



**POLICY PARALYSED
GOVT CAN'T DEFEAT
VIRUS: RAHUL | P9**



**NOT IN FAVOUR OF
TOTAL LOCKDOWN,
BUT WILL IMPOSE IF
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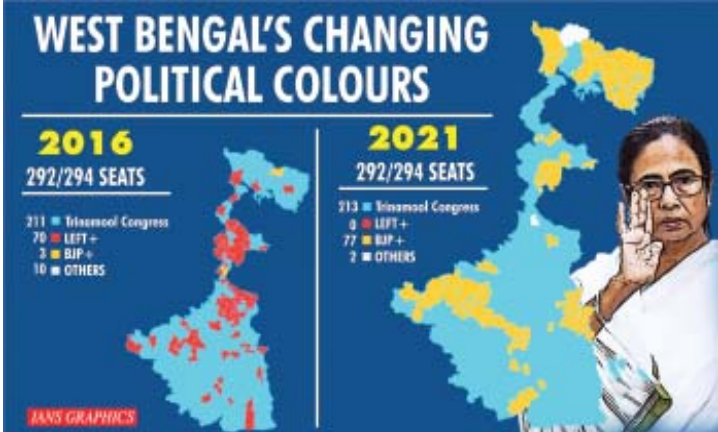


**Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX-
5 STATE ELECTION RESULTS,
INDIA**

YUDHVIR JASWAL
Y MEDIA GROUP EDITOR

DETAILED COVERAGE ON PAGE 4 AND 5

SET BACK IN JUNGLEMAHAL & NORTH BENGAL KEY REASON FOR BJP'S DEFEAT



Despite the saffron brigade's all-powerful national election machinery making a huge pitch in the state, the BJP failed to make an inroad into the heart of the people of West Bengal who gave them an opportunity to look into the eyes of Trinamool Congress in the last Lok Sabha polls.

A detailed analysis of the district wise result shows that though BJP has done reasonably better in the 56 seats of 7 North Bengal districts but has failed miserably in 146 seats in 7 districts in and around Kolkata and in 36 seats in the 3 districts in Central Bengal.

It though managed to retain some of its ground in Purulia, Bankura and East Midnapore but failed in the tribal districts like Jhargram and West Midnapore.

So far as North Bengal is concerned, BJP managed to get 30 out of the 54 seats allowing TMC the rest of the 24 seats.

The saffron brigade held back its ground in the four districts -- Coochbehar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling getting 21 out of the

total 26 seats but in the rest of the three districts, namely North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda they managed to get only 9 seats out of the total 28 seats.

Trinamool that failed miserably in the last Lok Sabha elections managed to regain some of its grounds and got 24 seats out of the total 54.

The seven districts in and around Kolkata -- Kolkata, South and North 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia and Murshidabad -- is an area where the Modi-Amit Shah combination failed to make a mark. There are altogether 146 seats in this region of which Trinamool Congress got 125, leaving the all-powerful with only 20 seats and another seat has been bagged by the newly formed ISF -- an alliance of Sanjukta Morcha.

Nadia is the only district where BJP was ahead of TMC getting 9 out of the total 17 seats. In the rest of the districts including Murshidabad (20), North 24 Parganas (33), South 24 Parganas (31) Howrah (16), Hooghly (18) and Kolkata (11), TMC got 117 seats out of the total 129 seats leaving BJP with a meagre 11 seats.

In central Bengal out of the 36 seats spread across West Burdwan (9) East Burdwan (16) and Birbhum (11), TMC got 32 seats leaving BJP with 4 -- one in Birbhum and three in West Burdwan.

Similarly, in Junglemahal that has 40 seats spread across four districts -- Jhargram (4), Purulia (9), Bankura (12) and West Midnapore (16), BJP managed to get 16 seats and TMC got the rest of the 24 seats. Among the Junglemahal districts BJP is ahead of TMC in Bankura where they managed to get 8 of the total 12 seats.

Interestingly enough in the last Lok Sabha election BJP got all these 40 seats. However, BJP did comparatively better in East Burdwan where 7 of the 16 seats and TMC got the rest of the 9 seats.

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

- Everyone aged 18 and over will be eligible for a shot by May 24 in Ontario & May 14 in Quebec.
- Ontarians 18+ in hot-spot communities eligible to book appointments this week.
- Federal govt. 'working to formalize request' made by Premier Ford to suspend arrival of international students in Ontario.
- Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Recommended For Canadians Aged 30+: NACI.
- Canadians to receive guidance 'very shortly about what they can do with one dose or two doses of the vaccine,': Health Minister Patty Hajdu.
- Ontario will donate 3,000 ventilators to the Indian Red Cross.

CONTD. ON PAGE 3

ONTARIO BAN ON ENTRY OF INT'L STUDENTS TO IMPACT INDIANS



TORONTO, (IANS) Ontario, Canada's worst-hit province which is battling the third wave of the coronavirus, has sought a ban on the arrival of international students.

Currently, students from India make up the majority of international students studying in Ontario.

CONTD. ON PAGE 3

ONTARIO DONATING CRITICAL LIFESAVING MEDICAL EQUIPMENT TO INDIA



Premier Doug Ford issued the following statement:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has strained health care systems around the world. While our province is facing a challenging third wave of COVID-19 driven by new, more-contagious variants, we continue to be committed to helping our friends and partners.

CONTD. ON PAGE 3

400TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF NINTH GURU, "HIND DI CHADAR" GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

Once again in our blessed life, we have got an opportunity to celebrate a milestone birth anniversary of an individual who touched; transcended every life form and is known as "HIND KI CHADAR" meaning shield of the Indian subcontinent. Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was the ninth Guru of the Sikhs in line with the light that started with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, he was born in 1621 and spent his early childhood in Amritsar where he mastered spiritual and martial learning.

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ONTARIO KHALSA DARBAR SET TO OPEN MOBILE VACCINATION CLINIC FOR PEEL RESIDENTS 18+

NEW SITE CONTINUES ONTARIO'S RAMP UP OF VACCINATIONS IN HOT SPOT REGIONS

BRAMPTON — Peel's Ontario Khalsa Darbar (OKD) is the latest location in the province to begin vaccinating Ontarians in select regions hard hit by COVID-19. In plans first announced by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, and Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, Ontario is rolling out vaccines to "hot spot" regions across the province as part of Phase Two of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. The OKD Community Vaccine Clinic, in partnership with the World Sikh Organization of Canada and with support from Amazon Canada, will run from May 4 — 16 and will operate between the hours of 12:00 pm — 8:00 pm.

CONTD. ON PAGE 3



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Y MEDIA JOINS HANDS WITH SONU SOOD IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

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COVID & VACCINE REPORT



COVID VARIANTS MAKE UP MAJORITY OF CANADA’S NEW CASES

OTTAWA, (IANS) Canada has reported 7,145 new cases of Covid-19, bringing the cumulative total to 1,234,181 cases, including 24,300 deaths, according to CTV. Coronavirus variants now make up the majority of Canada’s new Covid-19 cases, Theresa Tam, Canada’s chief public health officer, said on Sunday, Xinhua reported

As of Sunday afternoon, a cumulative total of 121,068 variants were reported, including 115,887 B.1.1.7 variants, 4,468 P1 variants and 713 B.1.351 variants.

Variants of concern represent a majority of cases in Canada, with the B.1.1.7 variant now reported in all provinces and territories in the country and accounting for over 95 percent of variants of concern sequenced to date, Tam said on Twitter.

Tam reiterated that variants are more contagious and are associated with more severe outcomes, and some like the P.1 variant and the B.1.351 variant are more resistant to vaccines.

The B.1.1.7 has become the dominant strain in some provinces, with Manitoba saying last week it will stop notifying residents if they’ve contracted the variant as it now makes up the vast majority of cases.

Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, confirmed 3,732 new Covid-19 cases on Sunday, 363 more cases than what was reported on Saturday.

Out of the 3,732 new cases, Ontario confirmed an additional 2,871 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, bringing the total number to 72,313.

Alberta province reported 1,731 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday as the number of ICU admissions set a new record in the province.

Of the 1,731 cases, 1,132 were the B.1.1.7 variants, 130 were the P.1 variants, and 12 were the B.1.351 variants.

The Alberta government has suspended the spring sitting of the legislature for two weeks due to surging numbers of Covid-19 cases in the province.

SUPPORTING INDIA’S COVID-19 RELIEF EFFORTS; ROGERS DONATED \$100,000 TO THE CANADIAN RED CROSS



As the heartbreaking COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold in India, which is battling a staggering number of COVID-19 cases, we want to express our heartfelt support and deepest sympathies to the people of India. As India’s most populated cities are being especially challenged to respond to the growing need for essential medical equipment, Rogers has donated \$100,000 to the Canadian Red Cross, which is working with local charitable and medical organizations in India. The donation will provide oxygen concentrators, ventilators, generators and other essential equipment to support critical needs at this time.

“We are so grateful to Rogers for their \$100,000 donation to the Red Cross response in India,” said Kelsey Lemon, Senior Director, Interna-

tional Cooperation and Programs, Canadian Red Cross. “Their contribution will provide essential care and supplies like medical support to our teams on the ground which are desperately needed and will help save countless lives.”

Many Canadians, including our Rogers team members, customers, and partner companies we work with, are directly affected by this crisis as they work to support family, friends and colleagues in India at this time.

To make a donation to the Canadian Red Cross, to support COVID-19 relief efforts in India, please visit: <https://donate.redcross.ca/page/81267/donate/1?locale=en-CA>

ONTARIO TO REIMBURSE EMPLOYERS FOR UP TO THREE PAID LEAVE DAYS RELATED TO COVID-19 FOR EVERY EMPLOYEE

TORONTO – While Ontario government continues to work with the federal government to further support vulnerable workers by doubling payments made through the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) program, the province will introduce legislation that, if passed, will offer up to three paid sick days per employee.

On Thursday, April 29, 2021, Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, will introduce legislation that would, if passed, require employers to provide employees with up to \$200 of pay for up to three days if they are missing work because of COVID-19. This program will be retroactive to April 19, 2021 and effective until September 25, 2021, the date the CRSB will expire.

