



**CLIMATE ACTIVIST GRETA THUNBERG'S 'ADMIRER' GIVES HER A LESSON ON INDIA'S AGRI SECTOR**  
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**SC STAYS ARREST OF SHASHI THAROOR, RAJDEEP SARDESAI OVER 'MISLEADING' TWEETS** | P11

**SIGNS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ARE DIRE: BOLLYWOOD ON UTTARAKHAND GLACIER BURST**  
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# Midweek NEWS WEEKLY

SOUTH ASIAN

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## PM TRUDEAU CALLS FOR VACCINE SUPPLY, PM MODI SAYS 'WILL DO OUR BEST'



IF THE WORLD MANAGES TO CONQUER COVID, IT WILL BE BECAUSE OF INDIA: PM TRUDEAU. | DETAILS ON PAGE 8

## TORONTO, PEEL & YORK TO STAY UNDER RESTRICTIONS TILL FEB. 22

**POOJA LUTHRA**  
Ontario government on Monday announced the Stay-at-Home order in the three regions, namely- Toronto, Peel, and York, will be extended till Feb. 22. "We are not out of the woods yet, and I'm still concerned about these variants," Premier Doug Ford said during a press conference at Queen's Park on Monday. Ford's government plans to progressively move all of Ontario's 34 public health units back to a colour-coded reopening framework. The government has allowed 50 per cent regular indoor capacity to operate in pharmacies, convenience stores and stores that primarily sell groceries. All other retailers, including big box stores, can run at 25 per cent capacity. The province said this move is to ensure and "support the province's economic recovery." While Stay-at-home is imposed, people must go out only for necessities such as grocery, attending school or post-secondary institution, and getting exercise or walking pets. Businesses should ensure their employees work from home, if possible. However, Ontarians can even go to work if they can't do it remotely. Under Stay-at-home orders, people are firmly and strictly advised not

to travel outside their region or the province unless "absolutely necessary." Personal care services must remain closed under the grey level. Under the grey level, gatherings at residences are still forbidden. Nevertheless, up to 10 people with two metres of distance are allowed at outdoor events and social meetings, with masks strongly encouraged. Baptisms, funerals, and weddings are also allowed, with 10 people indoors or outdoors, with two metres of distance. Indoor recreational fitness facilities remain closed, but outdoor recreational amenities like rinks and trails are open with restrictions. "While we have seen some progress in our fight against COVID-19, the situation in our hospitals remains precarious, and the new variants pose a considerable threat to all of us," Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott said during the press conference. "As we cautiously and gradually transition out of the province-wide shutdown, we have developed an emergency brake system giving us the flexibility to contain community spread quickly in a specific region, providing an extra layer of protection," said Elliott. The government said it would review the final decisions according to the trends in public health indicators at that time. "If we see the numbers spike again, we are prepared to take further action as necessary," Premier Ford said.

## PANORAMA INDIA VIRTUALLY CELEBRATED INDIA'S 72nd REPUBLIC DAY



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## OPINION

### "CANADA, INDIA & OTHER DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES NEED TO COME TOGETHER"

**- YUDHVIR JASWAL**  
Media Group Editor and CEO Yudhvir Jaswal has time and again reiterated that India's vaccination supply is leading worldwide as it is one of the largest vaccine manufacturers and exporters. During Jaswal's exclusive interviews with Canadian Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Anita Anand, and Brampton's Mayor Patrick Brown, he has reminded them to engage in a dialogue with India to help vaccine supply.



| CONTD. ON PAGE 8

### OSGC SENDS OPEN LETTER TO PM MODI

Hon. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, Ontario Sikhs and Gurudwara Council is a representative body of individual Sikhs and Gurudwara's in Ontario. OSGC is an organization whose aspirations are to provide religious and social leadership, to raise awareness of Sikh philosophy; principles and heritage, to promote Sikh values and work in liaison with the communities we live in.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 7

