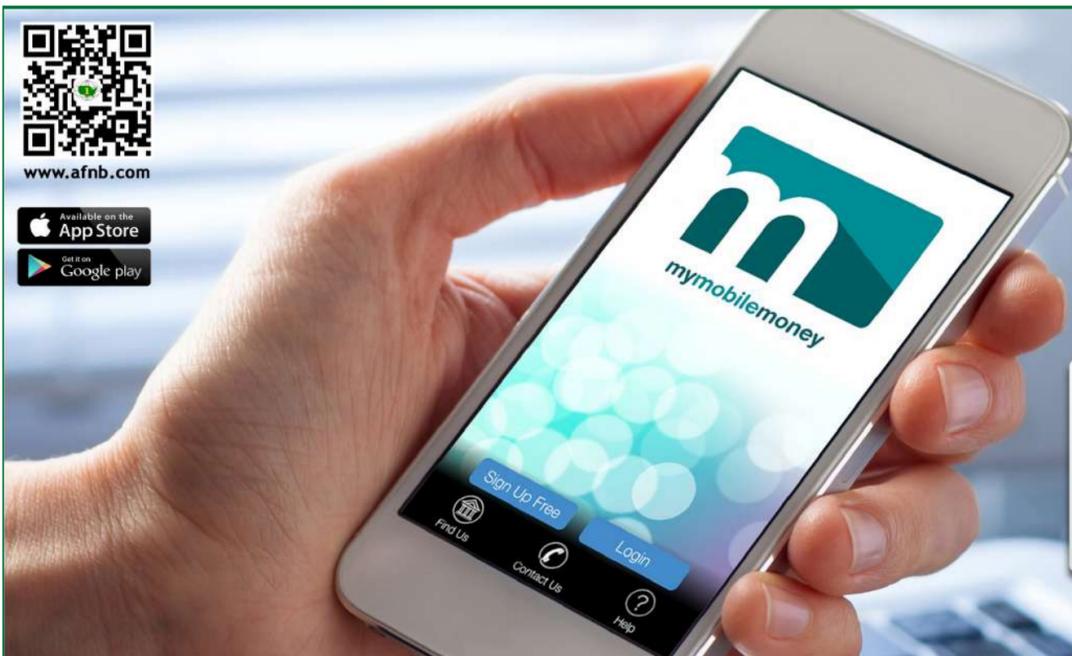
Report ad In a joint statement about the new accord, dubbed the Bicentennial Framework, the two nations pledged to work on the causes of violence and drug addiction, as well as monitor port smuggling of precursor chemicals for fentanyl and other drugs fuelling a record number of overdose deaths on U.S. soil.

"After 13 years of the Merida Initiative, it's time for a comprehensive new approach to our security cooperation, one that will see us as equal partners in defining our shared priorities," Blinken said.

Earlier, Lopez Obrador took Blinken on a tour of the murals at the National Palace before a working breakfast.



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# Two Indian drugmakers to end trials of generic Merck pill for moderate COVID-19

BENGALURU, Oct 8 (Reuters) - Two Indian drugmakers have requested permission to end late-stage trials of their generic versions of Merck & Co's (MRK.N) promising experimental oral antiviral drug molnupiravir to treat moderate COVID-19, a week after Merck said its own trial had succeeded for mild-to-moderate patients.

Merck earlier this year suspended its own development of molnupiravir as a treatment for hospitalized COVID-19 patients since many of them have reached a phase of the disease that is too late for an antiviral drug to provide much help.

The Indian companies - Aurobindo Pharma Ltd (ARBN.NS) and MSN Laboratories - did not exclude hospitalized patients in designing their moderate COVID-19 trials, according to study documents, although it was not known if the trials ultimately included people in the hospital.

Merck spokesperson Melissa Moody said Merck and the Indian companies had defined "moderate" disease differently. Merck's trials are based on U.S. Food and Drug Administration definitions, which for moderate COVID-19 describe blood oxygen levels as no lower than 93%. It defines blood oxygen levels for severe COVID-19 as 93% or lower.