By providing time-limited access to three paid leave days, the province is ensuring employees can pay their bills as they help stop the spread of the virus, including by getting tested, waiting for their results in isolation or going to get their vaccine. The province will partner with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to deliver the program and reimburse employers up to \$200 per day for each employee. “Our government has long advocated for the federal government to enhance the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program to better protect the people of Ontario, especially our tireless essential workers,” said Minister McNaughton. “It is a tremendously positive step that the federal government has signaled their willingness to continue discussions on the CRSB. Now we can fix the outstanding gap in the federal program so workers can get immediate support and can stay home when needed.”

The province has also offered to provide funding to the federal government to double CRSB payments to Ontario residents, adding an additional \$500 per week to eligible individuals for a total of \$1,000 per week. Combined with the province’s proposed three days of paid COVID-19 leave, doubling the CRSB would provide Ontario workers with access to the most generous pandemic paid leave in the country. “Ontario is very proud of those working throughout this unprecedented time to keep essential parts of our economy and local communities open through the pandemic,” said Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board. “The government of Canada and Ontario have done a historic job delivering the Safe Restart Agreement last year. New provincial funding would allow eligible individuals to receive a total of \$1000 per week through the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program if missing work because of COVID-19. Ontario looks forward to continuing discussions to secure Ottawa’s commitment to administer the program with the top-up to all Ontario applicants. We believe that this is the simplest and fastest way to increase program uptake and make this program more effective for those people who need this program most.”

If an eligible worker learns that they must isolate for longer than 50 per cent of the time they would have otherwise worked for the week, whether because of a positive COVID-19 test or risk of exposure, they may apply for the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit if they haven’t taken a paid leave day under this proposal.

ONTARIO KHALSA DARBAR SET TO OPEN MOBILE VACCINATION CLINIC FOR PEEL RESIDENTS 18+

NEW SITE CONTINUES ONTARIO’S RAMP UP OF VACCINATIONS IN HOT SPOT REGIONS

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Individuals 18 or older who meet postal code requirements will be eligible to receive their vaccination and must provide a health card or other form of government-issued ID (driver’s license or passport). To book an appointment, visit peelregion.inputhealth.com “Keeping Bramptonians safe is a priority for our government and the expansion of mobile vaccination clinics in our community will help us turn the tide against the spread of this pandemic,” said Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and MPP for Brampton South.

“As much-needed vaccine supplies are delivered to Ontario, we will continue doing everything we can to ensure that more families in Brampton receive the protection they need to keep them and their loved ones healthy.”

Mobile teams and pop-up clinics like the one set up at Ontario Khalsa Darbar have been administering vaccines in high-risk congregate settings, residential buildings, and faith-based locations in hot spot neighbourhoods such as Brampton and parts of Toronto. Through this initiative, 114 highly impacted neighbourhoods, as identified by postal code, will be reached through mass immunization clinics, mobile teams, and pop-up clinics.

“I am thrilled at the announcement of another pop-up vaccine clinic right here in Peel Region,” said Amarjot Sandhu, MPP for Brampton West. “By getting the residents of Peel the vaccines that they need we are once again demonstrating our steadfast commitment to protecting the health and safety of those who reside in COVID-19 hotspots.”

“Having delivered 500,000 doses to date, Peel’s Community Mass Vaccination Program is expanding thanks to provincially brokered private-public partnerships. This will offer more opportunities for Peel residents to get the vaccine and help in our fight against COVID-19,” said Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health, Region of Peel. “I am grateful that these initial enterprises have stepped up to sponsor public vaccination clinics while supporting their employees who cannot work from home.

These additional clinics will complement the over 100,000 doses a week that are delivered through current channels including community, pharmacy, hospital and mobile clinics in Peel.

“Thank you to Peel Public Health and Ontario Khalsa Darbar for working together to set up this pop-up clinic,” said Deepak Anand, MPP for Mississauga Malton. “This new clinic makes vaccines more accessible to the most vulnerable in our community and this is a great example of how we can all work together to stop this wave of COVID-19.”

Our community has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. This is why inclusive decision-making, community partnerships, and vaccination rollouts that target marginalized communities are so critical,” said Sharanjeet Kaur, Vice President Ontario of the World Sikh Organization of Canada. “We look forward to working with the Ontario government, Peel Public Health, and Amazon is ensuring that the OKD Community Vaccine Clinic is a success as well as a model to be replicated across Ontario and Canada.” Gurpreet Singh Bal, President of the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, added, “Gurdwaras are important hubs that service the needs of all communities. We are excited to open our doors for this innovative approach to vaccinating hot spot residents in Peel. This is our seva, or selfless service, in the Sikh spirit of sarbat da bhalla, which means may all people prosper.” “Nothing is more important to Amazon than protecting the health and safety of our employees and the communities we serve,” said Vibhore Arora, Director, Regional Operations, Amazon Canada. “We are proud to partner with the Ontario government, Region of Peel, Ontario Khalsa Darbar and Switch Health to sponsor the first community vaccination clinic of its kind in Ontario. Together, we are making an immediate and meaningful impact to ease the burden of COVID-19 in some of the hardest-hit communities in Peel.”

- QUICK FACTS:**
- Peel Health OKD Community Vaccine Clinic Booking Portal: <https://peelregion.inputhealth.com/ebooking/#new/locations>
 - Postal code eligibility for those 18+:
- L4T | L4W | L4X | L4Z | L5A | L5B | L5C | L5K | L5L | L5M | L5N | L5R | L5V | L5W | L6P | L6R | L6S L6T | L6V | L6W | L6X | L6Y | L6Z | L7A | L7C

ONTARIO BAN ON ENTRY OF INT'L STUDENTS TO IMPACT INDIANS

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Making this announcement on Friday, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said that since 94 per cent of all new cases in Ontario are of new variant of the virus and are coming from outside, he would urge the federal government to ban the arrival of International students into the province to check the spread of the virus. The Premier said, “Not enough is being done to keep these deadly variants out of Canada. Last week, the new Indian variant was reported here in Ontario. It didn't swim here I can tell you that.”

Responding to the Ontario Premier's request, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that his government would do everything to stop the spread of the virus. Trudeau said, “Premier Ford has asked that we should suspend the arrival of international students and because at this time Ontario is the only province making this request, we are happy to work narrowly with them.”

Canada banned all direct flights from India for one month earlier this week, after Health Canada statistics showed that many passengers from India were testing positive for the virus. There were 219,855 Indian students in Canada last year, making up about a third of all 642,480 foreign students. The majority of them study in institutions in Ontario.

ONTARIO DONATING CRITICAL LIFESAVING MEDICAL EQUIPMENT TO INDIA

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

In response to a call for help from the High Commissioner to Canada and Consul General in Toronto, Ontario will donate 3,000 ventilators to the Indian Red Cross. The Ontario government will also help coordinate the transportation of approved medical equipment that is being put together for the Indian Red Cross by the Indian diaspora and friends of India in Ontario.

While we remain very concerned about the challenges facing our hospitals here at home as more patients require intensive care, we have taken decisive action to add more hospital beds than ever before. Doing so will allow us to safely support our friends and allies in desperate need of help while never sacrificing our ability to care for Ontarians.

The made-in-Ontario e700 Transport ventilators are manufactured by O-Two Medical Technologies, a company based in Brampton, with support from the Ontario Together Fund. This partnership is another example of Team Ontario working together during this pandemic to support those in need, both here at home and abroad.

Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX- 5 STATES ELECTION, INDIA



MAMATA, VIJAYAN'S WIN RIGHTLY PREDICTED BY C-VOTER

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The comfortable win of the All India Trinamool Congress of Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal was predicted six months ago even when BJP's campaign was at its peak. The TMC winning assembly polls came into survey of the Centre For Voting Opinion and Trends In Election Research (C-Voter) in its exit poll. The Delhi based survey agency had also predicted a year ago that incumbent Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) will make a spectacular comeback due to his handling of the Covid situation in Kerala. The ruling LDF created history on Sunday by winning the Assembly polls for a second consecutive term as it crossed the majority mark of 71 in the state Assembly. It is the first time in nearly four decades that an elected government retained power in Kerala, bucking the trend of swinging between communists and the Congress-led UDF. Interestingly, C-Voter in the last election in Tamil Nadu had rightly predicted in its survey that AIADMK is coming back when everyone else said DMK is winning. C-Voter had then predicted that the AIADMK will win 139 seats and the DMK-Congress will win 78 seats.

In Karnataka assembly election polls, C-Voter had rightly predicted that the BJP would be the single largest party but short of majority when everyone else said Congress is winning. The C-Voter Exit poll in 2018 May stated that the BJP would emerge as the single-largest party in Karnataka Assembly elections, the incumbent Congress will fail to retain power.

Similarly, in Bihar assembly polls in 2020, the survey agency had predicted NDA will win in close photo finish when others were claiming that RJD would be sweeping in the state.

In Delhi assembly election, the polling agency had stated that riots in Delhi will have no impact in the polls and AAP will sweep in the elections.

Trinamool Congress successful in consolidating Muslim votes

KOLKATA, (IANS) The Trinamool Congress which scored a landslide victory in the assembly elections was successful in consolidating the Muslim votes and that had a direct impact on the results of the election. Of the 63 Muslim dominated assembly constituencies elections were held in 61 constituencies and the Trinamool Congress won 58 of them leaving two for the BJP and one for the SanjukataMorcha. The bulk of the Muslim dominated seats are mostly in four districts - Murshidabad, Malda, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas. While Murshidabad has 16 Muslim dominated seats among the total 22 Assembly seats the rest of the three districts have 9 assembly

seats each. However, elections were held in 61 of these total 63 seats because elections in two districts - Samserganj and Jangipur - were deferred because of the death of candidates. Among the rest of the 61 seats the Trinamool Congress managed to get 58 seats.

Interestingly, among these 58 seats the Trinamool Congress managed to win 30 seats with a margin of 40,000 or more votes. Candidates like SK Jiyauddin at Sujapur in Malda district, Monirul Islam in Farakka, Idris Ali in Bhagabangola - both in Murshidabad - managed to win with a margin of more than 50,000 votes having a vote share above 50 percent of the total votes. The BJP managed to get only one seat in North Dinajpur and another in Murshidabad district while the Indian Secular Front -- an alliance partner of the SanjukataMorcha -- managed the single seat in Bhargar in South 24 Parganas district. With the Hindu votes expected to polarise in favour of the BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee feared that if Muslim votes don't come to the Trinamool it might lead to her defeat. That was evident in her speeches where she appealed to the electorate not to allow the person who is visiting Bengal from Hyderabad, as he received money from the BJP, to contest the Assembly elections. She was hinting at All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi. She also took potshots at Abbas Siddique, the cleric of Furfura Sharif, who formed the Indian Secular Front (ISF) and joined hands with the Congress and the Left Front to contest the election.