### NO PAYMENT MADE TO RIHANA - MO DHALI WAL

**POOJA LUTHRA**  
Delhi Police has claimed the Canada-based Poetic Justice Foundation of creating the controversial Twitter 'toolkit' shared by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist. Mo Dhalwal is the founder and director of strategy at a Vancouver-based digital branding creative agency called Skyrocket and co-founder of Poetic Justice Foundation.



| CONTD. ON PAGE 10

### 'WORD OF MOUTH' WAR BETWEEN PM MODI & FARMERS

**POOJA LUTHRA**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke in the Rajya Sabha during the Motion of Thanks on President's address and said India is proud of the Sikh community. However, PM Modi observed and warned that some parties are engaged in propaganda to mislead the farmers. He also said: "We are familiar with the words shramjeevi and buddhijeevi. But a new 'breed' of agitators called 'andolanjeevi' has emerged in the country, who cannot live without agitation and the nation should guard against them."

| CONTD. ON PAGE 11

### REPUBLIC DAY VIOLENCE - DEEP SIDHU ARRESTED

The Delhi Police on Tuesday told a city court that actor Deep Sidhu was the main rioter and instigator in the Republic Day violence. They further said that Sidhu instigated the protesters and destroyed public property. He was produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Prigya Gupta where the police said that Sidhu was seen entering in a video with swords, sticks and flags during the violence on January 26.



| CONTD. ON PAGE 11

### Y MEDIA COVID AND VACCINE REPORT

**POOJA LUTHRA**  
To address your concerns and queries related to the coronavirus and its vaccination, Y Media brings dedicated and expert health professionals on its special Covid & vaccine programs that air on Channel Y. Along with this, Y Media's CEO and Group Editor, Yudhvir Jaswal, updates you with the latest and authentic information about the global coronavirus cases and the administration of the vaccines.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 7

### PRESIDENT BIDEN CALLS PM MODI HINTED AT DEEPENING 'PARTNERSHIPS' BETWEEN COUNTRIES

**POOJA LUTHRA**  
The President of the United States, Joe Biden, spoke with Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, on Feb. 8 in an endeavour to reinstate US-India's relationship. A statement from the White House read both countries to work intimately together "to win the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, renew their partnership on climate change, rebuild the global economy in a way that benefits the people of both countries, and stand together against the scourge of global terrorism."



| CONTD. ON PAGE 11

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# PANORAMA INDIA VIRTUALLY CELEBRATED INDIA'S 72ND REPUBLIC DAY

SEVERAL DIGNITARIES & CELEBRITIES JOINED THE CELEBRATION OF INDIA'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE



## CLOSING CEREMONY



**TORONTO:** With the support of the Consulate General of India, Toronto, Panorama India virtually celebrated India's 72nd Republic Day on Sunday, January 31st, 2021 in a grand style featuring over 9.5 hours of cultural and celebratory programming. Several Dignitaries & Celebrities sent in greetings to mark the occasion. The entire unique community-driven programming was live-streamed on 28+ Channels in the GTA including Television, Social Media and various other mediums. All the various segments of the event, including the popular and first time ever digitally programmed Panorama Idol 2021 with Bollywood Singer Kavita Krishnamurti, garnered a lot of views & appreciation from all over Canada.

The weeklong celebration commenced on Tuesday, January 26th, 2021 with a special Festival Kick-Off and Tribute Concert. Following this on Saturday, January 30th, 2021 Panorama India premiered the 12th annual Panorama Idol competition with Celebrity Judge, Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam, presented by SBI Canada Bank. The week ended with the grand celebration on Sunday, January 31st, 2021 with a full day of programming and cultural celebration ending on a high note with a live closing ceremony on Namaste Live where all the winners were announced for the art competition as well as for the 12th Annual Panorama Idol for both adult and junior categories.

"The community response has been overwhelming and I commend Panorama India for conducting such a grand digital celebration keeping everyone's safety in mind" shared Hon. Apoorva Srivastava Ji, Consul General of India in Toronto.