The trials in India define moderate COVID-19 blood oxygen levels as 90% to 93%, according to the trial documents for the two companies.

Aurobindo and MSN are continuing to conduct studies of molnupiravir in patients with mild COVID-19 who have not been hospitalized, according to trial documents and the website of the Indian drug regulator's internal expert committee.

Merck and partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics last week said molnupiravir had nearly halved the risk of hospitalization or death in at-risk non-hospitalized patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19, results hailed by experts as potentially a major advance in fight against the illness. The Indian drug regulator's committee also disclosed on its website that Aurobindo and MSN had presented interim clinical trial data for moderate COVID-19 patients and asked to end the trials.

A source with the Drug Controller General of India said the pill has not shown "significant efficacy" against moderate COVID-19, though it was having success against mild cases.



An experimental COVID-19 treatment pill called molnupiravir being developed by Merck & Co Inc and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics LP, is seen in this undated handout photo released by Merck & Co Inc and obtained by Reuters May 17, 2021. Merck & Co Inc/Handout via REUTERS

## INDIA TRIALS

Merck, whose shares closed down 1.6% at \$80.63, has entered into voluntary licensing agreements with at least eight Indian drugmakers for molnupiravir, with an aim to turn the South Asian nation into a manufacturing hub for the drug to supply low- and middle-income nations. [read more](#)

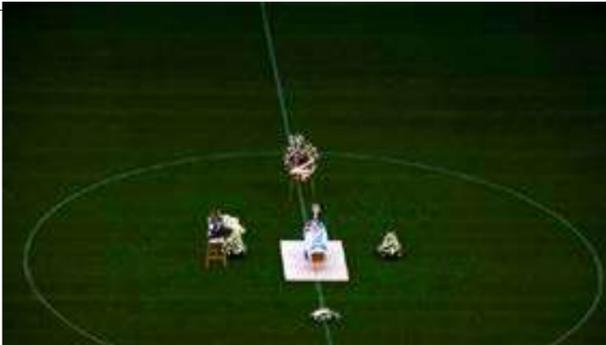
Five of the eight Indian companies - Dr Reddy's Laboratories (REDY.NS), Cipla (CIPL.NS), Sun Pharma (SUN.NS), Torrent Pharmaceuticals (TORP.NS) and Emcure Pharmaceuticals - are conducting a joint trial for the antiviral drug only in mild COVID-19 patients in an outpatient setting.

An Aurobindo spokesperson did not comment on the effectiveness of the drug in its trial. The spokesperson said the company had "faced challenges in patient recruitment at this juncture" for its trial in moderate COVID-19 patients, adding "we are evaluating the further course of action."

Aurobindo started the planned 100-patient trial of its generic version of the Merck pill against moderate COVID-19 in August, and is also running a trial that hopes to include 1,200 patients testing the pill against mild disease.

MSN did not respond to a request for comment.

## Editor's Choice



The coffin of late Bernard Tapie, French businessman and former Olympique de Marseille chairman, draped with the Olympique de Marseille flag and Champions League Cup is seen on the pitch during a ceremony at the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, France. REUTERS/Eric Gaillard



A Palestinian uses a sling as demonstrators clash with Israeli forces during a protest against Israeli settlements, in Beita, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. REUTERS/Mohamad Torokman



Four-year-old Elliana Barresi, the daughter of late New York City Fire Department (FDNY) officer Carmine J. Barresi, holds a flower at the annual FDNY memorial service for members who died in 2021, at the Fireman's Memorial on Manhattan's upper west side in New York City. REUTERS/Mike Segar



A Spanish Civil Guard boat passes by as smoke rises in the background following the eruption of a volcano, as seen from Tazacorte port, Canary Island of La Palma, Spain. REUTERS/Juan Medina