The Muslim vote bank is a big and deciding factor in Bengal polls. For almost three-and-a-half decades, the Muslims were wooed and considered a vote bank by the Left Front, which ruled the state for 34 years. The 'Poriborton' came when the TMC consolidated the farmers, workers and Muslims, and especially the poor, during their Singur and Nandigram agitations and the Muslims started to shift their loyalty from the Left to the Trinamool Congress.

In 2011 the Left Front was successful in retaining the Muslim vote bank and managed 45 per cent of the minority votes but the huge incumbency factor against the then government allowed Mamata Banerjee to come to power. "The results prove that she was successful in consolidating the Muslim votes in her favour. Trinamool Congress had the fear of ISF -- the newly born political party under the leadership of a Muslim cleric could have been a huge spoiler for the Trinamool Congress. If they could have managed to divide the Muslim vote share then that would have been a huge loss for the ruling Trinamool Congress. However, the fear of NRC and CAA if BJP came to power and the belief that Mamata Banerjee will fight for the cause of the Muslims might have helped the Trinamool Congress in getting their support," said analysts.

NDA SET TO FORM GOVERNMENT IN PUDUCHERRY



CHENNAI, (IANS) The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will be forming a government in Puducherry, a senior BJP leader said on Sunday. According to party national General Secretary C.T. Ravi, the BJP has been successful in retaining power in Assam, and further, "is on its way to form a NDA Government in Puducherry".

"This is no mean feat by our party. I congratulate our Karyakartas and leaders for these victories," he said.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Puducherry consists of the All India N.R. Congress, which contested in 16 of the Union Territory's 30 seats, the BJP nine and the AIADMK five.

According to Election Commission, the All India N.R.Congress has won 10 seats, followed by the BJP winning four and leading in two. On the other hand, the rival front member DMK has won three seats and leading in three while the Congress has won two.

Four Independents have won their seats and two are in the lead.

The BJP has been finding it difficult to make a mark in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry all these years.

It opened its account in the Puducherry Assembly with three nominated members, and then saw Congress leaders joining it in recent times, leading to the fall of the V. Narayansamy-led Congress government ahead of the elections.

"It will be interesting to see a government in which BJP is a part. This will be the first time that the BJP will be part of the government in a Tamil speaking land," political analyst KolahalaSrenivaas told IANS.

THREE OF FIVE BJP MPS BITE THE DUST IN BENGAL



KOLKATA, (IANS) While the Trinamool Congress is close to attaining a three-fourth majority in the Assembly elections in West Bengal, three of the five heavyweights of the BJP have fallen prey to the deluge of the ruling party.

Star BJP candidates and MPs Swapan Dasgupta, Locket Chatterjee and Babul Supriyo have all lost in the elections, while MP NisithPramanik has won by a slender margin of 57 votes. Another Lok Sabha member of the BJP, Jagannath Sarkar, also won the elections. The latest Election Commission data show that of the 292 Assembly constituencies where polling was held, the Trinamool has won 186 seats and is leading on 26 seats, taking its cumulative figure to 214, only four short of three-fourth majority, humbling the BJP which has won 60 seats and is leading on 16 others, taking its total tally to 76. While NisithPramanik won by a thin margin of 57 votes from Dinhat in Cooch Behar, Babul Supriyo, Locket Chatterjee and Swapan Dasgupta lost from Tollygunge, Chinsurah and Tarakeshwar, respectively.

Swapan Dasgupta, who contested from Tarakeshwar in Hooghly district and was being considered to be the face of Bengal BJP, lost to RamenduSinharay of Trinamool by a margin of 7,484 votes.

Similarly, Locket Chatterjee who had earlier won the Lok Sabha polls from Hooghly, lost to Asit Majumdar of the Trinamool in Chuchura by margin of 18,417 votes.

Babul Supriyo, who was elected to the Lok Sabha from Asansol, lost against Arup Biswas of Trinamool in Tollygunje by 50,080 votes.

MAMATA EMERGES AS CONTENDER ON NATIONAL POLITICAL STAGE

NEW DELHI, (IANS) After winning a bitterly-fought battle with the BJP to record her third successive victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections, Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee seems to have emerged as a formidable challenge to the Centre's ruling party. With leaders of different regional parties, including NCP chief Sharad Pawar, sending her congratulatory messages, the message from the Assembly election is clear that Banerjee is capable of taking the challenge of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, and combating it successfully.

However, the Congress, which was expected to win at least two states but could not do, failing to wrest Assam from the BJP and Kerala from the Left, still insists that it is the only option to BJP.

Congress chief spokesperson RandeepSurjewala said: "Congress is the sole national party which is alternative to the BJP as it is fighting BJP in all the states." But the messages from the leaders of regional parties indicate that Banerjee, whose Trinamool which was once part of the UPA, has shown her mettle by single-handedly defeating the BJP and in a convincing manner.

KAMAL HAASAN LOSES IN COIMBATORE SOUTH TO BJP'S SRINIVASAN

CHENNAI, (IANS) Superstar and MakkalNeedhiMaiaam (MNM) founder, Kamal Haasan lost the Coimbatore South seat by a margin of 1,500 votes against BJP women's wing national President, Vanathi Srinivasan. Congress candidate Mayura Jayakumar was relegated to the third position.

With the defeat of Kamal Haasan in his electoral debut, his MNM failed to open the account in the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

In the 2016 polls, Amman K. Arjunan of the AIADMK had won the seat, while it had gone to the party's Challenger Dorai in 2011. In this election, there was some friction after the AIADMK's NDA ally, the BJP, was allotted the seat but the matter was resolved.



MAMATA'S REACTION AFTER LOSING NANDIGRAM: NO BIG DEAL... BUT BENGAL HAS SAVED INDIA

NEW DELHI – West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, after registering a spectacular victory for her party, has lost her own election in Nandigram to one time ally and protege Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP. Her immediate reaction was "it is not a big deal. I accept people's verdict in Nandigram.

Speaking to reporters in Kolkata she, however, said that she would approach the court over the "mischief". She lost the Nandigram seat by 10,000 votes. Earlier reports had indicated that she has won by a margin of 1,200 votes.

"Let the Nandigram people give whatever verdict they want, I accept that. Nandigram was a sacrifice that was needed in the larger victory. We have won the state," she said. "Whatever happened is for the best. I will not have to go that far regularly now, I am saved in that way. But I will go to the court because I have heard there were some malpractices," she told reporters.

The TMC is leading in over 200 seats now. Reacting to her party's performance, she hailed the people of Bengal. "This is a victory for the people of Bengal. I am proud to say that Bengal saved the country. The Election Commission behaved badly with us — they behaved like BJP's spokesperson. Two slogans — 'Khela hobe' and 'Joy Bangla' — worked well for us. Bengal won the match. We will distribute 50,000 footballs among clubs in rural Bengal."

She also pointed out that combating Covid-19 will be the topmost priority of her government.

"Combating Covid-19 will be our topmost priority. The swearing-in will be a low-key event because of the prevailing situation. We will weather this storm. We will distribute free vaccines to everyone. Also request the Centre to distribute free vaccines to all. If this does not happen, I will sit on a dharna in front of the Gandhi Murti (in Kolkata)," she said. The chief minister added, "We appeal to everyone not to do a victory rally now. But this will be after Covid is defeated. We will do a big victory rally at the Brigade Parade Ground later after the situation is normal." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav and NCP leader Sharad Pawar were among those who congratulated Banerjee for TMC's performance.



Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX-5 STATES ELECTION, INDIA



M.K. STALIN, DMK'S 'COMMANDER', SET TO RULE TAMIL NADU FINALLY

CHENNAI, (IANS) For the 68-year-old M.K. Stalin, affectionately called "Thalapathi" (Commander) by members of his DMK, the wait to lead Tamil Nadu as its head will soon get over.

The DMK, led by Stalin, a former Deputy Chief Minister, is all set to come to power after a 10-year hiatus, and has even gained a majority on its own. With the successive poll victories - the first one was the 2019 Lok Sabha polls - and now the Assembly polls, Stalin has established himself as an undisputed leader within and outside the party.

Stalin has to wait for some more days for his coronation as Chief Minister. His earlier coronation as the DMK's second President in 2018 was a smooth affair. DMK's then General Secretary K. Anbazhagan then said 1,307 party officials had proposed and seconded Stalin's candidature.

Stalin was given the role of Working President in January 2017 after his father and party patriarch M. Karunanidhi was largely confined to his home due to age-related ailments.

Born on March 1, 1953 to Karunanidhi and DayaluAmmal, Stalin was named after the Russian leader Joseph Stalin who died on March 5, 1953 - four days after Stalin's birth. Legend has it that Karunanidhi wanted to name him 'Ayyadurai' - after DK founder 'Periyar' E.V. Ramasamy and DMK founder C.N. Annadurai. Like his multi-faceted father who entered public life at the age of 14, Stalin too started his political journey by becoming an ordinary member of the DMK at the age of 14 and campaigning for the party in the 1967 polls. A year earlier he had formed a youth forum: Gopalapuram Youth DMK. Stalin came to public notice at large when he was jailed under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) for opposing the imposition of Emergency by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He became the party's Youth Wing Secretary in 1984 and continued to hold that post for a long time. It was in 1984 that Stalin made his electoral debut from Thousand Lights constituency in Chennai but lost. He finally entered the Assembly in 1989. The other electoral loss for him was in 1991 at the same seat. Till date, Stalin has won six Assembly polls - four times from Thousand Lights and twice from Kolathur constituency. His seventh victory comes in 2021.

Stalin was the Local Administration Minister in the Karunanidhi government (2006-11) and became Deputy Chief Minister in 2009 and stayed in the post till 2011.