"I want to personally thank our larger community, the artists, the many community organizations, the media partners and the 27+ digital live stream TV channels and partners who aired the 3 days of celebration. All of you made this celebration a success. This was truly a labour of love for the Panorama India board as it was a community celebration of India's 72nd Republic Day. We work hard to ensure most, if not all, states and languages are represented during the celebration. We are proud of the Panorama India tagline - Mera India, Humara India" said Sumeeta Kohli, Chairperson.

The 12th Annual Panorama Idol 2021 Competition was aired both on Saturday, January 30th and Sunday, January 31st. With the top three Adult Contestants and the top three Junior Contestants competing for the coveted winner spot, the competition was very tight. Public voting opened on Saturday, January 30th 12 PM and closed on Sunday, January 31st at 3 PM.

Panorama India is pleased to share that 5201 people voted for their choice. Winners were announced on Panorama India's "Namaste Live" segment on Sunday evening as a part of the official closing ceremony. Panorama India would like to congratulate Pruthvi Pramod, 1st place

Winner for the Adult category. The 2nd place went to Vidhi Sharma and 3rd place was bagged by Shruti Vinod. For the Junior contestants there was a surprise tie for the winning spot! Rachna Venkatesh and Vyas Satish, were announced as the Winners - 1st Place for the Junior category. With a neck to neck competition, the 2nd place was bagged by Susrika Dey.

"We are so proud of all the contestants who participated in the Panorama Idol competition and we hope they continue to keep singing" said Anusha Iyer, Director, Programming.

A brand new segment "Senior's Spotlight" was introduced during the Republic Day celebration. Seniors from all over GTA performed in this segment in multiple languages. In addition to this, ex-service men shared special greetings in this segment.

"We are grateful to all the seniors who put together original programming for this special day", said Vaidehi Bhagat, Executive Director of Community Relations and Sponsorship.

The Folk Dances of India segment which featured traditional folk dances from across India consisted of submissions from artists from all the community groups throughout GTA.

Panorama India conceptualized a few new additions this year to allow for true virtual engagement.

Panorama India held its first live digital Art Competition sponsored by Tullika Creations. There were 150 children in the age group of "Kindergarten to Grade 9" who registered and participated in a live secure digital room and competed with each other based on various themes like Superheroes of India, Indian National Bird, Indian National Flower and Indian National Flag. All the winners were then announced at the live Closing Ceremony.

To add to the grandeur of the event, the highlight headliner segment "Two Legends One Night" featured an exclusive chat with the power couple from the world of music and art, Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam and Dr. L Subramaniam, in conversation with Sumeeta Kohli, Chair, Panorama India. Both the luminaries are musical legends and have enthralled the audiences globally with their musical brilliance.

### About Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam

Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam, a recipient of the coveted Padma Shri among several other accolades, is not just a revered playback singer across the globe, but she has also sung with orchestras as a soloist, collaborated with Western artists, and has diversified her singing styles by giving her voice to over 20,000 songs in different languages. She is a true representative of national integration.

### About Dr. L Subramaniam

Dr. L Subramaniam, who is also known as the "God of Indian Violin",

is the only musician who has performed Carnatic and Western Classical Music, composed for major Orchestras, scored for films and ballets, and collaborated with the greatest musicians of diverse genres globally.

In continuation with the theme of engagement, Panorama India launched its first ever "Virtual Vendor Fair" powered by Web Expo - an online marketplace where each vendor had their own Live interactive booth. Attendees chatted live with the vendors and each vendor also conducted a live webinar session throughout the day. This allowed vendors and sponsors to speak directly with the community. Vendors launched special promotions and programs in celebration of Republic Day.

"We are proud to have created an opportunity for engagement of our vendors and our community in such an interactive way" said Tanvir Kaur, Director of Digital Media.

We want to thank our sponsors and partners for supporting us to be able to deliver such a large-scale event.

