



FEDERAL BUDGET PROMISES TO SUPPORT CHILD CARE, BUSINESS & JOB GROWTH. (TWITTER/ LIBERAL PARTY) | DETAILS ON PAGE 7

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

PHARMACIES ACROSS ONTARIO, ALBERTA & MANITOBA TO OFFER ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE TO AGED 40+

Starting Tuesday, April 20, 2021, Ontario will offer the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to individuals aged 40 and over at pharmacy and primary care settings across the province. By extending vaccination eligibility for the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine at pharmacies and primary care settings to individuals aged 40 and over, Ontario will be able to offer the protection of the vaccine to more Ontarians earlier than anticipated. With the supply of AstraZeneca available at this time, the expansion of eligibility will also significantly increase access to vaccines in hot spot communities. The health and safety of Ontarians is always our top priority, and for that reason, only COVID-19 vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective are approved for use in Ontario. All COVID-19 vaccines available in Ontario have been shown to prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death. Adverse reactions are extremely rare. We strongly recommend that everyone book their appointment as soon as they are eligible. Ontario has administered over 3.86 million doses of the vaccine to Ontarians to date, and all of our partners and health care workers are continuing to work hard to administer doses as quickly as possible to Ontarians.

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- *Canada has approved four vaccine candidates till now, namely Pfizer- BioNtech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India's CoviShield, and finally Johnson & Johnson vaccine.*
- *Federal govt. authorizes provinces to use AstraZeneca vaccine in population over 18 years old.*
- *Pharmacies across Ontario, Alberta & Manitoba to offer AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine to aged 40+.*
- *13.4 million vaccines have been delivered in Canada to date.*
- *Canada to receive 48-50 million vaccine doses by June end.*
- *Businesses in Peel, Toronto to close for 10 days after 5 or more Covid-19 positive cases reported in the past two weeks.*
- *After Quebec's woman, Alberta marks 2nd rare case of AstraZeneca-linked-blot clot.*
- *EMA finds possible link to very rare cases of unusual blood clots with low blood platelets; but says benefits outweigh risks.*

"I AM WILLING WAITING FOR MY TURN TO GET
ASTRAZENECA VACCINE AT PHARMACY"
- PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU



Y MEDIA GROUP WISHES HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO COUPLES, SENDS WARMEST BLESSINGS TO DAUGHTERS



BRAMPTON'S MAYOR PATRICK BROWN AND HIS WIFE GENEVIEVE GUALTIERI BLESSED WITH A BABY GIRL.



BRAMPTON CITY COUNCILLOR FOR WARDS 9 & 10, HARKIRAT SINGH AND HIS WIFE WELCOME A BABY GIRL.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG RACKET BASED IN CANADA, INDIA, US DISMANTLED

Investigators with the York Regional Police Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau, in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Peel Regional Police, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, dismantled a large-scale international drug trafficking network that extended to Western Canada, the United States and India.

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DEREK CHAUVIN, FOUND GUILTY OF SECOND-DEGREE MURDER, THIRD-DEGREE MURDER

Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin has been found guilty on all charges in the murder trial of African-American George Floyd by a jury in the Hennepin County court. The 12 jurors found Chauvin guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in Floyd's death in May 2020, CNN reported.



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8 MASSACRED INCLUDING 4 SIKHS WHILE AT WORK IN US SHOOTING

NEW YORK, (IANS) Four Sikhs were massacred at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis when a former employee stormed the complex in the latest of series of mass shootings in the US, according to the Sikh Coalition. "We are sad to confirm that at least four of those killed in Thursday night's attacks are members of the Indianapolis Sikh community," the Coalition said on Friday.

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IS SIDHU IN HUNT OF NEW POLITICAL SPACE IN PUNJAB?

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu is now trying to carve his own political space after being kept waiting for his return to the state Cabinet. His meeting with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has not yielded any result so far, while the Congress high command, which was aggressive on Sidhu's issue, has also turned complacent, sources said.



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CLASHES BETWEEN BANNED TLP, POLICE LEAVE 'FEW' DEAD IN LAHORE

RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL PARTIES MISUSED ISLAM TO DAMAGE PAKISTAN: PM IMRAN

LAHORE, (IANS) Clashes erupted between members of the banned Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and police at Multan road in Lahore, leaving "a few" group supporters killed and more than 100 injured, sources said. Sources said that 11 police officers were injured, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police and others held hostage by the rioters. A few TLP members were reportedly killed at the Markaz, but only two deaths have been confirmed so far.



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BRITISH PM JOHNSON CANCELS VISIT TO INDIA, WILL HOLD VIRTUAL MEET

NEW DELHI/LONDON, (IANS) British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has cancelled his trip to New Delhi which was scheduled for next week, in view of the severity of the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic in India. An official statement of the ministry of external affairs said, "In view of the prevailing Covid situation, it has been decided by mutual agreement that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will not visit India next week."



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IG KUNWAR VIJAY PRATAP RESIGNATION ACCEPTED, SAYS WILL CARRY ON THE FIGHT

SUKHBIR BADAL TO SUE 2015 POLICE FIRING CASE PROBE CHIEF

IG Kunwar Vijay Pratap, who was heading the special investigation team probing the 2015 Kotkapura and Behal Kalan police firing case resigned earlier and his resignation was officially accepted by Punjab CM. The 1998-batch officer of the Punjab cadre had tendered his resignation on April 11, two days after the Punjab and Haryana high court had quashed the probe by the SIT into the Kotkapura firing incident.



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0.99% total customer cash purchase incentive is valid on any new 2020 Civic Sedan Model when registered and delivered between April 1, 2021 and April 30, 2021. Cash incentive is available for Honda retail customers except who lease or finance through Honda Financial Services (HFS) at a subvented rate of interest offered by Honda as part of a low rate interest program. All advertised lease and finance rates are special rates. Customer cash purchase incentive will be deducted from the negotiated price after taxes. Limited time finance and lease offers available through HFS to qualified retail customers on approved credit. [∞]Made with domestic and imported parts. [†]Finance example of 2021 Civic Sedan LX CVT/2021 CR-V LX 2WD: Price is \$24,527.50/\$31,551.50. \$24,527.50 financed at 0.99% APR equals \$96.85/\$205.29 per week for 60/36 months. Honda Bonus of \$750 is included in the payment example. 250/195 payments required. \$0 down payment required. Cost of borrowing is \$811.90/\$433.76 for a total obligation of \$25,139.40/\$22,025.24. ^ALease example of 2021 Civic Sedan LX CVT/2021 CR-V LX 2WD: 0.99% lease APR for 60/36 months. Weekly payment is \$81.30/\$99.47. Honda Bonus of \$750 is included in the payment example. 250/195 payments required. Cost of borrowing is \$814.00/\$277.12. Total lease obligation is \$15,961.40/\$15,454.90. \$0 down payment. Lien registration fee, lien registering agent fee and first weekly payment due at lease inception. 20,000 kilometre per year allowance; charge of \$0.12/km for excess kilometres. Finance and Lease payments include freight & PDI, the & environmental fee (\$21), A/C charge (\$100), and ORVIC fee (\$10). [∞]All Honda Bonuses will be deducted from the negotiated vehicle price after taxes. For all offers, license, insurance, PPSA, other taxes (including HST) and excise wear and tear are extra. Taxes payable on full amount of purchase price. Dealer may sell/lease for less. Dealer trade may be necessary. Offers valid between April 1, 2021 and April 30, 2021. Offers and prices subject to change without notice. See OpenRoad Honda for full details.

Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX-5 STATES ELECTION, INDIA

Rahul Gandhi suspends all his political rallies in Bengal



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Amid massive Covid surge in the country, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has suspended all his political rallies in West Bengal and asked other political parties to think about the consequences of holding big rallies in the middle of the raging pandemic. "In view of the Covid situation, I am suspending all my public rallies in West Bengal. I would advise all political leaders to think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet. In West Bengal, three phases of elections are still left to be held, but due to the Covid surge, there has been a demand to hold rest of the elections in a single phase.

India reported staggering 2,61,500 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day spike ever, pushing the country's overall Covid tally to 1,47,88,109, according to the Health Ministry data released on Sunday. This is the fourth consecutive day that the country has registered over 2 lakh Covid cases. India recorded 2,34,92 cases were reported on Saturday, 2,00,739 and 2,17,353 cases on Thursday and Friday respectively. Meanwhile, as many as 1,501 people died of Covid in the last 24 hours, taking the country's death toll to 1,77,150 so far. The daily active cases tally rose to 18,01316.