Joint winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, Italian scientist Giorgio Parisi makes a toast with colleagues in Rome after the announcement. Parisi, who dialled into the media briefing announcing the winners, was asked for his message to world leaders due to meet for U.N. climate change talks in Scotland. REUTERS/Remo Casilli



"I think it is very urgent that we take real and very strong decisions and we move at a very strong pace," said the 73-year-old Nobel laureate, who works at Sapienza University of Rome. REUTERS/Remo Casilli

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Covid-19 Response Continues To Snarl The World Economy

Gates Foundation Warns About Future Pandemic Threats



Melinda and Bill Gates

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, whose advice guided much of the global response to the Covid pandemic, has seemingly washed its hands of one virus while warning the world isn't prepared to deal with the next big pandemic.

have admitted they do not prevent Covid-19 transmission and might require additional booster shots. But the report mostly treated Covid-19 as a thing of the past, all but declaring victory over the virus and calling attention to the need to step up long-term infrastructure investments so as to be prepared for the next pandemic.



Placing its well-known vaccine evangelism front and center, the foundation's report credited extensive vaccine infrastructure (much of which it has helped fund over the preceding decades) for the world's success in fighting the virus, even as the companies behind the headline-grabbing mRNA formulas

Ironically, the foundation warned readers against such efforts to move on from the recovery effort, writing of the "very real risk that high-income countries and communities will begin to treat Covid-19 as another epidemic of poverty: Not our problem." However, high-income countries - specifically the English-speaking Five Eyes nations - have shown no sign of growing weary of the social controls Covid-19 has allowed them to introduce, indicating the virus (or at least fear of it) may hang

around for a good while yet. (Courtesy rt.com) Related

Vaccine Politics

The West Will Hoard 1.2bn Doses Of Spare Vaccines By Year's End, Analysis Says, While Pressure Mounts To Share With Poor Countries And Outshine China

The supply of Covid-19 vaccines that rich Western countries have secured for themselves is so big that it can cover their possible needs by a large margin. So it's time to share some with the poor and curb China's diplomacy. This appears to be the message coming on Sunday from leading Western media outlets, which report on an analysis of Covid-19 vaccine production capacities and supply contracts released by the London-based analytics firm Airfinity.



Empty vials of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine, donated to Kenya by the UK. (Photo©REUTERS)

/ Baz Ratner )

Rich nations have some 500 million doses that they can safely redistribute today. The number will increase to 1.2 billion by the end of the year and to 2.2 billion by the middle of 2022, the company estimated. That is a conservative evaluation based on the assumption that the US, the UK and the EU vaccinate 80% of their own populations, including children over 12, and launch booster shot programs.

The notion that rich countries have to choose between protecting their own people from Covid-19 and helping out nations that don't have the money and political clout to secure vaccine supplies is now "a false dichotomy," Airfinity chief Rasmus Bech Hansen told Bloomberg. "You can do both."

The looming "glut of vaccines," as The Economist described it, is a product of rapidly increasing production capacities. This year, the global production is expected to reach 12 billion doses, with the same amount produced next year by June. Rich nations can feel safe about their needs being met, Airfinity said.

So the moment has come for the West to show moral leadership and vaccinate the world, former British prime minister Gordon Brown wrote in The Mirror.



"It's time to act to end what has become a moral outrage and we must act now," he said, directing his call on the leaders of the US, the UK, Germany and France. "Only Biden, Johnson, Merkel and Macron can bridge the growing divide between the world's vaccine rich and vaccine poor."