"Panorama India is proud to host all these events for free and this was only possible with the support of sponsors such as SBI Bank Canada - our Diamond Sponsor, HSBC Bank and ICICI Bank - our Gold Sponsors, Kotamarti Group and Web Expo - our Silver sponsors. In addition, a special thanks to all of our bronze sponsors - Realtor Mr Venkat Perugu, AC Real Estates - Mr. Abhinandan Chandrappa, White Gold Sweets Restaurant, Brahma Kumaris, Farmer's Meat Shop and Mister Chai, Inspirely Steam Education, Coder Cookies, The Art of Content, Sara's Scroll, Different Strokes and Sharda Infosys." said Janak Bhawnani, Vice Chair Finance & Sponsorship and Sanjay Agarwal, Vice Chair Sponsorship and Vendor Management.

### Panorama India Board

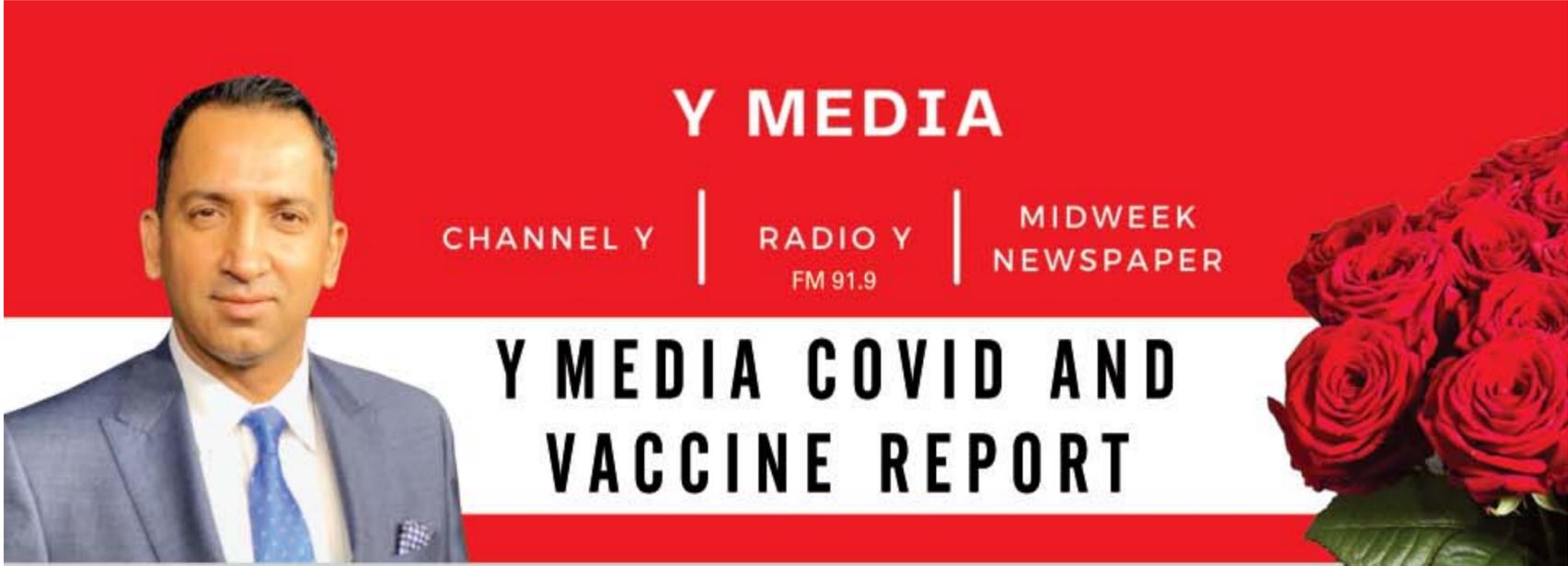
Sumeeta Kohli - Chairperson, Janak Bhawnani - Vice Chair Finance & Sponsorship, Sanjay Agarwal - Vice Chair Sponsorship & Vendor Management, Vaidehi Bhagat - Executive Director Community Relations & Sponsorship, Anusha Iyer - Director, Programming, Tanvir Kaur - Director, Digital Media

Panorama India is a not-for-profit umbrella organization, and it strives to flourish the ties between India and Canada by nurturing India's culture and heritage, providing a platform for all Indian cultural associations, groups, and individuals to showcase their arts and culture. Panorama India fosters a better understanding between India and Canada and is proud to build bi-lateral relations with India and Canada through culture.