As the aged Karunanidhi was not able to move much, the mantle of being lead campaigner fell on him in 2016 Assembly polls. The DMK won 89 seats and narrowly missed the victory to the AIADMK then led by J. Jayalalithaa. Stalin became the Leader of the Opposition. But the party suffered a shock defeat losing the security deposit in the by-election from R.K. Nagar constituency in Chennai, a seat held by Jayalalithaa. The by-election was won by T.T.V. Dhinakaran, a rebel AIADMK leader who later floated the AMMK. Before becoming a state minister Stalin was the Chennai Mayor in 1996-2001 and 2001-02. He was also the party Treasurer.

During his Mayorship, the Chennai Corporation built several flyovers to ease the traffic flow. The AIADMK government headed by Jayalalithaa had, however, arrested Stalin for alleged corruption in building the flyovers. But it did not affect his career. Even Karunanidhi had once openly declared that if he had a chance then he would announce Stalin as his successor.

But Stalin's elder brother and former Union Minister M.K. Alagiri - then incharge of the party affairs in the southern districts - opposed it and said he cannot think of anybody else as his leader other than Karunanidhi.

Later, Alagiri was dismissed from the party for anti-party activities. Meanwhile, Stalin started taking strong hold of the party reins following the indisposition of Karunanidhi.

The Alagiri-Stalin rivalry plagued the DMK for a long time but Karunanidhi kept a fragile peace till his passing away.

Stalin is married to Durga, a believer, and the couple have two children - Udayanidhi and Senthamarai.

Udhayanidhi, an actor turned politician, also made successful electoral debut this time from the Chepauk-Thiruvallikkeni Assembly constituency. Stalin also had acted in two movies and in two television serials.

Succeeding Karunanidhi, an illustrious leader, Stalin did not try to show himself as a leader different from his father, and in all his election campaign speeches, always said he is the son of Karunanidhi.

Roping in political strategist Prashant Kishor to chart the party's victory route, Stalin continued with the campaign of painting the Narendra Modi-led Central government as "anti-Tamil" and "anti-states".

The party also successfully built a public perception that it would win the polls and the AIADMK government was subservient to the Central government.

Stalin also carried out hard bargaining for seats with allies and made many of them contest under the party's Rising Sun electoral symbol.

On the other factors that worked for the DMK in the assembly elections, a political analyst told IANS, were the anti-incumbency against the AIADMK government, the anti-BJP sentiment, alliance arithmetic, the steady cultivation of the perception that it will win the polls over a long period of time, and caste neutrality.

He did not agree that the assembly poll victory was an extension of the DMK-led alliance's victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

"That was a total rout for the AIADMK-led alliance. During the Lok Sabha elections, it was Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for the Prime Ministership that was on the centre stage," the analyst said.

In 2019 there was an anti-Modi wave in Tamil Nadu. But in the 2021 Assembly elections, Stalin was at the centre stage but there was no wave in his favour to rout the AIADMK, the analyst said.

Be that as it may, with the 2021 Assembly election victory and heading the state government, Stalin has very many challenges facing him.

First and the foremost will be arresting the spread of coronavirus.

As an opposition leader, he had fired several salvos against Chief Minister K. Palaniswami. And now Stalin has to take control.

As he used to say, the state finances were in bad shape. And now it is his responsibility to set it right while fulfilling many of the populist poll promises that were made this time.

After years of maintaining an anti-BJP stance, Stalin has to navigate carefully the centre-state relations as a Chief Minister.

What is now certain is that Stalin may come out of his father's shadows. And the long wait to become the Chief Minister will soon get over.

ALL EYES ON CONG AFTER ITS DEFEAT IN KERALA

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, (IANS) With Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan scripting a new political history in Kerala by becoming the first sitting government to retain power, all eyes are on the badly hit Congress, which leads the United Democratic Front, as never before has such a thing happened in the state. In the 2016 Assembly polls the UDF had won 47 and the Congress 22 seats, but in the results that came out on Sunday the UDF tally sunk to 41 and the Congress to 21. State Congress president Mullapally Ramachandran when asked if he would resign after taking the moral responsibility of the defeat, said, "I will definitely come back to you after going through what actually happened." Today with the scenario looking bleak for the Congress, as already five years have passed without power and now will have to wait another five years on the sidelines, it could well be a period of test for the party right from its top leaders and grassroots workers. A media critic said that it is doubtful if the fireworks in the Congress will continue this time also, which has always washed its dirty linen in the public. "The party high command saw through that they need not bank on just one leader as the star campaigner and it was their move to draft in OommenChandy the last of the Congress leaders who has a pan Kerala acceptance as the one to oversee the elections to be assisted by Ramachandran and also the Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala. The campaign and the candidate selection was jointly seen by the trio," said the critic. With all the three having a collective responsibility, it's unlikely that any one of them will be held responsible and all that remains to be seen is with Chandy holding no post, will Ramachandran and Chennithala go on their own. If that happens, then one can expect fireworks as it could well be a generation change that will happen in the Congress party, as there are a few contenders from the second line leaders eyeing posts, to take forward the party and it includes former State Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, veteran party legislators V.D. Sateeshan and P.T.Thomas. Then it remains to be seen if they will go for young turks like P.C. Vishnunath and even ShafiParambil, who was given a fright till the last moment by Metroman E. Sreedharan. "If the Congress party needs to get back to its position, the need of the hour is to stop thrusting leaders from the top to all party posts, which has been happening for the past over three decades. The party should immediately go in for electing leaders through the ballot, if not then there is not going to be any hope for the party," added the critic. So at the moment, all eyes are on the upcoming meeting of the Congress and also the UDF and it remains to be seen if there will be a demand for a generation change and if it happens then it would be curtains for veterans like Chandy, Ramachandran and Chennithala. But the silver lining for these veterans are the allies of the Congress, especially the second biggest ally -- the Indian Union Muslim League. The IUML's seasoned veterans like P.K. Kunhalikutty, M.K. Muneer may not be keen to play second fiddle to young turks in the Congress, so Chennithala might get a second life.

ARROGANCE & MONEY POWER LOST IN BENGAL: SIBAL



NEW DELHI, (IANS) After the West Bengal poll results, Congress leader Kapil Sibal on Monday said that arrogance and money power have been defeated in the state.

"In West Bengal Who lost: Arrogance, Might, Money power, Using Jai Shri Ram for politics, Divisive agenda & The Election Commission. She stood up to them & WON," Sibal tweeted on Monday.

The Congress leader's tweet has subtle message to his own party that whoever stood against the BJP with full zeal won.

The Congress on Sunday could only register win in Tamil Nadu, that too as a junior alliance partner and lost other four states, however it had the chance to win Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.

After losing in the state polls the Congress on Sunday had said that the party will "study" the results, correct mistakes and do a course correction. Congress Chief Spokesperson RandeepSurjewala addressing a press conference on Sunday read out a statement and said, "The Congress Party will definitely study the results and all the reasons diligently and we are committed to correct our mistakes and do appropriate course correction." "We recognize that the election results are not as per our expectations, particularly those of Assam and Kerala," he added. Surjewala said the people's mandate is the final word in a democracy. People of West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have given their democratic mandate for the next five years. We accept the verdict with humility and a sense of responsibility. The statement said the party had lost the elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal but we have neither lost our morale nor our resolve or determination to continuously become the people's voice in these times of unprecedented calamity.

BJP-LED NDA RETURNS TO POWER IN ASSAM FOR 2ND TIME IN A ROW



GUWAHATI, (IANS) The ruling BJP-led NDA returned to power in Assam for the second consecutive term as the "Mitrarajot" secured 68 seats in the 126-member assembly, election officials said on Sunday midnight. According to the latest tally of the Election Commission results late on Sunday night, of the total of 126 seats, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has so far won 53 seats, and leading in six seats while its ally AsomGana Parishad (AGP) won nine seats and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) won six seats.

The Congress has won 23 seats and leading in seven seats. Other partners of the Congress led "Maharajot" (grand alliance) - the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) won 13 seats and leading in three seats, Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) and Communist Party of India-Marxist won four and one seat respectively.

Raijor Dal (RD) President and jailed leader Akhil Gogoi, who is contesting from Sibasagar constituency as an independent candidate, also won the seat by defeating the BJP candidate Surabhi Rajkonwari by a margin of 11, 875 votes.

The BJP had won 60 seats during the previous Assembly elections in 2016 while its ally AGP had managed 14 seats and the Congress had secured 26 seats and one seat went to the independent candidate. Contesting the 2016 elections independently, the AIUDF won 13 seats while Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) had bagged 12 seats five years ago..The BPF was earlier an ally of the BJP and is now an alliance partner of the 10-party "Maharajot".

WHEN BJP PROVED AN ALBATROSS AROUND THE NECK FOR AIADMK IN TAMIL NADU



The 2021 Assembly election in Tamil Nadu and Kerala was perhaps the best opportunity for the Bharatiya Janata Party to make inroads into these two South Indian states. It was initially thought that the decimation of the Left in West Bengal and Tripura would have its impact in Kerala which the BJP would exploit to its advantage. Not only that the Congress is not in the best of health in most of the states of India. No one was saying that the BJP would come to power but it would at least emerge as a third force.

But the May 2 results shattered the dream. The party failed to even open its account in Kerala this time notwithstanding the fact that it projected Metro Man, 89-year old E Sreedharan as the chief ministerial candidate. He himself lost from his own constituency, a disastrous debut of his political career so late in the life.

After the verdict in Tamil Nadu a section of the AIADMK leadership regretted its decision to tie with the saffron party as it proved too heavy a burden to carry. The tension had started even before the seat-sharing arrangements were finalised. The AIADMK reluctantly agreed to leave just 20 seats for the party which is in power in the Centre. This was even less than what it left for the PMK, a regional party. The PMK contested on 23 seats. The saffron party could win only four seats with the president of Tamil Nadu M Murugan himself losing from his seat. The PMK won five. Independent political observers were predicting that the DMK-Congress-Left alliance would repeat the 2019 Lok Sabha poll performance when the NDA could win only one seat —and that was by the AIADMK.