"These leaders are holding all the cards. They have the monopoly on vaccine orders." US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister

Boris Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron will discuss vaccine redistribution with leaders of other G7 nations at a meeting of the group, which may happen as soon as September 20, according to The Economist. Washington is expected to try and lead a Western effort "in sorting out the global vaccine supply." America's "early vaccine nationalism allowed China to project itself as a benevolent global leader by sending an abundance of vaccines overseas," the British magazine remarked. "A geopolitical win for America would be especially useful after the debacle in Afghanistan." Airfinity estimates that the global supply of redistributed vaccines will be dominated by Western-made shots, with Pfizer/BioNTech's comprising about 45% of the stockpile and Moderna's taking up some 25%. The Economist assessed that it was "fairly clear" that Western "mRNA vaccines are widely seen as the most effective and desirable around the world, whereas Chinese vaccines are seen as an inferior product that works less well."

"By supporting American mRNA manufacturing, the government can also help these vaccines win in the competitive market to come."

The glaring inequality in vaccine distribution is partially to blame for the poor performance of COVAX, a UN-backed donations-driven vaccine-sharing initiative. It has managed to buy and ship only 230 million doses this year, compared to its target of 1.3 billion delivered by the end of 2021.

Billionaire Bill Gates, who is a leading driving force behind COVAX, is a vocal opponent of opening up vaccine patents, a move that its advocates argue would have greatly benefited the poorer nations by making the jobs cheaper and more readily available. Gates' position is shared by Merkel and Macron. Biden's June promise to consider patent waivers has so far produced no concrete results.



Vaccine manufacturers and people like Gates, who support Intellectual Property (IP) protections for inoculations, claim factors such as the shortage of proper production capacities in the developing world and logistical bottlenecks are holding back the global vaccination effort. Lifting patent protections won't fix that and may make the rollout slower, not faster, they argued. Meanwhile, as of April, nine individuals linked to Big Pharma became billionaires on the back of the vaccine rollouts while eight others, who

were already above the cap, saw their wealth grow significantly. (Courtesy rt.com)

Vaccine Producers Could Have Funded Jobs For All Of Africa, Instead Shareholder Payouts And Sluggish 'Charity' Efforts Are The Priority.

The three largest producers of Covid-19 vaccines could have funded the entire cost of vaccinating Africa with the money they paid stockholders this year - and vaccine-sharing charity COVAX isn't bridging the gap, analysis shows. Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca, the three top producers of Covid-19 vaccines, could fund the vaccination of the entire continent of Africa, some 1.3 billion people, vaccine advocacy group the People's Vaccine Alliance revealed on Thursday.

Or rather, they could have funded all those jobs if they hadn't spent that money to pay out \$26 billion in stock buybacks and dividends to their shareholders. The vaccines have largely been sold to wealthy countries, netting Pfizer/BioNTech and fellow mRNA vaccine producer Moderna a whopping \$33.5 billion, and many of the recipient countries bought so many extra shots that their citizens are - in the case of Canada, at least - expected to be covered as many as five or more times over.



AstraZeneca vaccines offloaded in Ghana. (Photo© Reuters / Francis Kokoroko)

Many of the frontrunner companies promised to pick up the cost of vaccinating less wealthy nations in the early days of the vaccine research, a promise which helped secure funding from governments and charitable initiatives. However, touting their unusually charitable behavior in the early days of vaccine purchasing and development has largely evaporated now that the moneyed West has its supplies locked down and third world countries are finally able to get in line for theirs. Pfizer and its colleagues are starting to talk about upping their prices again - "once we get beyond the pandemic environment," in the words of chairman Albert Bourla.

Given that infection and death rates for Covid-19 in Africa never reached the level of a "global disaster," early on in the epidemic, it seems they're plotting to gouge the entire continent for a medicine it doesn't need nearly as badly as other countries, except in the eyes of the WHO. Given the continent's familiarity with less expensive drugs like chloroquine - a familiar and comparatively safe remedy for malaria - many doctors had already been using that off-patent formulation rather than twiddling their thumbs and watching patients die for months awaiting the arrival of the much-lauded Western miracle vaccine. (Courtesy rt.com)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

How Do We Prevent Future Pandemics?