Visit [www.panoramaindia.org](http://www.panoramaindia.org) for more details.

For media queries, please contact, [admin@panoramaindia.org](mailto:admin@panoramaindia.org)





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To address your concerns and queries related to the coronavirus and its vaccination, Y Media brings dedicated and expert health professionals on its special Covid & vaccine programs that air on Channel Y. Along with this, Y Media's CEO and Group Editor, Yudhvir Jaswal, updates you with the latest and authentic information about the global coronavirus cases and the administration of the vaccines. To stay updated and track the latest details, watch live shows on

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Channel Y. Listen to Yudhvir Jaswal's live radio show from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for an in-depth analysis of the Covid situation. What is even more appealing is that you can ask questions during the live T.V. and radio shows in Hindi, English, Punjabi and Urdu. Read the 'Midweek' newspaper to stay informed with the current news worldwide and visit southasiandaily.com for timely updates.

## Ontario Extends Stay-at-Home Order across Most of Province

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health.

"Our number one priority will always be protecting the health and safety of all individuals, families and workers across the province," said Premier Ford. "But we must also consider the severe impact COVID-19 is having on our businesses. That's why we have been listening to business owners, and we are strengthening and adjusting the Framework to allow more businesses to safely reopen and get people back to work." To support the province's economic recovery, the government has updated the Framework to allow for a safer approach to retail. Limited in-person shopping in Grey-Lockdown zones will be permitted with public health and safety measures, such as limiting capacity to 25 per cent in most retail settings. In addition, public health and safety measures in retail settings will be strengthened for other levels of the Framework. Individuals will also be required to wear a face-covering and maintain physical distance when indoors in a business, with limited exceptions. Other measures include a requirement for individuals to wear a face-covering when attending an organized public event or gathering (where permitted) if they are within two metres distance of another individual who is not part of their household (both indoor and outdoor). All other requirements for gatherings and organized public events would be maintained.

Based on the improving local trends of key indicators, including the lower transmission of COVID-19, improving hospital capacity, and available public health capacity to conduct rapid case and contact management, the following three regions will be moving back to the Framework at the Green-Prevent level on Wednesday, February 10, 2021, at 12:01 a.m. and will no longer be subject to the Stay-at-Home order:

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health; Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health; and Renfrew County and District Health Unit.

Due to the fact that public health trends are improving in some regions faster than others, the current Stay-at-Home order will be amended and individual orders making it applicable to each public health region will be made except for the three above.

It is proposed that the Stay-at-Home order will continue to apply to 28 public health regions until Tuesday, February 16, 2021. For Toronto, Peel and York regions, it is proposed that the Stay-at-Home order will continue to apply until Monday, February 22, 2021. Final decisions will be subject to a review of the trends in public health indicators at that time.

"While we have seen some progress in our fight against COVID-19, the situation in our hospitals remains precarious and the new variants pose a considerable threat to all of us," said Minister Elliott. "As we cautiously and gradually transition out of the province-wide shutdown, we have

developed an emergency brake system giving us the flexibility to contain community spread quickly in a specific region, providing an extra layer of protection."

Recognizing the risk posed by new variants to the province's pandemic response, Ontario is introducing an "emergency brake" to allow for immediate action if a public health unit region experiences rapid acceleration in COVID-19 transmission or if its health care system risks becoming overwhelmed. If this occurs, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, in consultation with the local medical officer of health, may advise immediately moving a region into Grey-Lockdown to interrupt transmission.

"While we are seeing our numbers trend in the right direction, our situation remains precarious as the variants of concern remain a serious risk," said Dr. Williams. "This is not a re-opening or a 'return to normal' and we must continue to limit close contact to our immediate households and stay at home except for essential reasons. By continuing to follow all public health and workplace safety measures, we can continue to reduce the number of new cases and the strain on our health system."