Huge turnout in largely peaceful fifth phase polling in Bengal



KOLKATA, (IANS) Though there were some stray incidents but the state recorded huge polling in the fifth phase of the election. The final figures are yet to come but the voters' turnout recorded by the commission shows that there was 78.36 percent polling till 5 p.m. on Saturday evening. According to the data released by the commission, Jalpaiguri registered the highest voting percentage of 81.73 percent followed by East Burdwan with 81.72 percent. Nadia witnessed 81.57 percent voting while North 24 Parganas and Darjeeling had 74.83 and 74.32 percent voting respectively. Kalimpong recorded the lowest turnout with 69.56 percent. There were altogether 319 candidates from different

political parties in the fifth phase of polls that was conducted in 45 constituencies including 7 in Jalpaiguri, 5 in Darjeeling, 1 in Kalimpong, 8 in Nadia, 16 in North 24 Parganas and 8 in East Burdwan. Though overall the voting was peaceful all over the state, there were some sporadic incidents including the arrest of an Independent candidate of Chakdah AC in Nadia district for having a firearm in his possession. "Koushik Bhowmick, the candidate was found going around a polling booth at Baliadanga, Daspara area with a country made gun tucked in his trousers. He dropped the firearm when the central forces intercepted him after the local people raised a hue and cry," CEO Ariz Aftab told the media after the election)

Excess money, little education highlights of candidates in 6th phase of Bengal polls

KOLKATA, (IANS) Lack of education and excess money are the highlights of the 306 candidates contesting the sixth phase of Assembly elections in West Bengal scheduled on April 22. On the one hand, 66 of the 306 candidates contesting the polls are crorepatris, only 94 of them have been able to clear the 10th standard. In a report published by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) - a social organisation that works in the area of electoral and political reforms - it has been mentioned that 66, which is 22 per cent of the 306 candidates contesting in the sixth phase are crorepatris. Twenty-eight (65 per cent) of the 43 Trinamool Congress candidates have more than Rs 1 crore assets followed by the BJP in which 19 (44 per cent) of the 43 candidates are crorepatris. If the excess of money is one side of the story of the candidates contesting in the sixth phase, then lack of education is the other side of the

story. Of the 306 candidates, 94 have been able cross the Class X standard. According to the ADR report, 37 candidates have passed Class X, 38 of them have passed Class VIII, 11 of them have passed Class V, 7 are literate and one is illiterate. Apart from that, there are 20 candidates who are graduates and 55 of them are post graduates. The candidates, according to the analysis, also have a healthy criminal background. The analysis of the criminal records show that BJP has the highest number of candidates with criminal records. Of the 43 candidates, 25 (58 per cent) have criminal records of whom 20 have been charged with serious offences. The BJP is closely followed by Trinamool where 24 (56 per cent) of the 43 candidates have criminal records of whom 20 are charged with serious crimes. In addition to this, 14 of the 23 CPI(M) candidates have criminal backgrounds. There are also 9 Independent candidates with criminal records.

DEREK CHAUVIN, FOUND GUILTY OF SECOND-DEGREE MURDER, THIRD-DEGREE MURDER



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It further reported that the maximum sentence for second-degree unintentional murder is imprisonment of not more than 40 years. The maximum sentence for third-degree murder is imprisonment of not more than 25 years. The maximum sentence for second-degree manslaughter is 10 years and/or USD 20,000. Chauvin was handcuffed in the courtroom and taken into custody by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. Judge Peter Cahill said, "eight weeks from now we will have

sentencing." Cahill thanked the jurors for what he called "heavy duty" service in the case. The former officer was charged with killing Floyd by kneeling on his neck for more than nine minutes, which was captured on video footage in May 2020 and triggered nationwide demonstrations for racial justice. Attorney Ben Crump and Floyd's family released a statement following the conviction of Chauvin, saying, "today's verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world," CNN reported. (ANI)

SURGE CONTINUE AMID CURFEW, DELHI GOVT KNOCKS ON CENTRE'S DOOR

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Amid the weekend curfew imposed in the national capital since 10 p.m. on Friday, in addition to the night curfew, as an attempt to break the chain of coronavirus, Delhi continued to see a surge in daily Covid-19 cases. Delhi registered 25, 462 new cases and 161 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to the health bulletin issued on Sunday. Daily positivity rate was 29.74 per cent, while the active cases in the city stand at 74,941, of which 34,938 are in home isolation. Delhi's cumulative death toll reached to 12,121 and the cumulative fatality rate was reported at 1.42 per cent. Meanwhile, 20,159 patients recovered till Sunday night taking the total recovery from Covid-19 so far in the capital to 7,66,398. Amid continuing surge and the number of beds running out while supplies of oxygen and other medical facilities dipped, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, terming the situation at a critical stage, dialled Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking help. Later, he wrote to Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, requesting uninterrupted supply of oxygen on a daily basis to Delhi. "I would request you to kindly look into the matter personally and give appropriate instructions to all concerned and ensure uninterrupted supply of 700MT of oxygen to Delhi for effectively managing Covid-19 situation," he said.

INDIA'S 2ND COVID WAVE MORE INFECTIOUS, LOWER FATALITY

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in India is different from the first one in September 2020 as the rate of increase in new cases is significantly higher. The Lancet Covid-19 Commission India Task Force said in a report that the increase from 10,000 to 80,000 new cases per day from February to April took place in less than 40 days. Last September, this journey took 83 days. The second differentiator is that many more of the cases testing positive are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic, resulting in relatively low rates of hospitalisation and mortality. The report said it is not entirely clear if the higher proportion of asymptomatic cases are entirely due to better contact tracing (more family members, for example, being tested). The overall Case Fatality Ratio (CFR) since the beginning of pandemic in March 2020 has been reported to be around 1.3 per cent, while the CFR among patients who have contracted the virus since the starting of 2021 is far less at 0.87 per cent. Provisionally, it appears that CFR appears to be lower in the second wave. Yet, India is reporting 664 deaths per day across the country. Fatality numbers lag infection rates, and are likely to rise as infections surge, the report said. Preliminary analysis indicates that while the pandemic has spread, the geographic contours of the second wave closely mirror those of the first wave, though with a deeper penetration into tier 2, tier 3 cities. Over the past year, there are 215 districts that have been among the top 10 per cent in terms of case infections at one point in time. But nine districts (Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Nashik, New Delhi, North 24 Parganas, Pune, Thane, and Solapur), have been part of the top 10 per cent throughout the year. The second wave has also been more geographically clustered so far. The number of districts comprising the top 50 per cent has dropped from over 40 at the time of the last peak, to less than 20 currently, indicating a much more concentrated pandemic. In fact during the first surge over August and September 2020, the number of districts for the top 75 per cent of cases was 60-100, while it has been around 20-40 districts during this wave, the report said.

ISRAEL LIFTS MANDATORY OUTDOOR MASK-WEARING, REOPENS SCHOOLS

Israel on Sunday lifted the requirement to wear masks outside and fully reopened its education system, as the number of coronavirus cases continues to drop in the country. All students, from kindergarten to the 12th grade, returned to schools, the education ministry said in a statement. The "capsules," learning in small groups, were cancelled, the ministry said, Xinhua news agency reported. The students and teachers still have to wear masks in class. The mandatory mask-wearing in public spaces was cancelled in the wake of a low number of diagnosed cases, the health ministry said in a statement. "The masks are intended to protect us from the coronavirus. After professionals decided this was no longer required in open spaces, I decided to enable taking them off," Health Minister Yuli Edelstein said in the statement. Israelis still have to wear masks in indoor spaces, such as supermarkets. Israel launched a national vaccination campaign in December, 2020. Over 53 per cent of the country's 9.3 million citizens have received both shots of the Pfizer vaccine. As of Sunday, Israel has recorded a total of 836,926 cases and 6,334 death since the beginning of the pandemic in February 2020, according to official figures.

PAK TO BEGIN INOCULATION FOR 50-59 AGE GROUP FROM APRIL 21

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Pakistan's National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has announced its decision to start the vaccination of people in the 50-59 age group against Covid-19 from April 21, it was reported on Sunday. Taking to Twitter on Saturday, Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, said: "Decision taken in today's NCOC meeting to start vaccination of people in the age group of 50 to 59 from Wednesday the 21st of April. "Would once again encourage everyone to register for the vaccination."

BRITISH PM JOHNSON CANCELS VISIT TO INDIA, WILL HOLD VIRTUAL MEET

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However, the two sides will be holding a virtual meeting in the coming days to launch plans for a transformed India-U.K. relationship. "Both leaders attach the highest importance to taking the India-U.K. partnership to its fullest potential and propose to remain in close touch in this regard and look forward to an in-person meeting later in the year," the ministry said. The UK is eyeing a new bilateral trade deal with India, following its exit from the European Union. India is the second-largest investor in the UK, after the US. Post-Brexit, the UK is focused on the Indo-Pacific region for its economy and security.



BRAMPTON'S MAYOR PATRICK BROWN RECEIVES ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE.

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

CMA CALLS FOR EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES AS PANDEMIC SURPASSES CRITICAL POINT

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is issuing an urgent call for unprecedented measures to address the state of the crisis unfolding in several provinces. This includes marshalling national resources where needed, applying restrictive public health measures, and prioritizing national collaboration to save the most lives. “As the third wave of the pandemic wreaks havoc on the healthcare and public health systems, healthcare providers, and patients, we are at a critical juncture where a truly national approach to combatting COVID-19 will make the difference between more or fewer lives saved,” said Dr. Ann Collins, president of the CMA. “This country must come together to help support provinces most severely impacted.” The CMA is calling for province-to-province collaboration and national leadership to address the scale and severity of the pandemic. Specifically, the CMA is recommending the deployment of resources where they are most needed to save the most lives. This means sharing healthcare resources across provincial and territorial borders to help jurisdictions that are currently at crisis levels with ICUs and where healthcare capacity is overwhelmed. Any measures taken now will take time to have an impact given the lag from exposure to disease – we must act now. “We act as one country when a crisis hits with wildfires, floods and other tragedies. This pandemic has reached a new level that requires a national response,” added Dr. Collins. “We must do everything needed to avoid making unbearable choices as to who lives if resources are not available.” The CMA is also calling on the federal



government to consider a re-prioritization of its vaccine distribution strategy to focus on areas of urgent need as opposed to the per-capita approach adopted to date. In addition, with current programs deemed inadequate in terms of allowing workers to stay at home, an enhanced form of paid sick leave is urgently required. Better communication and supports are necessary for people in Canada to adhere to public health measures and minimize risks. “These are strong measures, but they are absolutely needed,” said Dr. Collins. “We are one country, and it’s time we started acting like one by deploying resources where they are most needed. If we can’t achieve this through voluntary cooperation, then more and stronger measures might be needed.” Further restrictions must also be considered in provinces/territories that are not experiencing the rate of transmission witnessed in Ontario and Quebec. Provinces with lower COVID-19 transmission rates must preserve their status in order to support jurisdictions in dire circumstances – circumstances that all provinces must ensure are avoided. Emergency measures are required to ensure provinces grappling with pandemic management have the critical resources they need to preserve life. The CMA urges political leaders to come together as a nation to address this crisis. There are difficult decisions to make in balancing the pandemic response goals of minimizing serious COVID-19 illness and death while also minimizing the adverse societal impacts; we are at a critical juncture in this response. Physicians and all healthcare workers are pleading for this unprecedented level of response as the crisis takes hold in our hospitals and in our communities.