There are 1.7 million 'undiscovered' viruses in mammals and birds, 827,000 of which could infect humans. (Image: Unsplash/Mika Baumeister)

KEY POINTS

- Human activity is to blame for COVID-19, say 22 international experts. But we can prevent future pandemics by better protecting Earth's natural resources. There are 1.7 million 'undiscovered' viruses in mammals and birds, 827,000 of which could infect humans. But it's not too late to change course and rebuild our defences. Experts say switching our efforts to prevention would reduce the threat.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The good news: we can prevent future pandemics. But only if we take steps to protect the environment and restore its natural defences, according to an international group of 22 leading scientists.

"There is no great mystery about the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic - or of any modern pandemic," said Dr Peter Daszak, chair of the panel which was convened by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

COVID-19 is the sixth global health crisis since the flu pandemic of 1918 and "its emergence has been entirely driven by human activities," the report says, adding

that there are 1.7 million "undiscovered" viruses in mammals and birds - up to 827,000 of which could infect people.

"The same human activities that drive climate change and biodiversity loss also drive pandemic risk through their impacts on our environment. Changes in the way we use land, unsustainable trade, production and consumption disrupt nature and increase contact between wildlife, livestock, pathogens and people." This contact allows viruses to cross over between species and spread more rapidly around the world.



This is how pandemics start and spread - and their frequency is increasing, say scientists. (Image: IPBES)

Prevention is better than reaction

The group says that, rather than tackling pandemic outbreaks after they occur, we should be acting now to prevent them through greater conservation efforts and ending the overexploitation of Earth's resources.

"The overwhelming scientific evidence points to a very positive conclusion," said Daszak. "We have the increasing ability to prevent pandemics - but the way we are tackling them right now largely ignores that ability."

Daszak says the fact that human activity has brought about such a rapid change in the natural environment proves we also have the ability to make change in the right direction - but "our approach has effectively stagnated".

Global action needed

Forecasting that the global cost of the COVID-19 pandemic may already be as high as \$16 trillion, the IPBES report calls for the creation of a high-level intergovernmental council on pandemic prevention to coordinate a global action to prevent future outbreaks. If no action is taken, the report says future pandemics will happen more often, spread faster and kill more people than COVID-19. The panel says the economic cost of the current pandemic is 100 times the estimated cost of preventing it by protecting nature.

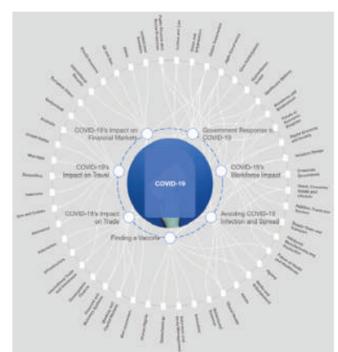
They call for "changes to reduce the types of consumption, globalized agricultural expansion and trade that have led to pandemics. This could include taxes or levies on meat consumption, livestock production and other forms of high pandemic-risk activities," the report says.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) forecasts that by 2030

global meat consumption per head will reach 45.3 kg, almost double the level in the mid-1960s. Although COVID-19 lockdowns have reduced air pollution, a recent study warned that increased poverty caused by the pandemic could lead to more environmental damage as people return to activities like wildlife poaching and clearing forests for crops to survive.

COVID-19 -

Connected To The World



COVID-19 threatens to become one of the most difficult tests faced by humanity in modern history. As the pandemic has spread it has taken lives, stirred anxiety and political drama, overwhelmed health systems, and triggered potentially lasting geopolitical change. The International Monetary Fund says the global economy faces a critical juncture, and Oxfam International has warned that half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of the crisis. Around the world, desperate efforts are underway to contain what has become a profoundly disruptive outbreak.

The World Economic Forum's recent report, Vision Towards a Responsible Future of Consumption, called on consumer industries to encourage sustainable consumption, reducing environmental impacts and developing a circular economy, reusing resources to reduce waste. They call for "changes to reduce the types of consumption, globalized agricultural expansion and trade that have led to pandemics. This could include

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