SIKH-CANADIAN JASMAN SANGHA SIGNS WITH DIVISION 1 TEXAS A&M CORPUS CHRISTI TEAM ON FULL SCHOLARSHIP

CORPUS CHRISTI – The first National Letter of Intent of the Steve Lutz era came in Friday as the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi men's basketball program added Jasman Sangha to the squad. Sangha is a 6-8 forward/center from Brampton, Ontario, Canada. He'll join the team after spending the last year at Garden City CC where he averaged 13.4 points and 6.2 rebounds per game. Sangha shot .525 from the floor and .455 from beyond the arc. "I'm excited to join the team and hope to be a mentor for younger Canadians who wish to play basketball," Sangha said. "This has been the result of years of hard work and I'm looking forward to getting started in Corpus Christi, Texas!" Jasman is one of the first few Sikh-Canadians to play Division 1 Basketball in the NCAA.

"Jasman is a tremendous young man with an infectious personality. He is a very good scorer on the block and can also stretch the floor with his three-point shooting ability," Head Coach Steve Lutz said. "We are excited to add him to the Islander family." Sangha began his collegiate career at Pensacola State where he played in 20 games in the shortened 2019-20 season. Since it was a COVID-19 year, Sangha still has three seasons of eligibility remaining. Prior to Pensacola, Sangha was a four-year letter winner at Louise Arbour Secondary School. He was named both the MVP and Defensive Player of the Year in 2017 and was named an All-Star. Sangha was a two-time All-League selection in 2017 & 2018. Sangha will be enrolling in the business program at A&M-Corpus Christi.

400TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF NINTH GURU, "HIND DI CHADAR" GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

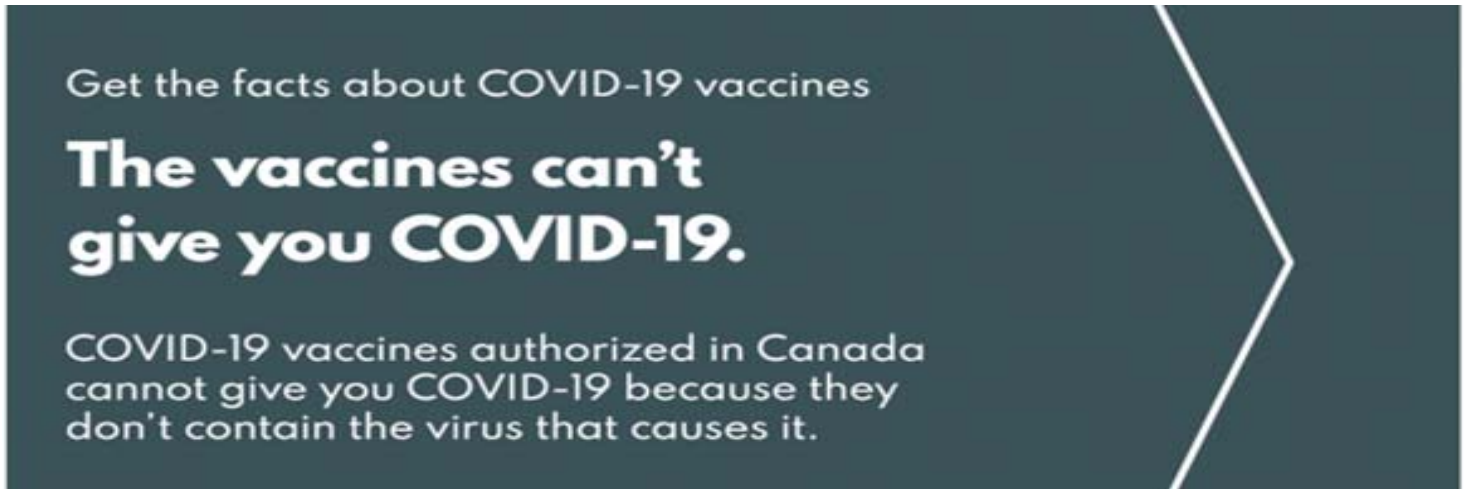
CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Guru Tegh Bahadur ji later moved to Baba Bakala in 1624 on his father's advice where Guru Ji spent 20 years and through divine intervention discovered as the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs in 1644. Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's life is a life unparalleled as to how to preach and spread a just civilized society, he travelled extensively throughout the Northern and North-Eastern part of India reaching as far as Dhaka, Bangladesh. Guru Ji's words as inscribed in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji "be fearless in your pursuit of a just society: he who holds none in fear, nor is afraid of anyone, is acknowledged as a man of true wisdom". It was his pursuit of a life without persecution and religious freedom that led to his ultimate sacrifice at the hands of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Guru Ji's sacrifice was one that no one has ever seen, ended up saving the faith and lives of the Hindus living under the tyranny of Aurangzeb, hence his title "HIND KI CHADAR". Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom helped to make the protection of human rights central to the Sikh identity, the attempt to convert the ninth Guru clearly made an indelible impression on the Guru Ji's nine-year-old son, Gobind who taking inspiration from the martyrdom eventually organized the Sikh's into a distinct, formal, patterned community, Guru Gobind Singh Ji eventually created the Khalsa identity to further fight for human rights and a just civilized society. The teachings as inscribed in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and his exemplary life is an inspiration for generations since then, the guiding light that was started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji came to a full circle with Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's family, first with his sacrifice where he was beheaded in a public square and with the sacrifices of his son and Grandsons. One cannot find any example that can even come close to the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, let us all take this opportune time to pledge to work on his principles which we so need badly in this world and especially going through the pandemic. Guru Ji's life is an inspiration that we can achieve our goals with faith, inner strength and belief in the almighty, let our religious beliefs be our source for a just, clean and helpful world.



EYE-CATCHING EID STAMP ISSUED TO MARK ISLAMIC CELEBRATIONS

TORONTO – Canada Post joins more than a million Muslims in Canada and many others around the world in celebrating the festivals of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha with the release of an eye-catching Eid stamp. The issue is the third in an ongoing series celebrating the two important Islamic holidays, which begin this year around May 12 and July 9, respectively, and can last for several days. **About Eid festivals** Eid festivals are greeted with celebration, as they coincide with the completion of two practices of religious and cultural significance – Eid al-Fitr heralds the end of the fast held during the holy month of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha follows the annual Hadj pilgrimage to the holy Kaaba shrine in Mecca. Gratitude and appreciation for community and greater humanity are central to both events. Thanks are expressed through communal prayers and feasts, family visits, and acts of kindness and charity to others – particularly the less fortunate. **About the stamp** A luminous night sky viewed through a latticed window is the focus of this year's design by Context Creative. The crescent moon, a highly recognizable symbol of Islam, alludes to the fact that both festivals begin with the sighting of a new moon. Printed by Lowe-Martin, the domestic rate Permanent™ stamp is available in a booklet of 10 and on an Official First Day Cover, which is available at canadapost.ca/shop.



COVID VACCINES CAN'T GIVE YOU THE VIRUS - IT PROTECTS YOU AGAINST IT (HEALTH CANADA AND PHAC/ TWITTER)

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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES SICK DAY PROGRAM

3 PAID SICK DAYS FOR ALL WORKERS

The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit currently provides 20 sick days! 3 paid sick days will be added on top of this existing program that gives \$500 per week.

ELIGIBILITY

- going for a COVID-19 test
- staying home awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test
- being sick with COVID-19
- going to get vaccinated
- experiencing a side effect from a COVID-19 vaccination
- having been advised to self-isolate due to COVID-19 by an employer, medical practitioner or other authority
- taking care of a dependent who is: sick with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 or self-isolating due to COVID-19.

The province will double the funding for the Federal sick days benefit to \$1,000.

FROM \$500 PER WEEK TO \$1000 PER WEEK

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED PAID SICK LEAVE PROGRAM FOR WORKERS (PRABMEETSARKARIA/ TWITTER)

The Ontario government is expanding bookings through the province's online booking system to individuals aged

18 AND OVER

Effective May 3, 2021 at 8 AM, living in hotspot zones.

If you are 18 or older in 2021 and live in **BRAMPTON** in the postal code areas:

L6P

L6R

L6S

L6T

L6C

L6V

L6W

L6X

L6Y

L6Z

L7A

You can schedule your vaccine appointment by visiting

[Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](https://ontario.ca/bookvaccine)

or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Information Line number at 1-888-999-6488.

ADULTS 18+ LIVING IN HOTSPOT AREAS IN BRAMPTON CAN NOW BOOK VACCINE APPOINTMENT (PRABMEETSARKARIA/ TWITTER)

The best COVID-19 vaccine is the first one you are offered

18 or older?

If you live in a hot spot, you can now book your COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

L4T	L5B	L5N	L6R	L6X
L4W	L5C	L5R	L6S	L6Y
L4X	L5K	L5V	L6T	L6Z
L4Z	L5L	L5W	L6V	L7A
L5A	L5M	L6P	L6W	L7C

PEEL RESIDENTS 18+ LIVING WITHIN HOT SPOT POSTAL CODES CAN NOW BOOK COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENT (REGION OF PEEL/ TWITTER)

ONTARIO TAKES NEXT STEP TOWARDS TWO-WAY, ALL-DAY GO SERVICE ON KITCHENER LINE



TORONTO — MPP Amarjot Sandhu, Member of Provincial Parliament for Brampton West, announced that the Ontario government and Metrolinx released the Preliminary Design Business Case that highlights the benefits of the two-way, all-day GO service project including more train service and shorter travel times as well as a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to add new station platforms and track upgrades. The Kitchener GO Rail Expansion project is part of the government’s plan to spark investment and support population growth in the region.

“We are one step closer to delivering rapid transit to communities across the Kitchener line,” said MPP Amarjot Sandhu. “Today’s announcement is proof that we are making headway in our commitment to investing in transit that will support the growth here in Brampton.”

“Our government is taking action to deliver significant advancements to GO service between Toronto and Kitchener that will bring more trips at every point along the line,” said Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation. “This project will help build fast, frequent and reliable transit that will better support families and businesses along the entire corridor.”

The release of the Preliminary Design Business Case for Kitchener GO Rail Service Expansion highlights benefits including significant travel time savings for GO riders with train service every 15 minutes on core segments. The Kitchener line is projected to have 39,000 jobs and an estimated 54,000 residents living within approximately 10 minutes walking distance from a station with two-way, all-day service. The Kitchener line also forms the core of the Toronto-Waterloo Innovation corridor, a fast-growing innovation technology hub with the potential to see a growth of 170,000 jobs if the technology supercluster is realized.