In addition, the provincial emergency declared under s 7.0.1 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) will be allowed to terminate at the end of February 9, 2021. While the province-wide Stay-at-Home order will cease to apply in some regions as of February 10, 2021, everyone is strongly advised to continue to stay at home, avoid social gatherings, minimize travel between areas with different rules, and limit close contacts to their household. Employers in all industries should continue to make every effort to allow employees to work from home. Enforcement of residential evictions will remain paused in the public health unit regions where the provincial Stay-at-Home order remains in effect. This will ensure people are not forced to leave their homes. In regions where the Stay-at-Home order is lifted, the regular process for residential eviction enforcement will resume. Orders currently in force under the EMCPA have been extended to February 23, 2021 and will be extended further if necessary. O.Reg.55/21 (Compliance Orders for Retirement Homes) is currently in effect until February 19, 2021. "While the declaration of emergency will be ending, the risks posed by COVID-19 and the new variants remain serious concerns," said Solicitor General Jones. "That's why extending the stay-at-home orders for most of the province is necessary to protect our communities, our most vulnerable populations, and stop the spread of COVID-19. We continue to urge all Ontarians to follow public health guidelines and stay home, stay safe, and save lives."

The Chief Medical Officer of Health will continue to consult with public health and other experts, review data, and provide advice to the government on the appropriate and effective measures that are needed to protect the health of Ontarians. Municipalities and local medical officers of health may have additional restrictions or targeted requirements in their region.

## Dr. S. Jaishankar on 'toolkit' matter: 'It has revealed a lot'



**POOJA LUTHRA**

External Affairs Minister, Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on toolkit matter said its exposure had disclosed a lot, and the celebrities vocalized "on matters on which they obviously didn't know very much."

"It has revealed a lot. We've to wait and see what else comes out. There was a reason why Foreign Ministry reacted to statements that some celebrities gave out on matters they didn't know very much," said the EAM minister.

Swedish environmental activist, Greta Thunberg, shared a toolkit on social media for India's farmer protests, which indicates that a widespread campaign may have been on much before Jan. 26.

A toolkit usually incorporates reading material on the context of the protest, news article links, and protest methods.

Twitter exploded in India after the toolkit as it included a document on details of the Jan. 26 protests.

IANIS reported the document detailed how and where the protests should be done outside Indian missions abroad, media houses, government buildings and even Adani-Ambani offices.

"A section of the documents titled "prior action" delineates the following action plan, digital strike-through hashtags on or before Jan. 26, Tweets storm Jan. 23 onwards, Physical action on Jan. 26, Watch-out or join farmers' march into Delhi and back to borders," it said.

The document was restricted after that, and the tweet was deleted, as per reports.

This document hinted at an international conspiracy put forth to defame the BJP government on the farmers' protest.

Delhi Police claims the Twitter toolkit shared by Greta Thunberg has created many controversies, and the police seek help from Google to know the I.P. address from where the toolkit was uploaded.

"The intention of the creators of the tool kits appears to create disharmony among various social, religious and cultural groups and encourage disaffection and ill-will against the government of India. It also aims at waging a social, cultural and economic war against India," Delhi police said in a statement. Investigators suspect the role of the 'Poetic Justice Foundation' behind the creation of the 'toolkit' document.

Mo Dhaliwal, the co-founder of 'Poetic Justice Foundation,' posted a statement saying the information spread is "incorrect" and entirely invented."