Ontario extends stay-at-home order & emergency order for 2 more weeks, introduces new COVID-19 restrictions



TORONTO — The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, is strengthening enforcement of the province’s Stay-at-Home order while imposing new travel restrictions and further strengthening public health measures. These urgent actions are targeted at stopping the rapid growth in COVID-19 case rates and relieving mounting pressures on the province’s health care system. Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health. “As the latest modelling confirms, without taking immediate and decisive action COVID-19 cases will spiral out of control and our hospitals will be overwhelmed,” said Premier Ford. “That’s why we are making difficult, but necessary decisions to reduce mobility and keep people in the safety of their own homes. We need to contain the spread of this deadly virus while getting vaccines in as many arms as quickly as possible.” To increase public compliance with the Stay-at-Home order and stop the spread of COVID-19, amendments to an emergency order (O.Reg 8/21 Enforcement of COVID-19 Measures) have been made that will provide police officers and other provincial offences officers enhanced authority to support the enforcement of Ontario’s Stay-at-Home order. Effective Saturday, April 17, 2021, at 12:01 a.m., police officers and other provincial offences officers will have the authority to require any individual to provide their home address and purpose for not being at their residence. In addition, police officers, special constables and First Nation Constables will have the authority to stop vehicles to inquire about an individual’s reasons for leaving their home. This additional enforcement tool will only be in effect during the Stay-at-Home order and exclusively to enforce the Stay-at-Home order. “With our hospital system under significant pressure and the continued increase of COVID-19 variants, we are stepping up enforcement to ensure that people adhere to the Stay-at-Home order and follow public health measures,” said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. “This is a critical moment in Ontario’s response to this deadly virus, that’s why we are doing whatever it takes to stop the spread and protect our communities.” Both the provincial declaration of emergency and the

Stay-at-Home order (O.Reg 265/21) have been extended for an additional two weeks to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The Stay-at-Home order currently in effect requires everyone to remain at home except for specified purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise, or for work that cannot be done remotely. “Now, more than ever before, businesses need to take all measures possible to stop the spread of COVID-19,” said Minister McNaughton. “We’re in workplaces every day to enforce safety requirements and we won’t hesitate to stop unsafe work and ticket offenders. Today, we launched an enhanced, targeted provincewide inspection campaign of construction sites, dispatching 200 workplace inspectors, supported by provincial offences officers, to visit 1,300 construction sites to enforce COVID-19 safety requirements. In addition, provincial offences officers will also be visiting over 500 workplaces this week-end in the COVID-19 hotspots of Ottawa, Toronto and the York Region. Their visits will include big-box stores, food processors, manufacturers and warehouses.” In order to limit the transmission of the variants of concern, the government is also restricting travel into Ontario from the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec with the exception of purposes such as work, health care services, transportation and delivery of goods and services or exercising Aboriginal or treaty rights. “The rising spread of variants means we must take stronger measures to limit transmission and prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “As we continue to work to vaccinate those in the areas with the highest rates of transmission, everyone must adhere to public health measures and stay at home as much as possible to protect capacity in our health system and the health of thousands of Ontarians.” The government also intends to implement the following public health and workplace safety measures effective Saturday, April 17, 2021, at 12:01 a.m.: Prohibit all outdoor social gatherings and organized public events, except for with members of the same household or one other person from outside that household who lives alone or a caregiver for any member of the household; Close all non-essential workplaces in the construction sector; Reduce capacity limits to 25 per cent in all retail settings where in-store shopping is permitted. This includes supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers’ markets, other stores that primarily sell food and pharmacies; and, Close all outdoor recreational amenities, such as golf courses, basketball courts, soccer fields, and playgrounds with limited exceptions. In addition, effective Monday, April 19, 2021, at 12:01 a.m., the government is limiting the capacity of weddings, funerals, and religious services, rites or ceremonies to 10 people indoors or outdoors. Prohibiting social gatherings associated with these services such as receptions, except for with members of the same household or one other person from outside that household who lives alone. Drive-in services will be permitted. All other public health and workplace safety measures for non-essential retail under the provincewide emergency brake (i.e., curbside pick-up and delivery only), will continue to apply.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDES ADDITIONAL, EMERGENCY SUPPORT TO FIGHT THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN ONTARIO

As the number of new cases in Ontario continues to escalate to unprecedented levels due to variants of concern, Federal government is working with the Province to protect the health and safety of Ontarians and support the capacity of our health care system. This includes:
* Sending federal health care staff and equipment to the front lines in Ontario to care for people across the province, particularly in areas that are most impacted.
* Boosting rapid testing to help stop the spread of the virus, and working with municipalities and businesses to deploy them to hot spots across Ontario, support contact tracing and isolation, and make workplaces safer.
* Investing \$84.2 million to support voluntary safe isolation sites, including across Ontario. These sites have already helped 3,900 Ontarians isolate safely to prevent the spread of the virus.
* Signing a bilateral agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario to enhance virtual health services in the province. This agreement comes with \$46 million in funding to expand Ontario's efforts on virtual health care during the pandemic.
* Providing an additional supply of tocilizumab and other needed drugs for Ontario through reallocation from other provinces and territories. Tocilizumab is used to treat severe pneumonia in COVID-19 patients.
Federal government is providing a two-month extension on two Mobile Health Units (MHU), until June 30. These MHU were approved in January and are currently deployed in Toronto and Hamilton. The federal government also stands ready to deploy the Canadian Red Cross to help the province with its mobile vaccination teams, and the Canadian Armed Forces is working with partners to determine what additional support they can provide to Ontario. The Government of Canada is also working closely with provinces and territories to facilitate extra support for Ontario, including sending medical supplies and health care workers, and has offered to cover the costs.



RESIDENTS AGED 40+ NOW ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE (REGION OF PEEL/ TWITTER)

OSLER-HUMBER COLLEGE COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC OPENS EXPANDING ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINE



William Osler Health System (Osler) is pleased to announce the opening of the Osler-Humber College COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic tomorrow in partnership with Humber College and the University of Guelph-Humber. The clinic expands access to the COVID-19 vaccine and continues to serve residents in Osler’s North Etobicoke catchment area. As part of this partnership, Osler is providing oversight of the Vaccine Clinic and offering practical experience for Humber and UofGH students. As many students have not been able to receive a clinical placement due to COVID-19, the Vaccine Clinic transition provides important on-the-job training for the next generation of clinicians who will benefit immensely from the practical, real-world experience of administering vaccines to local residents. The clinic will maintain hours similar to the clinic at Etobicoke General Hospital, between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm up until Friday, April 16. The goal is to ramp up to open seven days a week and have hours that can accommodate essential workers in the community who may work shifts. Appointments at the Osler-Humber College COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic can be booked online through Osler’s website or by phone at 905-494-6685, from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, seven days a week. Vaccinations are by appointment only.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG RACKET BASED IN CANADA, INDIA, US DISMANTLED

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In May 2020, officers began an investigation, dubbed Project Cheetah, into a robust network involved in importing large quantities of cocaine, ketamine, heroin and opium into Canada. The drugs were then distributed across the country through a sophisticated system run by the traffickers. On Thursday, April 8, 2021, police in Ontario, British Columbia and California executed more than 50 search warrants, resulting in 33 people charged with more than 130 criminal offences. Officers seized approximately \$2.3 million worth of drugs including Ten kilograms of cocaine, eight kilograms of ketamine, three kilograms of heroin and 2.5 kilograms of opium. Investigators also seized 48 firearms and \$730,000 in Canadian currency. “The success of this investigation is a testament to the effective cooperation among multiple agencies across jurisdictions as we pursue the shared objective of public safety,” said Inspector Marwan Zogheib, Officer in Charge, RCMP Toronto West Detachment. “The RCMP’s resources across Canada and overseas and our partnership with York Regional Police provide a multiplier effect to our collective efforts to dismantle such criminal networks.” “Peel Regional Police were pleased to have joined with York Regional Police and the RCMP on Project Cheetah. This drug trafficking network was active throughout the Greater Toronto Area and negatively impacted our communities,” said Superintendent Dermot Coughlan - Intelligence Operations. “By working together with our law enforcement partners, the project was successfully concluded and I want to thank the members from the multiple agencies for helping to make our communities safer.” Through funding provided by the Ontario Government, the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario supported this joint-forces investigation.

CLASHES BETWEEN BANNED TLP, POLICE LEAVE 'FEW' DEAD IN LAHORE



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Further, TLP leaders have asked that the members killed in the clash not to be buried unless their demands are met.