“We are making great headway in our long-standing goal to better connect the thriving businesses and residential communities between Kitchener-Waterloo and Toronto,” said Kinga Surma, Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA). “By building this major transit project, our government is increasing the reliability of transit, reducing congestion and commute times while also supporting the growth of communities.”

In addition to releasing the Preliminary Design Business Case, Metrolinx has issued an RFQ to move ahead with procurement for improved infrastructure between Georgetown and Kitchener. Interested parties are now invited to submit their proposals to Metrolinx. The RFQ package includes infrastructure improvements at Acton GO Station and Guelph Central Station that will help enable two-way train service, new maintenance of tracks, other track upgrades that will allow for higher train speeds.

The province has also recently completed significant work on the Kitchener GO Rail line with the complete excavation of the twin tunnels under Highways 401 and 409 to increase train capacity on the corridor and continues to work closely with CN Rail to increase GO Train service for two-way, all-day service.

QUICK FACTS

By 2041, the service is forecasted to attract between 10.9 million to 11 million annual boardings and reduce annual vehicle kilometres travelled by 16.2 million kilometres.

An estimated 2.3 million people and 1.4 million jobs will be located within 5 km of an existing GO station along the Kitchener line by 2031. Travel time is estimated to be approximately 90 minutes between Kitchener GO station and Union Station, down from 111 minutes.


‘REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) GREW 0.4% IN FEBRUARY, FOLLOWING 0.7% GROWTH IN JANUARY.’ STATSCAN

Real gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.4% in February, following 0.7% growth in January. This 10th consecutive monthly increase continued to offset the steepest drops on record in Canadian economic activity observed in March and April 2020. However, total economic activity was about 2% below the level observed in February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Services-producing industries were up 0.6%, while goods-producing industries contracted (-0.2%) for the first time since April. Overall, 14 of the 20 industrial sectors expanded in February. Preliminary information indicates an approximate 0.9% increase in real GDP for March. Manufacturing, retail trade, and finance and insurance contributed to the gain, while mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction offset some of the growth. This advance estimate points to an approximate 1.6% increase in real GDP in the first quarter of 2021. Owing to their preliminary nature, these estimates will be revised on June 1 with the release of the official GDP data for the March reference month and the first quarter of 2021. Retail trade activity jumped 4.5% in February, following two months of decreases, as 10 of the 12 subsectors were up. In February, many provinces lifted or eased the lockdown measures that had largely contributed to the sector’s declines in December and January. Stores more dependent on in-store traffic experienced the largest rebound in activity.


Clothing and clothing accessories stores (+23.5%), sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores (+28.8%), and furniture and home furnishings stores (+11.7%) saw double-digit increases in activity. Motor vehicle and parts dealers were also up strongly (+4.9%), led by higher activity at new car dealers and at automotive parts, accessories and tire stores. General merchandise stores grew 6.0%, while building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 3.5%, benefiting from continued growth in home alteration and improvement activity. Non-store retailers increased for the fourth month in a row, growing 0.5% in February. Construction rose 2.0% in February, building on increases in the previous two months, as all subsectors were up. Residential building construction jumped 4.7% as all types of construction recorded growth, led by home alterations and improvements and by single-family home construction. Repair (+0.5%), engineering and other construction activities (+0.2%), and non-residential building construction (+0.3%) were all up in February. First decline in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction in six months. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction declined 2.8% in February as two of the three subsectors contracted. Oil and gas extraction decreased 3.9% in February following five consecutive months of growth. Oil sands extraction (-4.8%) was down for the first time in six months as lower crude bitumen and synthetic oil production in Alberta contributed to the decline in February. Oil and gas extraction (except oil sands) decreased 2.8% as crude petroleum extraction was down across the country, with notable declines at Newfoundland and Labrador offshore production facilities. Following three months of growth, mining and quarrying (except oil and gas) declined 2.7% in February as all subsectors were down. Metal ore mining decreased 3.1%, as copper, nickel, lead and zinc ore mining (-6.4%), iron ore mining (-1.9%), and other metal ore mining (-16.8%) all contributed to the decline. International demand for these commodities was down in February.

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40% of Ontario adults have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine



40% OF ONTARIANS AGED 18+ HAVE RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINE (CHRISTINE ELLIOT/ TWITTER).

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COVID-19: US RESEARCH GROUP'S BIG CLAIM! INDIA TO SEE OVER 10 LAKH DEATHS BY AUGUST



A TOTAL OF 2,22,408 DEATHS HAVE BEEN REPORTED SO FAR IN THE COUNTRY INCLUDING 70,851 FROM MAHARASHTRA, 17,414 FROM DELHI, AMONG OTHERS.

A leading US-based global health research body has projected over 1 million (10 lakh) cumulative deaths from COVID-19 in India by August 2021. Today, the total tally of coronavirus cases in India rose to 2,02,82,833 with 3,57,229 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 2,22,408 with 3,449 new fatalities, according to the data provided by the Union Health Ministry. According to the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, "the number of cases that are being detected needs to be multiplied by 20 or more to get the number of infections that are occurring in India." "Without drastic measures to bolster the health system to deal with this onslaught, decreased social mixing, and increased effective face mask use, the situation currently looks quite

grim for India," said an updated country-specific policy briefing from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), a widely regarded independent research wing of the University of Washington based in Seattle. The institute reportedly also projected that India will report over 1 million (10 lakh) deaths by the start of August. The cumulative death toll due to COVID-19 could rise to 6,65,000 by the end of July, with around 3,29,000 additional deaths between April 12 to August 1. However, a universal mask coverage (95 percent) could help bring down this figure by over 70,000. For the uninformed, in all, 2,22,408 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 70,851 from Maharashtra, 17,414 from Delhi, 16,250 from Karnataka, 14,468 from Tamil Nadu, 13,447 from Uttar Pradesh, 11,637 from West Bengal, 9,472 from Punjab, and 9,275 from Chhattisgarh.

Ahead of India-UK summit, Boris Johnson announces 1 billion pound trade deal

Ahead of the India-UK virtual summit to be chaired by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Indian PM Narendra Modi, the former has announced one billion pounds of new UK-India trade deals which includes an investment of 240 million pounds investment by Pune based Serum Institute of India (SII). The investment by SII according to the UK government will be into their vaccine business and a new sales office that will generate new business worth one billion pounds. Ahead of the summit, UK PM said, "Like every aspect of the UK-India relationship, the economic links between our countries make our people stronger and safer." All in all, the announcement on a trade deal will create 6500 new jobs in the UK and includes over £533m of new Indian investment into the UK. £200 million of these deals will support low carbon growth. One of the key focus areas of the virtual summit that will take place around 5 IST will be the launching off the comprehensive Roadmap 2030. The roadmap aims to expand and deepen India-UK cooperation in the next decade in 5 areas--people-to-people relationship, trade, and prosperity, defense and security, climate action, and healthcare- The UK sees New Delhi as its key partner in a post-Brexit world and as part of its Indo Pacific tilt has been increasing engagement. In fact, UK PM Boris was very keen on visiting India and both times--when he was to visit India in January, then again in April got postponed due to the COVID pandemic.

LOCKDOWN IN BIHAR: FULL SHUTDOWN IN STATE TILL MAY 15 - CHECK LIST OF RESTRICTIONS HERE

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday (May 4) announced to impose total lockdown in the state till May 15 to curb the spread of coronavirus COVID-19 cases in the state. CM Nitish said in a tweet that he has taken the decision after consultations with cabinet minister and other senior officials. He added that the Crisis Management Group has been ordered to release the guidelines related to lockdown by today evening. On Monday, the Patna High Court had said that a statewide lockdown is urgently needed to curb the spread of coronavirus in the state. During a hearing, a division bench of Justices Chakradhari Sharan Singh and Mohit Kumar Shah had asked advocate general Lalit Kishore to talk to CM Nitish Kumar over imposing total lockdown in Bihar. The Patna HC had also asked the advocate general to apprise it about the government's decision on Tuesday. "It has been emerging that the state government is heading toward total failure. There is no action plan in the context of an uncontrollable surge of corona infection in Bihar. Whatever plan you have submitted, it's not up to the mark and no effective steps have been taken. Despite repeated orders you are not doing anything, Everything is an eye-wash", the court observed.

Check full list of restrictions here:
- All shops selling vegetables, fruits, eggs and meat to remain open.- Restaurants and dhabas can continue with home delivery .- All religious places will remain closed.- Cinema halls, malls, clubs, gyms and parks will be closed.- Schools, colleges and other educational institutes will remain closed.- No examination will be held by state-run schools and universities till May 15. Bihar is fighting it tough to tackle the second wave of coronavirus. The state recorded 11,407 fresh COVID cases on Monday, while the death toll was 82.

DELHI CM KEJRIWAL ANNOUNCES RS 5000 FOR AUTO AND TAXI DRIVERS, FREE RATION FOR CARDHOLDERS FOR 2 MONTHS

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced that the Delhi government will provide free ration to 72 lakh ration cardholders in the city for the next two months. In addition to this, financial assistance of Rs 5,000 will be given to auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, CM Arvind Kejriwal said, "All autorickshaw drivers and taxi drivers in Delhi will be given Rs 5000 each by the Delhi government so that they get a little help during this financial crisis." The Delhi CM, however, cleared that this does not mean the lockdown imposed in the national capital to break the chain of transmission will last for two months. As per the Delhi government, during last year's COVID-19 pandemic, it had provided similar financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to 1.56 lakh auto and taxi drivers, and Rs 10,000 to around 44,000 construction workers. "The Delhi Government provided financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to each of 1.56 lakh auto and taxi drivers during last year's lockdown and will do so again to help them," Kejriwal said.

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HEALTH WORKERS WEARING PPE SUITS LOOKING AFTER COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENT IN EMERGENCY COVID-19 CARE CENTER BY DELHI GOVERNMENT AT SHAHNAI BANQUET HALL IN FRONT OF LNJP HOSPITAL IN NEW DELHI. — IANS

DELHI GOVT WRITES TO CENTRE SEEKING ARMY HELP IN COVID CRISIS

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Delhi government has sought help from the Centre to depute Armed Forces in the national capital to set up and operationalise the Covid-19 facilities.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia made the appeal through a letter written on Sunday to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for lending services of the Armed Forces to set up Covid facilities here in the city with about 10,000 oxygenated non-ICU beds and 1,000 ICU beds.