## CANADA INDIA HEALTHCARE SUMMIT 2021, MAY 20-21, 2021 – VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

**TORONTO/NEW DELHI:** Canada India Foundation ("CIF"), Toronto Rehab Institute – University Health Network ("TRI"), Federation of Indian Chapters of Commerce and Industries ("FICCI) and the Consulate General of India ("CGI") are pleased to announce the Canada India Healthcare Summit 2021 ("CIHS 2021"), scheduled to take place as a virtual event on May 20 and 21, 2021, with Toronto as the hosting venue. The Summit will address the themes of Pandemic Response and Post-COVID Healthcare, Biotechnology and Artificial Intelligence and will also feature the CIF competition for innovators and start-ups in the healthcare sector. The current global healthcare crisis, caused by the spread of COVID-19, has resulted in great loss of human life as well as unprecedented disruption of economic activity and social welfare around the world. This has heightened the urgency for democratic countries to work together to develop new approaches to healthcare in the post-COVID world, utilizing new developments in Biotechnology and Artificial Intelligence ("AI"). This will be the third Canada India Healthcare Summit that CIF will be organizing, coming after its earlier initiatives in 2015 in Toronto and in New Delhi in 2017. "The Summits brought together healthcare experts, governments and business leaders to explore opportunities for Canada and India to work together on the important theme of healthcare", said Dr. VI. Lakshmanan, who co-chaired both summits as well as several similar thematic forums held by CIF earlier. "Key partners and participants included the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Ayush (Government of India), Apollo Hospitals, Apotex and many others. The Forums facilitated many new collaborative ventures," he added.

Among the main deliverables of CIHS 2021 are:

- Enabling private sector, government, universities and research institutions in Canada and India to collaborate in exploring Biotechnology & AI driven healthcare solutions
- Understanding lessons learnt from managing the COVID-19 healthcare crisis
- Leveraging R&D in Healthcare, Biotechnology & AI to create economic opportunities and ensure better universal healthcare
- Helping to shape public policy in Canada and India to provide optimum healthcare to its residents through Public-Private Partnership (PPP)
- Coordinating the CIF Competition and recognizing the winners of the competition

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MACKENZIE HEALTH OPENS CORTELUCCI VAUGHAN HOSPITAL TO GENERATE FURTHER ICU CAPACITY TO HELP ADDRESS COVID-19. (SOURCE-MACKENZIE HEALTH/ TWITTER)



CANADIAN FORCES IN KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION HELPS COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO TRAVEL SAFELY TO GET VACCINES. (SOURCE- HARJIT SAJJAN/ TWITTER)



MINISTERS BARDISHCHAGGER, MARYAM MONSEF AND ADAM VAN KOEYERDEN ANNOUNCE \$15 MILLION FUNDING TO SUPPORT 76 PROJECTS THROUGH LGBTQ COMMUNITY CAPACITY FUND (SOURCE- BARDISHCHAGGER/ TWITTER)



PLAY VIRTUAL FAMILY FEUD, JEOPARDY, OR A SCAVENGER HUNT ON FEBRUARY 13 AND 15 FOR FAMILY DAY WEEKEND! (SOURCE- CITY OF BRAMPTON/ TWITTER)



THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA PROCURED UP TO 40.5M RAPID TESTS ON BEHALF OF PROVINCES & TERRITORIES, INCLUDING ANTIGEN & MOLECULAR TECHNOLOGIES. (SOURCE- ANITA ANAND/ TWITTER)



ONTARIO POSTPONES MARCH BREAK TILL THE WEEK OF APR. 12 (SOURCE- CHRISTINE ELLIOT/ TWITTER)



FEB. 11 MARKS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE. (SOURCE- DOUG FORD/ TWITTER)



CANADA'S FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INVESTS \$15B IN TRANSIT OVER THE NEXT EIGHTYEARS. (SOURCE- BONNIE CROMBIE/ TWITTER)



DIAL 211 TO GET SUPPORT WITH FOOD, HOUSING OR MENTAL HEALTH. (SOURCE- BONNIE CROMBIE/ TWITTER)

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ADDRESSES CERB "REPAYMENTS FOR SELF-EMPLOYED" INDIVIDUALS AND ANNOUNCES INTEREST "RELIEF ON 2020 INCOME TAX DEBT DUE TO "COVID-19 RELATED INCOME SUPPORT

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada has provided urgently-needed income support to millions of Canadians, which has helped them put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads during this crisis. The federal government is committed to continuing to support Canadians throughout this crisis.