"TLP may begin its long march this evening which will further weaken the law and order situation," a source said. The clashes started on Sunday morning when members of the banned group gathered outside the party's Saddar office and chanted slogans against the arrest of their chief Saad Hussain Rizvi. "Violent clashes took place between TLP protesters and police and other security agencies at Chowk YateemKhana in Lahore, the stronghold of TLP, since 8:30 a.m.," said the source. As security personnel, comprising both paramilitary Pakistan Rangers, and local police reached the spot, they came under attack and summoned reinforcements as bullets were fired and stones pelted. The local police said that Rizvi's supporters attacked them with petrol bombs. It is also alleged that TLP members went berserk after firing. The mob barged into the Nawankot police station and held DSP Umar Farooq, five constables, and two Rangers officials hostage for hours and also tortured them. After this, reinforcements were called again and huge deployment of police personnel was done at the protest sites as police believe that the protesters will again create ruckus later. On last Monday, TLP supporters carried protests in major cities across the country for three long days, leaving hundreds of police officers injured. The demonstration came after its chief was arrested as a "pre-emptive measure". During the crack-down, police arrested thousands of TLP supporters and charged them for attacking police. On Thursday, the government formally banned the party. The Interior Ministry notification stated that TLP "engaged in terrorism, acted in a manner prejudicial to the peace and security of the country". "The religious group intimidated the public, caused grievous bodily harm, hurt and death to the personnel of law enforcement agencies and innocent bystanders," it added. The group was proscribed under Section 11B (1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, empowering the government to ban an organization involved in terrorism. Rizvi had threatened the government with widespread protests if it did not expel France's Ambassador over depictions of Prophet Muhammad. He had called on the government to honour what he said was a commitment it made in February to TLP to expel the French envoy before April 20 over the publication in France of depictions of the Prophet.

Rizvi is the son of late Khadim Hussain Rizvi, who protested last year against sacrilegious sketches in France and demanded expulsion of French Ambassador. Later on, the protesters, led by him, dispersed peacefully after the government reportedly assured him that it would take action in the matter.

8 MASSACRED INCLUDING 4 SIKHS WHILE AT WORK IN US SHOOTING

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Officials said that the gunman killed himself after murdering eight people and wounding at least seven, five of whom were hospitalised. Three of the Sikhs killed were in their 60s and two were women, according to a list released by police late Friday night.

Among the eight people killed were Amarjeet Kaur Johal, 66, Jaswinder Kaur, 64, Jaswinder Singh, 68, and Amarjit Sekhon, 48.

Police identified the alleged killer as Brandon Scott Hole, 19, and from a picture of him released by the Indianapolis Police Department, he appeared to be white. He had come on the law enforcement radar previously but no action had been taken against him other than seizing a shotgun and returning it to him. The head of the local office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Paul Keenan, said that "no Racially Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE) ideology was identified" when he was investigated. Indianapolis Police Deputy Chief Craig McCartt said that he could not yet ascribe a motive for the killings.

Sikh Coalition Executive Director Satjeet Kaur said: "While we don't yet know the motive of the shooter, he targeted a facility known to be heavily populated by Sikh employees, and the attack is traumatic for our community as we continue to face senseless violence."

Sikhs have for long been victims of bias attacks in US, often being mistaken for Muslims because of their turbans.

According to the FBI's hate crime statistics for 2019, the latest available, there were 49 anti-Sikh attacks with 60 victims.

In the worst attack targeting Sikhs, a former serviceman described as a White supremacist killed seven people at a gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, wounded four before killing himself in 2012.

"Enough is enough, our community has been through enough trauma," said Komal Chohan, the grand-daughter of one of the victims of the Indianapolis massacre. President Joe Biden ordered the national flag flown at half mast at all government facilities and US Embassies abroad to mourn the deaths.

McCartt told reporters that Hole began shooting people in the parking lot of the major US parcel and courier company facility killing four people, then entered the building and killed four others.

He then apparently committed suicide before police got there, McCartt said. "There was no confrontation, no disturbance, he just randomly started shooting," he said.

In a statement issued through the Sikh Coalition, Chohan said: "I am heartbroken to confirm that my 'naniji' (maternal grandmother), Amarjeet Kaur Johal, is among those killed in the senseless shooting.a

"I have several family members who work at the particular facility and are traumatised. My nani, my family, and our families should not feel unsafe at work, at their place of worship, or anywhere."

WXIN-TV station quoted Parminder Singh, the uncle of one of the victims, as saying that his niece who worked at the facility near the airport phoned him shortly after the shooting and said that she was shot while in her car and was being taken to the hospital.

Sikh community member Maninder Singh Walia, who kept a long vigil at a nearby hotel with members of the families waiting for information about the status of those who worked at the FedEx facility, said: "These kinds of violent attacks are a threat to all of us. Our community has a long road of healing, physically, mentally, and spiritually, to recover from this tragedy." About the agency's encounter with Hole, Keenan, said that he had

The TLP says that initially the government had assured to fulfill its promise of expelling the ambassador in February but later asked for time and finally agreed to fulfill its commitment by April 20. Amid this, the French Embassy in Pakistan on Thursday had advised all French nationals and companies to temporarily leave the country, after violent anti-France protests paralysed large parts of the country this week. "Due to the serious threats to French interests in Pakistan, French nationals and French companies are advised to temporarily leave the country," the embassy had said in an email to French citizens.

RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL PARTIES MISUSED ISLAM TO DAMAGE PAKISTAN: PM IMRAN

Islamabad, April 19 (IANS) Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has lashed out at political and religious parties in the country for misusing religion for their own personal gains.

"In our country, it is a great misfortune that many times our political parties and religious parties use Islam wrongly and use it such that they deal damage to their own country. "So I am saddened that many times this love for the Holy Prophet and Islam is misused. Does the government not worry about this? That when there is disrespect of Holy Prophet's honour then aren't we pained?" he said. Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement comes amid raging violence by protesters of the recently proscribed organization Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) has left cities paralyzed and claimed the lives of locals and security personnel. The TLP's main demand is the release of their leader Saad Hussain Rizvi, who was arrested hours after he announced a march against the government, demanding immediate expulsion of the French Ambassador and severing of ties with France due to the blasphemous caricatures of Prophet Mohammad and the statement by French President Emmanuel Macron on freedom of expression.

The TLP claimed that several of its protestors were shot dead by security forces, while it took at least 11 policemen hostage after an attack on a police station in Lahore. The officials were later released after negotiations with the government. "Violent protests in Pakistan will make no difference to the country where the blasphemous act has occurred," said PM Imran Khan, adding that such actions did not benefit Islam in any way. He said that he is in contact with other Muslim leaders to join together and put forward a case of Prophet Mohammad's honour at international forums, such as the European Union and the United Nations. "When we begin a campaign by bringing together all Muslim countries, it will make a difference and change will come in the West. Otherwise, we will continue vandalizing the country and it will make no difference to the Western world," he said.

been questioned after his mother had warned that he might try to commit suicide by provoking police to shoot him.

Hole's step-sister told WXIN TV that he was "isolated" and "never got the help he needed".

She told the station that there was a history of mental illness in the family and that their father had committed suicide in 2004.

The Indianapolis incident is the latest in a wave of mass shootings plaguing the US. On March 16, a white man killed eight people, six of them Asian women, at three massage parlours in Atlanta.

That was followed by the killing of 10 people, including a police officer, by a Syrian immigrant in Boulder, Colorado, on March 22.

Four people were killed with the assailants, who were all non-white, committing suicide in each of these incidents that followed: On March 28 in Essex, Maryland; on March 31 in Orange, California, and on April 3 in Allen, Texas. And on April 7, a former professional American football player who is not White, killed five people in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

"What a cruel wait and fate that has become too normal and happens every day somewhere in our nation," Biden said and urged Congress to "enact commonsense gun violence prevention legislation, like universal background checks and a ban of weapons of war and high-capacity magazines". There are no national laws governing gun ownership and regulations vary by states, with some allowing even high calibre automatic weapons with checks on ownership. Efforts to regulate gun ownership has been stymied mainly by the Republican Party backed by the powerful National Rifle Association, an organisation of gun owners. According to the Gun Violence Archive, 19,380 people were shot dead last year, an increase of more than 25 per cent over the previous year's deaths. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is visiting the US said at the White House before a meeting with Biden: "I would like to express my condolences to the victims, and my sympathies to the families. Innocent citizens must not be exposed to any such violence."

IG KUNWAR VIJAY PRATAP RESIGNATION ACCEPTED, SAYS WILL CARRY ON THE FIGHT

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

During the exclusive interview with Y Media Group Editor and CEO, YudhvirJaswal, he said to continue his fight in bringing out the truth, whether he is in service or not. Days before quitting, Kunwar Vijay Pratap had written to the Punjab Police and Home Department on the challan to be submitted against former Punjab CM Parkash Singh Badal and President of SAD, Sukhbir Badal. IG also placed allegations on Sukhbir Badal to offer job to Ajit Singh, who was a prime witness in the 2015 Kotakpura police firing case. Many political parties including came out in favour of IG Kunwar Vijay Pratap's report and demanded it to be made public. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Singh Badal said he had never met Ajit Singh, and that he would file a defamation suit against Inspector General (IG) Kunwar Vijay Partap Singh for falsely claiming that he had tried to lure the witness. In a statement here, the SAD President said it was clear that IG Kunwar Vijay Pratap, who was heading state's Special Investigating Team (SIT) to probe into the firing incident, was obsessed with targeting SAD and the Badal family. It was with this purpose that he had forwarded a malicious letter to the Director General of Police and made these wild allegations. "The IG knew from the proceedings of the Kotkapura firing case in the high court that his probe would be cast aside. The latest allegation is a result of this deep rooted frustration and aimed at politicising a case after wasting three years pursuing the political agenda of the Congress party. "The IG tried to implicate SAD and its senior leadership in the case at the instance of the Congress government but he was unsuccessful in this task. It is a clear case of gross misuse of his official position by the IG to please his political bosses rather than nailing the culprits in the case." Badal said Ajit Singh had also set the record straight by asserting that he had not been approached by anyone for a job in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and that he had approached the Sikh institution for a job. "The witness has also submitted that even this request is pending and that he has not been offered any job by the SGPC." He said despite such a clear cut rebuttal from the witness, the IG had prevailed upon a section of the media to publish this malafide report. Badal said SAD had always stood for speedy investigation into all cases related to the heinous incidents of sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib. "It is unfortunate that after failing to nail those responsible for the reprehensible acts, the Congress government is politicizing the issue by using Kunwar Vijay Pratap to strike out at me," Badal added.