Mentioning that Delhi is in the midst of unprecedented Covid surge which has stretched the health infrastructure to the maximum level, Sisodia said: "I shall be grateful if your Ministry could lend the services of our Armed Forces to set-up, operationalise and run some Covid health facilities with about 10,000 oxygenated Non-ICU beds and 1,000 ICU beds."

"Since the entire health infrastructure machinery is overwhelmed with the management of the existing hospitals and the upcoming Covid hospitals or care centres, it will be timely help to the people of Delhi if the Ministry of Defence, with the considerable resources at its commands, is tasked with the responsibility to provide and man the additional Covid health facilities as per the current projections."

The Deputy CM also requested the Ministry of Defence to make arrangements for supply of medical oxygen for the Covid health facility to be set up.

Sisodia sought the help noting "Indian Army has always stood at the forefront during every time of crisis, helped and protected the citizens of his great nation".

Considering the enormous number of cases, Sisodia said, the additional health infrastructure, being set up by the Delhi government is likely to be filled up as soon as it is ready and we need at least 10,000 oxygenated non-ICU beds and 1,000 ICU beds at the earliest to overcome this crisis.

The Deputy CM also informed that Delhi at present has 16,272 non-ICU oxygen beds and 4,866 ICU beds, and that the Delhi government is creating an additional 15,000 oxygenated non-ICU beds and 1,200 ICU beds

which are likely to be operationalised over the next ten days.

In the letter, Sisodia further said: "The other requirement at the moment of crisis is the regular supply of medical oxygen."

The government of India allocates medical oxygen to the various states and Delhi is grateful to the efforts of the Centre in augmenting the supply of medical oxygen, said Sisodia, adding "from the initial allocation of 378 MT per day, government of India has increased the allocation to 490 MT on April 24 and thereafter to 590 MT".

"The additional allocation to Delhi has been made from the plants located more than 1,500 km from Delhi like Durgapur, Rourkela and Kalinga Nagar. Delhi government with necessary help from the government of India and other state governments, is augmenting the transport infrastructure by sourcing cryogenic tankers even from abroad," Sisodia said.

"It would be an extraordinary help from our Armed Forces if the Ministry of Defence can provide cryogenic tankers for transport of Liquid Medical Oxygen".

Sisodia also informed that the Delhi government has deployed all available medical professionals in manning the Covid hospitals and Covid care centres, and it is also in process of recruiting retired doctors and para medical teams.

Still, the AamAadmi Party leader said, the availability is extremely limited considering the huge demand. "The Ministry of Defence may also kindly provide medical and para medical teams to supplement the medical manpower of Delhi."

At the end of the letter, Sisodia mentioned that the requirements may be considered on humanitarian grounds in this hour of unprecedented health crisis, noting "the operational details can be mutually worked out after receipt of in principle approval from the Defence Ministry".

On an average, there have been 25,000 new Covid cases in Delhi every day and about 10 per cent of them require some form of hospitalisation including oxygen support.

NOT IN FAVOUR OF TOTAL LOCKDOWN, BUT WILL IMPOSE IF NEEDED: PUNJAB CM



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Even as he made it clear that he was not in favour of a complete and harsh lockdown, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday warned people against laxity in adherence to the curbs imposed in the state, and said if the situation did not improve, he would be forced to consider a total lockdown.

The Chief Minister said he had so far refrained from ordering a sweeping lockdown in the state because it will hurt the poor the most and would lead to exodus of migrant labourers, plunging industries into chaos again. However, if the people do not stringently comply with the restrictions in place, harsher steps might have to be taken, he added.

The state is currently in a soft lockdown situation, with strong curbs in place, with additional restrictions imposed by the government on Sunday. DGP Dinkar Gupta told the meeting that all measures were being taken to enforce the current curbs strictly.

Chairing a high-level virtual meeting to review the Covid situation, the Chief Minister on Monday also ordered a stop on all take-away deliveries from restaurants, which was being used by youngsters as a pretext to move out of their homes.

Only home deliveries of food should be allowed, he directed the officials. He, however, gave permission for shops selling fertilisers to be open.

Asserting that he will not allow Punjab to go the way of some other states, where patients could be seen lying out on the roads, the Chief Minister said that industry should be encouraged to use their CSR funds for vaccination and treatment of their labour suffering from mild or moderate illness, so that they can stay at home, thus reducing pressure on hospitals.

Underlining the need to step up preparedness amid projections of a peak in the coming days, he ordered 20 per cent increase in bed capacity in the next 10 days.

He directed the Health and Medical Education Departments to get stadiums, gymnasiums and other such places ready to house patients.

Tented camps should be set up, and gyms and halls should be converted into L2 and L3 facilities, he said, adding that "we have to be prepared for the worst".

He also directed use of staff from Rural Development and other departments to augment the workforce for tracing of Covid contacts in rural areas.

The directives came as Health Minister Balbir Sidhu said the situation was grim with only 300 beds now available at L3 level in the state. Hospitals were getting overwhelmed, he added.

Health Secretary Hussan Lal pointed out that the state's positivity rate had on Sunday stood at 12 per cent, with the Malwa region showing increase cases in the last seven-10 days.

With L3 occupancy 90 per cent and in some cases 100 per cent, the situation was grim, he said, adding that CFR was close to two per cent and higher (at 2.7 per cent) in rural areas.

Home deaths currently were also at two per cent. The worrying factor was that 17 per cent of the all deaths had no co-morbid conditions, he said.

K.K. Talwar, head of the state's Covid expert committee, stressed the need to prioritise monitoring of home isolation cases to identify serious patients fast, especially in rural areas.

With no clarity still on whether mutation was responsible for the current spread, he also underlined the importance of increasing L3 bed capacity.

Medical Education Secretary D.K. Tewari disclosed that from 343 in the first week of April, ICU bed capacity had increased to 770 and would be further enhanced to 900 by the end of the week.

The total oxygen beds will be increased from 1,500 to 1,800 this week and further to 2,000, he disclosed.

To augment manpower, 700 MBBS final year students, 90 BDS final year students and 70 Senior Residents would be recruited immediately, while 86 nurses will also join in the next one week, he said, adding that a total of 473 new recruitments will be made this month.

JOURNALISTS DECLARED FRONTLINE WARRIORS IN PUNJAB

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday announced that all accredited and yellow card journalists in the state will be included in the list of frontline warriors in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

All power corporation employees in the state have also been brought under the ambit of frontline workers.

These employees, along with the journalists, will now be eligible for all the benefits that the frontline workers are entitled to, including priority vaccination, the Chief Minister said at a high-level Covid review meeting.

Journalists have been taking grave risks in covering the pandemic from the ground and helping to spread awareness about the virus for the past more than a year, the Chief Minister said.

They need to be protected, he said, adding that though many states had raised the demand for their inclusion in the frontline workers category, the government of India has not responded so far.

The Punjab government, therefore, has decided to provide frontline protection to the journalists and also power corporation employees, who too are endangering their lives while maintaining critical power services in hospitals and other vital institutions.

POLICY PARALYSED GOVT CAN'T DEFEAT VIRUS: RAHUL



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has attacked the Union Government for policy paralysis, and said the government should face it and not fake it.

Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "A policy paralysed GOI cannot secure victory over the virus. Face it. Don't fake it."

India continued to report a dip in the number of Covid cases with 3,68,147 fresh cases and 3,417 fatalities recorded in last 24 hours, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said here on Monday.

It is the 12th straight day when India recorded more than 3 lakh cases while over 3,000 casualties have been reported for the past six days.

COVID CRISIS, INDO-PACIFIC DOMINATE JAISHANKAR-BLINKEN TALKS IN LONDON



The ongoing COVID crisis, and US assistance to India in dealing with it, Indo-Pacific dominated the talks between India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in London. This was the first physical meeting between the two ministers since the new Biden administration took charge in January. Both of them have been in constant touch, telephonically and virtually.

After the meeting, EAM said, "We discussed first and foremost the strong support we are getting from the United States on dealing with the COVID situation. We are very, very appreciative of that."

So far, US has sent five consignments of assistance to India to deal with the ongoing devastating COVID crisis. India has been reporting over 3 lakh cases of daily for days now. The assistance includes oxygen concentrators and other related supplies.

The US Secretary of State said, "We remember so well when India came to our assistance in the early days of COVID in a very important and powerful way", adding, "we are joined in this fight together and determined to do everything we can to help".

The focus was also on vaccines, and how Indian vaccine production can address both India's own needs and the world's requirements. Under the Quad vaccine initiative, India will be producing a large number of vaccines for the countries in the Indo-Pacific, with the US and Japan's financial support and Australia's logistical backing.

Focus, expectedly on Indo-Pacific, with sourcing saying ministers reviewed the "progress in practical cooperation" in recent months. Both the ministers also discussed the agenda before United Nations Security Council, Climate change, the situation in Myanmar. On Myanmar, discussions centered on the ASEAN 5 point plan and its further progress.

'WE FEEL LET DOWN': AIR INDIA PILOTS THREATEN TO STOP WORK IF AIRLINE FAILS TO VACCINATE CREW ON PRIORITY



Captain T Praveen Keerthi, General Secretary of the pilots' union of national carrier Air India, Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA), on Tuesday raised an issue with Air India Director Captain R S Sandhu about their guidelines of COVID-19 vaccination drive across India which excludes pilots.

In a letter to the Air India Director, Keerthi threatened to "stop work" if the management fails to set up vaccination camps pan India for the flying crew above the age of 18 years.

Keerthi in his letter claimed that the management left their flying crew "vulnerable". He said, "We feel let down by the self-serving approach of the management, which sees no injustice in organising vaccine camps at few bases but excludes pilots. The employees who are doing desk jobs and the majority opting to work from home are allowed to get vaccinated, leaving the flying crew vulnerable."

If Air India fails to set up vaccination camps on a Pan India basis for the flying crew above the age of 18 years on priority, we will STOP WORK," he added.