IS SIDHU IN HUNT OF NEW POLITICAL SPACE IN PUNJAB?

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Sidhu has suddenly become active in Punjab politics over the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib, an incident which occurred way back in 2015. On Tuesday, Sidhu went to the Burj Jawahar Singh gurdwara, the epicentre of the sacrilege incidents in Faridkot district in 2015, and said that the report prepared in connection with the case by the Special Investigation Team should be made public. Without mincing words, he had said: "More law, less justice... Justice delayed is justice denied." In his tweets, Sidhu has hinted that things are not smooth, saying: "When you keep your conscious mortgage, then no power matters." The activeness of the cricketer-turned-politician is being closely watched by the Congress, while the AamAadmi Party (AAP) is also trying to fish in troubled water given that Punjab will go to the polls next year. Sidhu's return to the Punjab Cabinet too hangs in balance as there is no indication from the Chief Minister of this happening from, despite the efforts of the Congress leadership and the party's General Secretary in-charge of Punjab, Harish Rawat. Amarinder Singh and Sidhu have met twice recently, but there has been no breakthrough from either side. Sources said that Sidhu wants his old portfolio, something which Amarinder Singh isn't willing to concede. Sidhu last met Amarinder Singh on March 17. A day after the meeting, when the Punjab CM was asked about Sidhu's rehabilitation, he had said: "Everyone wants him to be part of our team." The party's central leadership is keen in accommodating the ex-cricketer, who has been a star campaigner for the party. Since Harish Rawat is recuperating from Covid after being discharged from the hospital, more time may be taken to decide organisational issues. Sidhu had resigned from the Punjab Cabinet in July 2019 after being stripped of a key portfolio. He was in-charge of local bodies, but was then shifted to the power department. The simmering tension between the two leaders had reached a boiling point when Sidhu's wife Navjot Kaur was denied a party ticket for the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, sources said.



AMERICAN EXPORT CONTROLS RISK INDIAN VACCINE PRODUCTION

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Production lines in India, making at least 160 million doses of Covid vaccine a month, will come to a halt in the coming weeks unless America supplies 37 critical items, The Economist reported. A report in The Economist said last week, the billionth dose of Covid-19 vaccine was produced. It is a sign of how greatly manufacturing capacity has expanded over the past six months that the next billion doses could be produced by May 27th, according to Airfinity, an analytics firm.

"Yet this ambition is at risk from American export controls on raw materials and equipment. Production lines in India, making at least 160 million doses of Covid vaccine a month, will come to a halt in the coming weeks unless America supplies 37 critical items," the report said. Earlier, the world's largest vaccine maker, Serum Institute of India's (SII) Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla on Friday appealed to US President Joe Biden to lift the US embargo on exporting raw materials for Covid-19 vaccine production. SII is manufacturing Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The vaccine is not only being used in India but also exported to a number of countries.

Tagging the Twitter handle of the President of the United States, Poonawalla wrote, "Respected @POTUS, if we are to truly unite in beating this virus, on behalf of the vaccine industry outside the US, I humbly request you to lift the embargo of raw material exports out of the US so that vaccine production can ramp up."

With the number of new Covid-19 cases nearly doubling over the past two months, approaching the highest infection rate the world has seen during the pandemic, the unequal distribution of vaccines is not only a moral outrage, but economically and epidemiologically self-defeating, the head of the UN health agency told a special ministerial meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on Friday.

"Vaccine equity is the challenge of our time," World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the gathering in his opening remarks. "And we are failing."

Driving that point home, he said that of the 832 million vaccine doses administered, 82 per cent have gone to high or upper middle-income countries, while only 0.2 per cent have been sent to their low-income peers. In high-income countries alone, one in four people have received a vaccine, a ratio that drops precipitously to 1 in 500 in poorer countries.

Rapidly spreading variants, the inconsistent use and premature easing of public health measures, fatigue with social restrictions and the "dramatic" inequity in vaccine coverage; all have led to an alarming spike in new cases and deaths, he said. The WHO chief called on countries with enough vaccines to cover their populations "many times over" to make immediate donations to COVAX. In March, the WHO called on all countries to drop restrictions on the export of vaccines and vital components, as a rush for Covid-19 jabs puts pressure on global supply, Irish Times reported. Several countries around the world have imposed bans or restrictions on exports of doses and key vaccine ingredients amid a scramble for stock, causing logjams in complex international pharmaceutical supply chains that could slow progress to end the pandemic, the global health body warned, as per the report. "Some countries have imposed legal restrictions on the export of critical supplies. This is putting lives at risk around the world. We call on all countries not to stockpile supplies that are needed urgently to ramp up production of vaccines," the WHO chief said.



CHINA’S INTENTION IS TO REPLICATE CARRIER BATTLE GROUPS LIKE US NAVY: INDIAN NAVY CHIEF

NEW DELHI, (IANS) China’s intention is to replicate carrier battle groups like the US Navy with the addition of more aircraft carriers and accompanying them with a fleet of support ships and destroyers, Indian Navy chief, Admiral Karambir Singh, said on Wednesday, pointing out the rapid expansion of naval power by Beijing. Replying to a query during the Raisina Dialogue 2021 on China adding more aircraft carriers to its fleet and its plans to deploy them in the Indian Ocean Region, Admiral Singh said, “We have seen regular naval Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean Region for over a decade now. If China looks West from where it is, its energy, markets and resources are located to the West. So, it won’t be surprised if it soon comes into the Indian Ocean, as there is a saying that the flag follows the trade.”

The Navy chief was speaking on the topic ‘Samudra Manthan: The Indo-Pacific in Churn’.

Currently, China is building its third and largest aircraft carrier to take forward military modernization plans amid a number of territorial and maritime disputes. In 2019, China had launched its second aircraft carrier, the Shandong, the first to be built at home. It joined the Liaoning, which was developed by retrofitting a Soviet-era cruiser commissioned in 2012.

The PLA Navy is working towards six aircraft carriers, with two likely to be deployed in China’s near seas, including for the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea, two for the Western Pacific and two for the Indian Ocean.

The Navy chief said that in the Indian Ocean Region, the Indian Navy’s aim is to be a ‘Preferred Security Partner’. “Be credible and forward-leaning in our engagements, be first responders,” he said.

Admiral Singh also talked about shunning the transactional nature of engagements, working with regional navies to build their capacities to secure their interests, as also working with like-minded navies to build interoperability and trust.

Talking about Quad, an informal security forum comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, Admiral Singh said that as far as the military part is concerned, navies of Australia, Japan, the US and India already enjoy a high degree of interoperability.

“If an opportunity arises, we have the capability and capacity to come together in an almost plug and play mechanism,” he said.

On Indo-Pacific, the Navy chief said: “Given the expanse of the Indo-



Pacific, no one can do it alone. Expanse is an incentive for nations to work together. Indian Navy is ready to do its bit to contribute to security and stability. We can build collective maritime competence, and learn from each other.”

He said that there is also a natural desire among most nations in the region to cooperate and collaborate for greater prosperity. “Indo-Pacific provides tremendous opportunities for issue-based convergences. Convergence, as you know, can lead to cohesion,” he said.

The Navy chief said akin to the mythological ‘Samudra Manthan’, “we can work together and extract many treasures and ultimately extract the ‘Amrit’ (heavenly nectar)”. “There exist many avenues for maritime nations in the Indo-Pacific to come together and ensure that the ocean churn should benefit all,” he said. “So I remain positive of what the churn in the Indo-Pacific would bring to the region, and to the world at large,” said the Navy chief, adding, “When we look at the Indo-Pacific, what stands out is its predominant maritime character, and we know that oceans connect, they don’t divide.” “And, therefore, the opportunities for cooperation, to my mind, can outweigh the challenges that we face. There is also a natural desire among most nations in the region to cooperate and collaborate for greater prosperity,” he concluded.

Only 1% Covid vax administered in lowest-income nations: WHO

GENEVA, (IANS) The World Health Organization (WHO) said that only 1 per cent of the 100 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine were administered last week went in the lowest-income countries. Close to “99 million doses of vaccines last week went into high- and upper-middle-income and some low- and middle-income countries, but only one percent of that went to the lowest-income countries”, Bruce Aylward, Senior Advisor to the WHO Director-General on Orga-



nizational Change said at a press conference on Monday. Asked whether more vaccines should be produced, Aylward said that “we need to be careful thinking that we can simply build additional capacity”, because “that capacity is still going to the wrong places”, reports Xinhua news agency. The world body said that it is working with manufacturers to help increase vaccine capacity for the COVAX Facility, a WHO-led initiative to distribute vaccines for low- and middle-income countries. Aylward said it will “take weeks and months” to increase vaccine supplies and “in the meantime, we’ve got to take some urgent and important decisions about how we are going to use the vaccines that exist today”. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist of the WHO, explained at the same press conference that the “immediate need” of COVAX is to increase vaccine supplies by working with manufacturers and suppliers on suppressing “roadblocks and obstacles”, as well as ensuring that export bans “don’t interfere with the process of vaccine manufacturing”.

COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA INVITED TO APPLY FOR UNSMOKE CANADA CLEANUPS GRANT



TORONTO– Unsmoke Canada has opened its application process for the second annual Unsmoke Canada Cleanups grant-giving program. The goal of the program is to support litter cleanup projects across the country and to help everyone work together to clean up Canada’s great outdoors. “It will take a joint effort to solve the problem associated with littering. It starts by raising awareness and empowering people to make a difference. Unsmoke Canada is ready to work with authorities, anti-littering organizations and other relative stakeholders to achieve the greatest impact in all communities.”

“Litter is an issue of concern in society. It impacts diverse locations – from streets and city parks to beaches and oceans. Cigarette butts are among the most frequently littered items. The Unsmoke Canada Cleanups program will help raise awareness of littering in Canada with a specific emphasis on cigarette butt waste.” – Vasie Papadopoulos, Communications Manager, RBH

Unsmoke Canada encourages nonprofit organizations with a connection to nature, outdoor recreation, outdoor conservation, health and wellness, volunteer engagement, and/or community service to apply for the grant. With these grants, the groups will organize litter cleanup projects that will take place in local communities across Canada in 2021. “2021 is the second year of the Unsmoke Canada Cleanups campaign, and we were so pleased with the achievements during the inaugural year in 2020 that we increased the amount of available funding this year. We encourage any nonprofit organization in Canada to be a part of the solution to address the global issue of litter by applying for a grant to help keep Canada’s natural resources beautiful.” – Lori McCullough, Founder and CEO, The Great Outdoors Fund

In 2020, the program provided \$50,000 in funding to 17 groups that went on to organize local litter cleanup projects throughout the year. From Penticton, British Columbia to Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland and Labrador, 283,977 volunteers from coast-to-coast -dedicated 427,122 hours and collected 1,031,926 pounds of litter.

BUDGET 2021

Supporting Canadians and Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic

- Creating jobs and growing the middle class
- Funding early learning and child care

- Building a green recovery for jobs and a cleaner future
- Finishing the fight against COVID-19 and investing in health care

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CANADA HAS ADMINISTERED MORE THAN 10 MILLION VACCINE SODES TO DATE.

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Y Media Quick Facts On Canada’s 2021 Budget



CANADA'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE, CHRYSTIA FREELAND, PRESENTED 2021 BUDGET ALONG WITH PM TRUDEAU.

Budget 2021 includes \$101.4 billion over three years in proposed investments as part of the Government of Canada’s growth plan that will create good jobs and support a resilient and inclusive recovery. Key measures include:

- Establishing a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, in partnership with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partners, will help all families access affordable, high-quality, and flexible child care no matter where they live, and no longer shoulder the burden of high child care costs. The budget proposes new investments totalling almost \$30 billion over the next five years and \$8.3 billion ongoing to support this vision.
- Extending emergency supports to bridge Canadians and Canadian businesses through to recovery, including:
Extending the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support until September 25, 2021.
- Extending the number of weeks available for important income support for Canadians such as the Canada Recovery Benefit and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit.
- Enhancing Employment Insurance sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks. Increasing Old Age Security for seniors age 75 and older to provide them with better financial security.
- Supporting small and medium-sized businesses through several transformative programs, such as:
A new Canada Digital Adoption Program that will assist over 160,000 businesses with the cost of new technology. And it will provide them with the advice they need to get the most of new technology with the help of 28,000 young Canadians who will be trained to work with them.
- Allowing Canadian small businesses to fully expense up to \$1.5 million in capital investments in a broad range of assets, including digital technology

and intellectual property. This represents an additional \$2.2 billion investment in the growth of Canada’s entrepreneurs over the next five years.

- Revitalizing Canada’s tourism sector through \$1 billion to help tourism businesses recover and support festivals and cultural events that provide jobs and growth in many of our cities and communities.
- Supporting women, Black Canadians, and other underrepresented entrepreneurs who face barriers to launching and owning businesses through \$300 million to enhance initiatives like the Black Entrepreneurship Program and the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy.
- Establishing a \$15 federal minimum wage.
- Enriching the Canada Workers Benefit, which will support about 1 million more Canadians and lift nearly 100,000 people out of poverty. This will result in additional support of \$8.9 billion over six years for Canada’s low-wage workers.
- Helping to build, repair and support 35,000 affordable housing units for vulnerable Canadians through an investment of \$2.5 billion and a reallocation of \$1.3 billion in existing funding. Investing \$17.6 billion in a green recovery that will help Canada to reach its target to conserve 25 per cent of Canada’s lands and oceans by 2025, exceed its Paris climate targets and reduce emissions by 36 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and move forward on a path to reach net-zero emission by 2050. Closing the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, supporting healthy, safe, and prosperous Indigenous communities, and advancing meaningful reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation through a historic investment of over \$18 billion.

“This budget is about finishing the fight against COVID-19. It’s about healing the wounds left by the COVID-19 recession. And it’s about creating more jobs and prosperity for Canadians in the days—and decades—to come,” said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland.

CANADA, ONTARIO INVEST IN PUBLIC TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RESIDENTS OF BRAMPTON

BRAMPTON: The safety and well-being of Canadians are top priorities of the governments of Canada and Ontario. Investments in Ontario’s infrastructure during this extraordinary time provide an opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and to make our communities more inclusive and resilient.

That is why, together, these governments are taking decisive action to help families, businesses and communities as they adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ontarians need safe and reliable public transit to get to work and home, to appointments, to shop for essentials, and to conduct business. Strategic investments in public transportation infrastructure play a key role in delivering this service. Today, Maninder Sidhu, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development and Member of Parliament for Brampton East, on behalf of The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities; Amarjot Sandhu, Member of Provincial Parliament for Brampton West on behalf of The Honourable Laurie Scott, Ontario’s Minister of Infrastructure; and His Worship Patrick Brown, Mayor of the City of Brampton, announced joint funding for the construction of a new public transit maintenance and storage facility for the City’s bus

fleet. The Government of Canada is investing more than \$69.9 million in this project through the Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (PTIS) of the Investing in Canada plan. The Government of Ontario is providing \$58.2 million, and the City of Brampton is contributing more than \$46.6 million. Phase 1 of the project includes the construction of approximately 400,000-square-foot transit maintenance and storage facility with up to 36 maintenance bays and approximately 40 overhead garage doors to accommodate up to 250 standard 40-foot equivalent buses, in addition to administrative and maintenance support space. Work also includes installing fixed and mobile hoists, a vehicle inspection pit, an overhead crane, fuel storage and dispensing systems, a vehicle location and radio system, and backup electricity generation. The construction of this new facility will not only improve the capacity, quality, and safety of public transit infrastructure for the City of Brampton, but it will allow for the future installation of infrastructure to service electric buses, creating cleaner and more efficient transportation methods for residents. All orders of government continue to work together for the people of Ontario to make strategic infrastructure investments in communities across the province when needed most.

Record home sales in March 2021, new supply increases: CREA

OTTAWA– Statistics released today by the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) show national home sales set another all-time record in March 2021 as increased supply became available.

SUMMARY:
National home sales rose 5.2% on a month-over-month (m-o-m) basis in March.
The actual (not seasonally adjusted) activity was up 76.2% year-over-year (y-o-y).
The number of newly listed properties jumped another 7.5% from February to March.
The MLS® Home Price Index (HPI) rose 3.1% m-o-m and was up 20.1% y-o-y.
The actual (not seasonally adjusted) national average sale price posted a 31.6% y-o-y gain in March.
Home sales recorded over Canadian MLS® Systems climbed 5.2% between February and March 2021 to set another new all-time record. In the face of continuing strong demand, the increase in sales was likely the result of an increase in new supply.
The month-over-month increase in national sales activity from February to March was broad-based and generally in line with locations where more new listings became available. Sales gains were largest in March in Greater Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton-Burlington and Ottawa.
Actual (not seasonally adjusted) sales activity posted a 76.2% y-o-y gain in March, though year-over-year comparisons will be extremely stretched this spring because of last year’s initial lockdown period.

In line with heightened activity since last summer, sales set a new record for the month of March by a considerable margin (almost 22,000 transactions). In fact, the 76,259 residential properties that traded hands via Canadian MLS® Systems in March 2021 marked the highest level of activity of any month in history, nearly 14,000 more sales than the previous record set last July. “Seeing how many homes were bought and sold in March 2021, one could be forgiven for thinking the market just continues to strengthen, and maybe to some extent it is,” stated Cliff Stevenson, Chair of CREA. “The real issue is not strength in housing markets but imbalance. That demand has been around for months, but with the shortages in supply we have across so much of Canada, a lot of that demand has been pressuring prices. So the big rebound in new supply to start the spring market is the relief valve we need the most to get that demand playing out more on the sales side of things and less on the pricey side. That said, it will take a lot more than one month to record new listings, but it looks like we may finally be rounding the corner on these extremely unbalanced housing market conditions. It’s great news for frustrated buyers, who should consult with a local REALTOR® for the best information and guidance about buying or selling a home this year,” continued Stevenson. “We spent a lot of time over the last year talking about pent-up demand, but I think now is a good time to talk about pent-up supply, which may be the answer to the question everyone is asking right now,” said Shaun Cathcart, CREA’s Senior Economist. “2020 was the year that home became everything, so in hindsight, it’s not that surprising that so many people who did not have one in which to ride out the pandemic really wanted one, while so many of those who did have a home to hunker down in were not inclined to give it up.