ICPA has around 1,000 pilots in the union. Alleging that Air India is not working enough in the welfare of its flying crew, Keerthi said, "Many crews have been diagnosed COVID-19 positive and are struggling to get oxygen cylinders. We are left to fend for ourselves for hospitalisation. The management continues to do what it does best, providing lip service and playing to the gallery by issuing circulars and letters with no outcome."

Captain Keerthi also claimed that they have no healthcare support and no insurance and they are in "no position" to continue risking the lives of pilots.

For the unversed, Air India had set up a mass vaccination camp for its employees aged 45 years or above on priority on April 13. The move came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched a four-day "Tika Utsav" or a vaccination festival that allowed establishments to facilitate vaccination camps at the office premises for employees above the age of 45 years.

PRESIDENT BIDEN ROLLS OUT SWEEPING LEGISLATIVE AGENDA IN HIS 1ST ADDRESS TO CONGRESS



WASHINGTON, (IANS) US President Joe Biden on Wednesday night addressed a joint session of Congress for the first time, rolling out his administration's two top priorities in a sweeping legislative agenda — the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan — while touting his achievements on the eve of his 100th day in office. For the first time in US history, two women were seated directly behind the president on the dais: Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The American Jobs Plan, a planned investment of \$4 trillion in building climate-friendly infrastructures such as roadways and broadband, would be guided by one principle, 'buy American, buy American,' said Biden, pledging that the plan would create "millions of good-paying jobs" and be the biggest increase in non-defence research and development on record in the US.

"Throughout our history, public investments and infrastructure have literally transformed America. These are investments we made together, as one country, and investments that only the government was in a position to make. Time again, they propel us into the future," Biden said. The American Families Plan will add two years of universal high-quality pre-school for every three- and four-year-old in America, increase Pell Grants and investment in historically black universities, tribal colleges, and minority-serving institutions, provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, ensure low-to middle-income families pay no more than 7 per cent of income to care for their children up to the age of five, and expand the child tax credit for every child in a family. To finance the two plans, Biden said he had no intention of raising the deficit or imposing any tax hikes on people making less than \$400,000 a year. Instead, he proposed major hikes on corporations, investment income and wealthy households.

"It's time for corporate America and the wealthiest 1 per cent of Americans to pay their fair share," said Biden, citing a study which found that "CEOs make 320 times what their average workers make."

"The pandemic has only made things worse," the president continued. "Twenty

million Americans lost their jobs in the pandemic, working-and middle-class Americans. At the same time, the roughly 650 billionaires in America saw their net worth increase by more than \$1 trillion." "It's time to grow the economy from the bottom up and middle out," Biden announced.

However, the two plans face a deeply uncertain fate in Congress, where Democrats hold only a slim majority in both the House and the Senate, analysts say. The president urged Congress to pass legislation on immigration reform, gun safety the 15-dollar minimum wage, equal pay for women, as well as expanded protections for members of the LGBTQ community. He also called on lawmakers from both parties to "find consensus" and pass policing reform by the anniversary of African American George Floyd's death next month. The plans face an uphill battle and will require the support of at least some Republican senators.

In his address, Biden touted his achievements such as pushing his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package through Congress and getting more than 200 million coronavirus vaccine shots within his first 100 days. He also pushed for actions on lowering drug prices and expanding Medicare benefits. "I was not overly inspired," said moderate Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski. "I think he wanted to make sure we knew all of the ins and outs of his various plans. I was looking for more of an uplifting and outreach on the bipartisan note that we heard from the inauguration speech." Senator Tim Scott, who delivered the Republican rebuttal to Biden's address, argued that the administration's plans on spending and tax hikes would weaken the US economy. "The actions of the President and his party are pulling us further and further apart," Scott said. The event was limited to an attendance of 200 people in a locked-down Capitol, instead of the usual 1,600, due to strict security and health restrictions, media reported, adding that Chief Justice John Roberts will be the lone member of the Supreme Court on hand. The address has been delayed for months. Newly inaugurated presidents generally deliver an address to Congress within weeks of taking office, but Biden has not done so due to the Covid-19 pandemic, said media reports.

BILL AND MELINDA GATES TO DIVORCE AFTER 27 YRS OF MARRIAGE

WASHINGTON, (IANS) Philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates have announced in a joint statement that they were getting divorced after 27 years of marriage. "After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage," the pair wrote in a joint statement posted on Twitter on Monday by the Microsoft founder. "Over the last 27 years we have raised three incredible children and built a foundation that works all over the world to enable all people to lead healthy, productive lives. "We continue to share a belief in that mission and will continue our work together at the foundations, but we no longer believe we can grow together as a couple in this next phase of our lives," the statement added. According to reports, they met in the late 1980s when Melinda joined Microsoft. They have three children and jointly run the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is based in Seattle, with Chief Executive Mark Suzman. In developing countries, the foundation's focus is on improvements to health and providing opportunities for people to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty.

OVERSIGHT BOARD TO DECIDE ON FACEBOOK'S TRUMP BAN ON MAY 5

WASHINGTON (IANS) The independent Oversight Board on Monday said it will announce its decision on May 5 on the case concerning former US President Trump, who was banned on Facebook following the Capitol attack on January 6. On January 21, the Oversight Board accepted a case referral from Facebook to examine its decision to indefinitely suspend Trump's access to post content on Facebook and Instagram, as well as provide policy recommendations on suspensions when the user is a political leader. The board, constituted by Facebook with 20 members from across the world last year, last month said it is reviewing more than 9,000 responses before it delivers the verdict on Trump's ban on the social media giant.

NEPAL GOVERNMENT TO CLOSE 22 ENTRY POINTS WITH INDIA AMID COVID-19 SURGE

Looking at the critical COVID-19 condition in India, the Nepal government on Saturday decided to close 22 border points with the country. Now only 13 border points between Nepal and India will remain operational. The decision came after the COVID Crisis Management Coordination Committee (CCMC) on Friday recommended to the Council of Ministers to shut down 22 out of a total of 35 border points between Nepal and India, according to officials. India's daily COVID-19 tally crossed four lakh milestone, while the death toll rose to 2,11,853 with 3,523 fresh fatalities, according to the date updated by the Union Health Ministry on Saturday. Nepal has reported 323,187 COVID-19 cases and 3,279 deaths so far, but cases are going up at breakneck speed. The country reported more than 5,000 new cases on Thursday and Friday. A 15-day prohibitory border was enforced in the national capital Kathmandu and other districts in Nepal on Thursday, as the country grapples to contain the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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GALLERIA PRESENTS AIR – GALLERIA ON THE PARK CONTINUES TO DEFINE MODERN URBAN LIVING



Reimagining the 20-acre site of the historic Galleria Mall and Wallace Emerson Community Centre and Park, ELAD Canada's Galleria on the Park rises at the corner of Dufferin St. and Dupont St. in Toronto's West End. This master-planned community responds to the needs of the evolving area through strategic planning and thoughtful design. Spearheading positive change, ELAD Canada continues to push forward with their newest condominium in this community, Galleria Air. Understanding the needs of their wide demographic, the developer has placed emphasis on creating these large two and three-bedroom suites with multiple bathrooms – making it easy for families to live in a condominium without compromising comfort and convenience.



ROOM TO BREATHE
Galleria Air's incredible series of terrace suites are artfully designed to give people what they've been looking for most – room to breathe. Offering a selection of expansive two and three-bedroom floorplans, these condos boast a light and airy modern design sized to suit the way residents live and built to draw attention to the suite's open space. Complete with stunning, large terraces that provide sweeping views of the park and cityscape, residents can spend their time enjoying the fresh air. Showing their excitement for the upcoming landmark building and its new collection, ELAD Canada has released additional limited-time incentives for the premium suites. With a limited-time promotion of deposits totaling only 15% before occupancy and one-year maintenance-free living, this collection embodies the developer's commitment to community progress and growth. Thoughtfully-designed, inclusive, and accessible, Galleria Air is quickly getting attention from the local community, young professionals, investors and downsizers from across the GTA.

GATEWAY TO THE COMMUNITY
As the flagship building of Galleria on the Park, Galleria III marks the entry to the master-planned community and will integrate and elevate the Dufferin and Dupont neighbourhood. Designed by renowned architecture firm Hariri Pontarini Architects, the 31-storey elevated flatiron building will feature a deep red brick exterior at the podium that honours the industrial heritage of the site and neighbouring homes while standing as a beacon within Toronto's West End. These themes continue with intricately designed metal panels that resemble radiator heaters – a nod to the site's former use as the Dominion Radiator Factory. The signature curves created by the building's bold shape will carry throughout the interior units and balconies, resulting in a soft fluidity between outdoor and indoor spaces. Following along the pedestrian mews, Galleria III's two-storey ground floor retail space will offer food, beverage and personal services, redefining community lifestyle in this emerging neighbourhood. Further, the pedestrian mews will feature a public art canopy, physically connecting Galleria III to the neighbouring building – acting as a striking art piece, shade for the mews and create an engaging walking experience for residents and the community alike. Indoors, the Galleria III tower has an impressive amenity program that considers the changing ways residents live and work today. The third floor will stand as a mecca for modern wellness and include a fully equipped fitness centre, yoga room, spin studio meditation room and outdoor yoga spaces. Meanwhile, the 11th floor boasts a dedicated so-



cial space, complete with a lounge, billiards and a private dining room with a chef's kitchen and wine cellars. Outdoors, a barbecue area, games space and an elevated pool with cabanas will overlook the tree canopy north of Dupont.

A NEW WEST END
As one of the most unique and community-driven master-planned developments in Toronto, Galleria on the Park promises to be transformative for the city's West End. ELAD Canada's new community will shape the future of the Dupont and Dufferin area – focusing attentively on neighbourhood use and the evolution of the district around it. When complete, Galleria on the Park will feature eight mixed-use towers encompassing 2,896 residences, 300,000 sq. ft. of retail (including a national grocer, banks, restaurants and cafes) and 150 affordable rental housing units. In addition, the brand new 95,000 sq. ft. community centre as well as the expansive eight-acre park, will allow the community better access to great public recreation opportunities and green space – providing a true live, work and play experience. Be sure to book your private appointment and visit the Presentation Centre today for your opportunity to become a part of this inspiring master-planned community. Learn more at GalleriaonthePark.com





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