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Meeting to choose new CBI chief to be held after May 2, SC told



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Centre on Monday informed the Supreme Court that the Congress leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, would not be available to participate on May 2 meeting of a high-powered committee, including the Prime Minister, for appointment of the CBI Director, and therefore, it will be convened after May 2. In an affidavit filed in the top court, the Centre said: "The Secretary (DoPT) contacted the leader of the single largest opposition party in the House of the People (Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury). The Secretary (DoPT) was informed by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury that he would not be available to participate in the meeting till May 2, 2021." Chowdhury is also a member of the committee for the appointment to the post of CBI Director. "In the light of the foregoing, the meeting of the committee under section 4A of the Act (Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946) shall be convened immediately after May 2, 2021," it said. The affidavit said Praveen Sinha, who has been directed to look after the duties of the Director, CBI, till the appointment of the new Director, is senior-most IPS officer posted in the rank of Additional Director, CBI. The affidavit said that, as per section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act 1946, appointment to the post of CBI Director is made based on recommendation of a high-powered committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition recognised as

such in the Lok Sabha, or where there is no such Leader of Opposition, then the leader of the single largest opposition party in that House, and the Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him. On March 12, the Supreme Court had sought reply from the Centre on a plea by NGO Common Cause, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, seeking direction to immediately appoint a regular CBI Director. Bhushan has contended that a proper appointment as per the statutory law is necessary for upholding the rule of law and for enforcement of the rights of the citizens under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. A bench headed by Justice L.N. Rao has scheduled the matter for further hearing on May 13. Bhushan had alleged that the Central government is delaying the high-power committee meeting, as it wants to bypass the present Chief Justice, who is also part of the committee, but is scheduled to retire on April 23. The NGO had contended that the government must be directed to comply with the mandate of the law and call for the meeting of the selection committee as per the DSPE Act, 1946 as amended by Lokpal Act, 2013. "The ad hoc appointment of Praveen Sinha as the Interim/ Acting CBI Director deserves to be set aside," added the plea.

Centre nod for credit support for SII, Bharat Biotech

NEW DELHI, (IANS) In a bid to boost vaccine production amid rising Covid cases, the Centre has given in-principle approval for credit to vaccine-makers, the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech, it was announced on Monday. The Finance Ministry has approved sanction of Rs 3,000 crore credit for the Serum Institute and Rs 1,500 crore to Bharat Biotech, and the credit will be disbursed at the earliest. Earlier, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India, had suggested that the company would require around Rs 3,000 crore to increase production of Covid-19 vaccines. Industry body FICCI also recently suggested that the government should provide incentives to vaccine manufacturers to in-

crease the production of Covid-19 vaccines in the country. It recommended financing vaccine makers under a production linked incentive (PLI) type scheme. The financial support came as the government decided to open up vaccination for all citizens above the age of 18 from May 1. Further the Health Ministry on Monday said that the National Vaccine Strategy aims at liberalised vaccine pricing and scaling up of vaccine coverage. This would augment vaccine production as well as availability, incentivising vaccine manufacturers to rapidly ramp up production as well as attract new vaccine manufacturers, domestic and international, said an official statement.

Punjab imposes stricter curbs as Covid cases rise



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) As Covid-19 cases continue to rise rapidly in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday ordered stricter restrictions beginning on Tuesday, including extension of night curfew timings from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., closure of all bars, cinema halls, gyms, spas, coaching centres with restaurants and hotels to be open only for takeaway and home delivery. Rates for RT-PCR and rapid antigen testing (RAT) by private labs have been reduced to Rs 450 and Rs 300, respectively, with additional charges for home collection of the samples, in a bid to promote increased testing. Gatherings of more than 20 persons, including for weddings and cremations, have also been banned across the state, with approval of the district administration needed for all gatherings of more than 10 persons, except for cremations. The new restrictions, which also include closure of all malls, shops and markets on Sunday, coupled with the ones imposed earlier, will remain in effect till April 30, announced the Chief Minister, directing the Police Department to strictly enforce the restrictions, taking support of civil society organisations where needed. All weekly markets have also ordered to be shut down. Chairing a high-level virtual meeting to review the Covid situation in the state, the Chief Minister also ordered that all people flying into Punjab should have a negative RT-PCR report not more than 72 hours old, else they would have to undergo RAT testing at the airport. He also ordered that people who have attended large gatherings anywhere -- religious, political and social -- to be mandatorily home quarantined for five days and tested as per protocol. The Chief Minister directed the Transport Department that number of people in buses and taxis and autos be restricted to 50 per cent of the capacity. In a bid to check inbound travellers, the Chief Minister also directed that rapid antigen testing booths should be set up at bus stands and railway stations and all passengers checked. All eligible persons should be also vaccinated. The Chief Minister also ordered postponement of the recruitment ex-

ams for patwaris and directed the Medical Education Department to hold online examination for the first, second and third year MBBS, BDS, BAMS and 1st year nursing students. He also reiterated his appeal to all religious, social and political leaders to desist from organising large gatherings, encourage vaccination and motivate people for Covid appropriate behaviour, especially wearing of masks and avoiding gatherings. Guardians of governance and all ex-servicemen have been urged to take the lead in ensuring adherence to protocols. He further said that military hospitals in the cantonments in Punjab had assured the state government of all possible help to tackle the surge, while private hospitals had already been directed to reserve 75 per cent beds for Covid patients. While reviewing the situation in private and government hospitals, the Chief Minister directed 75 per cent reservation of L-3 facilities for Covid in all private hospitals providing critical Covid care. He said no elective surgeries should be conducted in any government or private hospitals till May 15 and all OPD patients must be tested, besides encouraging them to get vaccinated. The containment and micro-containment strategy was left to the Deputy Commissioners to decide, depending on the situation in their respective zones or areas. Health Secretary Hussan Lal, in a presentation, said the state's positivity rate had stayed stable at around 7.8 per cent but had shown a quantum jump thereafter, going up to 12.6 per cent as of April 15, with Mohali being the worst hit at 36.53 per cent. The spike, he said, could be attributed to the new variant, along with people coming back from large gatherings from outside Punjab. The figure was expected to go up further with more testing, he said, adding that by May 5, the state was projected to report 6,000 cases a day of urgent measures were not implemented in districts of Ludhiana, SAS Nagar (Mohali), Jalandhar, Amritsar and Patiala, which would be the drivers of the spike.

EVERYONE ABOVE 18 ELIGIBLE FOR ANTI-COVID VAX FROM MAY 1



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Union Government on Monday announced that everyone above the age of 18 will be eligible to get a vaccine against Covid-19 from May 1. The decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The Government has been working hard for over a year to ensure that maximum numbers of Indians are able to get the vaccine in the shortest possible time. India is vaccinating people at world record pace and we will continue this with even greater momentum," Modi said.

The government claimed that pricing, procurement, eligibility and administration of vaccines are being made flexible in Phase 3 of the world's largest vaccination drive.

"India's National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy has been built on a systematic and strategic end-to-end approach, proactively building capacity across R&D, manufacturing and administration since April 2020. While pushing for scale and speed, it has simultaneously been anchored in the stability necessary to sustainably execute the World's Largest Vaccination Drive," the government said.

In phase 3 of the vaccination drive, vaccine manufacturers would supply 50 per cent of their monthly Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) released doses to the Government of India (Gol) and would be free to supply the remaining 50 per cent doses to the state government and in the open market.

Manufacturers would have to make transparently an advance declaration of the price for 50 per cent supply that would be available to State Governments and in the open market, before May 1. "Based on this price, State governments, private hospitals, industrial establishments would be able to procure vaccine doses from the manufacturers. Private Hospitals would have to procure their supplies of Covid-19 vaccine exclusively from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for other than Gol channel," the government said.

Private Vaccination providers shall transparently declare their self-set vaccination price and the eligibility through this channel would be opened up to all adults, above the age of 18. Vaccination will continue to be provided free of cost to the eligible population as defined earlier which include Health Care Workers (HCWs), Front Line Workers (FLWs) and all people above 45 years of age at Government of India (Gol) vaccination centres. All vaccination would be part of the National Vaccination Programme, and mandated to follow all protocol such as being captured on CoWIN platform, linked to AEFI reporting and all other prescribed norms. Stocks and price per vaccination applicable in all vaccination centres will also have to be reported real-time.

The division of vaccine supply 50 per cent to Centre and 50 per cent to other than Gol channel would be applicable uniformly across for all vaccines manufactured in the country. The Gol, however, will allow the imported fully ready to use vaccines to be entirely utilised in the other than Govt. of India channel. The Union government from its share, will allocate vaccines to States/UTs based on the criteria of extent of infection (number of active Covid cases) and performance (speed of administration). "Wastage of vaccine will also be considered in this criteria and will affect the criteria negatively. Based on the above criteria, State-wise quota would be decided and communicated to the States adequately in advance," the Government said. The second dose of all existing priority groups i.e. HCWs, FLWs and population above 45 years, wherever it has become due, would be given priority, for which a specific and focused strategy would be communicated to all stakeholders. Vaccine manufacturers are also incentivized to further scale up their production, as well as attract new national and international players.

'SOME DELHI HOSPITALS LEFT WITH FEW HOURS OF OXYGEN', SAYS KEJRIWAL, SEEKS CENTRE'S HELP

Amid complaints of oxygen scarcity in hospitals throughout the country, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday appealed to the Centre to urgently provide oxygen to the national capital, saying that hospitals are facing acute shortage due to an unprecedented surge in cases.



"Serious oxygen crisis persists in Delhi. I again urge centre to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi. Some hospitals are left with just a few hours of oxygen," Kejriwal tweeted.

He had earlier made a similar appeal to the central government, saying that hospitals in the national capital are running low on oxygen as well as ICU beds.

In the last 24 hours, Delhi reported 240 deaths -- the highest-ever registered in a single day fatalities in the city - and 23,686 fresh coronavirus infections. There are currently 76,887 active cases in the national capital.

The national capital has gone into a six-day lockdown amid the deteriorating COVID-19 situation.

Meanwhile, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said the next three weeks are crucial with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country. "Centre working closely with States and UTs on public health measures to contain COVID-19. Next three weeks crucial! At a meeting held today, UTs advised augmenting hospital infrastructure, ramping up testing, creating containment zones and strictly enforcing COVID appropriate behaviour," tweeted Dr Harsh Vardhan.

UAE MEDIATING BETWEEN INDIA, PAK TO RESTORE ‘FUNCTIONAL RELATIONS’



BANGLADESH HAS REGISTERED 7,087 FRESH COVID-19 CASES, TAKING THE TALLY TO 6,37,364, IN THE LAST 24 HOURS UNTIL SUNDAY WHICH IS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF INFECTIONS SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC, THE UNITED NEWS OF BANGLADESH REPORTED. (AP PHOTO)

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is facilitating and mediating back-channel talks between India and Pakistan with an aim to turn their rivalry into a healthy and functional relationship, its envoy in Washington has confirmed.

As part of the backdoor talks and meetings, top intelligence officials from both Pakistan and India have had secret meetings in Dubai during January 2021 as the UAE played an important part in bringing the two sides to calm military tensions over the Kashmir region.

“UAE played a role in bringing Kashmir escalation down and created a ceasefire, hopefully ultimately leading to restoring diplomats and getting the relationship back to a healthy level,” said Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba, during a virtual discussion with Stanford University’s Hoover Institution. “They might not sort of becoming best friends but at least we want to get it (relations) to a level where its functional, where its operational, where they are speaking to each other,” he added. The revelation made by the UAE Ambassador to Washington has hinted towards the US’s indirect intervention in the India-Pakistan relationship through its trusted ally, the UAE. It has also raised questions over statements from Pakistan’s top ministers, of not having any backdoor channel active between India and Pakistan. Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has repeatedly maintained that there can be no talk with India until the Narendra

Modi government reverses its decision to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A, stripping the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating into two Union Territories. However, the intervention of the UAE to de-escalate tensions between India and Pakistan, especially in reference to the boiling tensions along the Line of Control (LoC), has certainly yielded positive results as both sides agreed to enforce the ceasefire along the borders. Positive results of the backdoor secret negotiations were also evident with exchanges of complementing letters from Indian PM Modi and his counterpart PM Imran Khan, sharing a mutual desire for peace. But what remains, as the major point of contention between the two sides, is Kashmir. Pakistan has reiterated that it will not be taking any forward movement towards dialogue with India until New Delhi agrees to put the Kashmir ‘dispute’ on the table. One reason for Pakistan’s rigid position on Kashmir is because it cannot afford to show any flexibility on the issue as it not only plays an important role in gaining political mileage for all political parties in the country but any deviation on Kashmir and forward movement on other matters, would trigger a massive response from across the country, something that no ruling party of Pakistan can afford to see happen. With UAE playing its role in bringing both countries closer, it remains to be seen if the Modi government and the Imran Khan-led government, would agree to compromise on political backlash domestically and give priority to rational and functional relations with each other.

PRINCE PHILIP INTERRED IN THE ROYAL VAULT OF ST GEORGE'S CHAPEL

LONDON, (IANS) Prince Philip's coffin has been interred in the royal vault of St George's Chapel. It was placed on a catafalque on a marble slab and lowered into the vault by an electric motor, dpa news agency reported. The vault was created between 1804 and 1810 for George III, who died in 1820 and is one of three kings buried there. The other two are George IV and William IV. Homs were played as his coffin was lowered down. A blessing was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury before the choir sang the national anthem, "God Save the Queen." The members of the royal family looked up as the choir sang while the queen bowed her head. The 94-year-old monarch was then led out of the church by the archbishop and followed by her family members.

Prince William, her grandson, was seen glancing back at the vault as he left his pew QUEEN ELIZABETH II SITS ON HER OWN AT PRINCE PHILIP'S FUNERAL

Coronavirus social distancing measures forced Queen Elizabeth II to sit alone during the funeral for her husband, Prince Philip, at the St George's chapel in Windsor Castle on Saturday. Her expression was not captured by cameras during the service, however, other members of the Royal family appeared sombre, the dpa news agency reported. Prince Edward, the queen and Prince Philip's youngest child, was seen touching his forehead with his hand during a performance by the choir. He was later seen gazing at the coffin of his father. Several of the Royals read the order of service throughout the funeral, while others were seen staring into the distance. Each member of the Royal family - and their specially chosen guests - were all seen wearing formal black clothes and black face masks. They were all spread around the chapel in their seats to comply with the current Coronavirus restrictions in place in England.

With Quad at its strongest, US-Japan pledge to work with India on free Indo-Pacific

New York, (IANS) Declaring that the Quad "has never been stronger", the US and Japan have reiterated their commitment to work with India and Australia to build a free and "thriving" Indo-Pacific where, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga warned the "security environment has become increasingly severe". In a joint statement issued on Friday after their talks, US President Joe Biden and Suga said: "Together, we will continue to work with allies and partners, including with Australia and India through the Quad, which has never been stronger, to build the free, open, accessible, diverse, and thriving Indo-Pacific we all seek." The Quad is made up of India, the US, Japan and Australia and has assumed an important role in Washington's strategy to confront China's military, economic and diplomatic challenges. Signifying the importance Biden places on Beijing's threat, his first multilateral summit after becoming President was held last month with the Quad Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India, Scott Morrison of Australia and Suga.



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PRESIDENT BIDEN SUMMIT ‘NEEDS’ EMISSIONS REDUCTION, FINANCE COMMITMENTS

NEW DELHI, (IANS) US President Joe Biden invited 40 world leaders to the Leaders’ Summit on Climate on April 22-23. Climate experts say this is a critically important initiative as the first step by the US government to focus on climate action in their efforts to show that the US is back on the international level, targeting heads of states of key countries. The summit comes at a critical juncture, with the latest UNFCCC report stating that the collective climate action pledges according to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are far off track from the goals envisaged in the Paris Agreement, most notably to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. There are also increasing calls to developed countries to step up financial support for climate action in developing countries, in particular for adaptation. What do we want? Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe views the Leader’s Summit as a critical opportunity for European leaders to bring to the table further efforts and specific commitments to put themselves on a 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible pathway. Its four main requests for the European Commission and the European leaders participating in the summit are Emissions reductions well beyond 55 per cent. This should be combined, with greater efforts to protect biodiversity and increase carbon removals, in line with the EU’s fair share of the global efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. All Member States, Norway and the UK commit to increasing climate finance for developing countries to be allocated to adaptation, with a strong priority to the least developed countries and the small island countries. The European Investment Bank should commit to scaling up adaptation finance to 50 per cent of its climate finance for developing countries by 2025. No COVID-19 recovery funding to fossil fuels, explicitly fossil gas, says CAN, Europe’s leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. At the EU level, this translates into keeping fossil gas and nuclear out of the EU taxonomy, budget funds and EU recovery (1.8 trillion) spent by the Member States and regions. In assessing recovery plans, the European Commission should insist that the necessary reforms on a national level, throughout all sectors, are kicked off to

achieve beyond 55 per cent emissions reduction. European countries champion climate action and a green recovery in upcoming bilateral meetings and summits, including the EU-India summit, the renewed Southern Partnership and EU-Africa Partnership Strategy, by developing concrete measures to globally shift away from fossil fuels and lock in new dependencies. For each of the European countries participating in the Leaders’ Climate Summit, CAN Europe asks Denmark that no funds for polluters or for fossil infrastructure. Also climate finance for adaptation and mitigation developing countries and enhance commitment to renewable energy. For France to end fossil fuel subsidies nationally and abroad. And increase climate finance for developing countries to 8bn per year for 2021-2025. Also, implement all the recommendations of the citizen assembly. Germany to increase domestic emissions reduction and associated climate law to 70 per cent by 2030 (up from 55 per cent). Also adjust renewable energy expansion and other targets accordingly, plus double finance from the federal budget allocated to international climate finance to at least 8bn per year by 2025. “Five years after European countries committed to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius in Paris, European leaders must increase emissions reductions or we won’t manage,” said Wendel Trio, CAN Europe Director. “We are obnoxiously far off track. European countries must aim way beyond long-term commitments; we need emissions to start dramatically dropping from today. “This summit taking place is a good sign. But it won’t be useful as such unless it brings greater action to combat climate change; namely, increased climate finance and higher emissions reductions,” Trio said. “We see political leaders across Europe acknowledging the need to foster climate action. However, we need to see the essence of their speeches at the heart of absolutely all their policies, budgets, priorities, decisions just a couple of green measures won’t sort out the climate crisis,” said Sven Harmeling, International Climate Policy Coordinator, CAN Europe.



A LOOK: DOS AND DON'TS FOR WEARING A #MASK.

BATTLE AGAINST BILL 21 MUST CONTINUE: WORLD SIKH ORGANIZATION OF CANADA

OTTAWA: While the World Sikh Organization of Canada is pleased that the Quebec Superior Court has struck key provisions of the province’s “secularism” law, known commonly as Bill 21, the battle to have the law struck in its entirety must continue. The WSO and Quebec educator Amrit Kaur were interveners in this case. Amrit Kaur, a WSO Board member who is a practicing Sikh and wears a turban as a part of her beliefs, was forced to relocate to British Columbia in order to pursue her profession. The WSO and Amrit Kaur were represented by Léon Moubayed, Faiz Lalani and Sarah Gorguon from Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP. While the Quebec Government has invoked the notwithstanding clause to insulate the law from Charter scrutiny, in a ruling issued today, Justice Marc-André Blanchard found that Quebec’s “Act respecting the laicity of the State” is in violation of Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as it protects minority language education rights and cannot apply to the Quebec English education system. Section 23 rights are not subject to the notwithstanding clause. The ruling also applies to members of the Quebec National Assembly who cannot be forced to uncover their faces to exercise their functions. Amrit Kaur said, “I am very pleased that today’s decision allows teachers like myself to work in the Quebec English education system. However, this victory is bittersweet since teachers in French schools, police officers and lawyers still cannot work with their articles of faith. Bill 21 continues to pose an unprecedented challenge to minorities in Quebec.” WSO President Tejinder Singh Sidhu said today, “while we are pleased that the Quebec Superior Court has struck key provisions of Bill 21, we are disappointed that the law was not struck down and declared inoperative in its entirety. It is almost inevitable that this decision will be appealed and we continue to review the decision with our legal team as we decide on next steps to challenge this unjust law.”



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