Today, the Government of Canada announced that self-employed individuals who applied for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and would have qualified based on their gross income will not be required to repay the benefit, provided they also met all other eligibility requirements. The same approach will apply whether the individual applied through the Canada Revenue Agency or Service Canada. This means that self-employed individuals whose net self-employment income was less than \$5,000 and who applied for the CERB will not be required to repay the CERB, as long as their gross self-employment income was at least \$5,000 and they met all other eligibility criteria. Some self-employed individuals whose net self-employment income was less than \$5,000 may have already voluntarily repaid the CERB. The CRA and Service Canada will return any repaid amounts to these individuals. Additional details will be available in the coming weeks.

In addition, today, the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue, announced that the Government of Canada will provide targeted interest relief to Canadians who received COVID-related income support benefits. Once individuals have filed their 2020 income tax and benefit return, they will not be required to pay interest on any outstanding income tax debt for the 2020 tax year until April 30, 2022. This will give Canadians more time and flexibility to pay if they have an amount owing.

To qualify for targeted interest relief, individuals must have had a total taxable income of \$75,000 or less in 2020 and have received income support in 2020 through one or more of the following COVID-19 measures:

- the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB);
- the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB);
- the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB);
- the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB);
- the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB);
- Employment Insurance benefits; or
- similar provincial emergency benefits.

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will automatically apply the interest relief measure for individuals who meet these criteria.

Additionally, any CRA-administered credits and benefits normally paid monthly or quarterly, such as the Canada Child Benefit and the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax credit will not be applied to reduce individuals' tax debt owing for the 2020 tax year. Canadians are strongly encouraged to file their tax returns by the filing deadline to ensure that their benefit payments continue without interruption.

The Government of Canada recognizes that many Canadians continue to face serious financial impacts as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The interest relief measure announced today will provide an estimated 4.5 million low- and middle-income Canadians with the flexibility required to feel confident about accessing the COVID-19 income support without facing additional stress at tax time.



### Quotes

"From day one we said we would be there to help Canadians get through this difficult time. Emergency supports like the CERB helped millions of Canadians pay for things like food and rent. We made the CERB's eligibility criteria as broad and inclusive as possible so that workers who needed support could get it. This announcement is giving certainty to self-employed Canadians who applied for the CERB in good faith, while also protecting their financial well-being. We have gone to great lengths to support workers during this pandemic, and will continue to do so as we build back better together."

— Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough

"Our government will continue to do whatever it takes, for however long it takes to get through the current public health crisis. Today's announcement demonstrates the Canada Revenue Agency's commitment to putting Canadians at the centre of everything it does. We will continue to provide support to Canadians as they tackle the many challenges of this pandemic until they are able to get back on their feet."

— The Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue

### Quick facts

All individuals are encouraged to file their income tax returns. All amounts owing are determined based on an individual's personal circumstances and the credits and benefits they may receive.

Like Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, the COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits, including similar provincial benefits, are taxable. Although 10% of the benefit amount for the three Canada Recovery Benefits (CRB, CRCB, and CRSB) is withheld at source, many other emergency benefits, including the CERB and the CESB did not withhold tax at source. Today's announcement will give those Canadians who owe any taxes as a result of accessing these benefits more time and flexibility to pay those amounts.

The CRA has not extended the tax filing deadline. Canadians should complete and submit their tax returns by April 30, 2021, the filing due date for most individuals. Canadians are strongly encouraged to file their tax returns to ensure that their benefit payments continue uninterrupted.

## SMALL BUSINESSES NEED A SAFE PATHWAY TO REOPENING

**TORONTO** - Mike Schreiner made the following statement in response to Premier Ford's announcement on the ending of the state of emergency and stay-at-home order:

"We all agree that Ontario's small businesses need a safe pathway to reopening.

But the Premier is setting us up to fail if he refuses to invest in the necessary safety measures and supports small businesses need. This means ramping up testing, more contact tracing, implementing provincially paid sick days, providing additional financial support for small businesses and deploying rapid tests for essential workplaces to prevent outbreaks. If we want to have any hope of reopening the economy and keeping it open, we must make our workplaces safe.

I call on the Premier to prioritize the safety of Ontarians and to save small businesses by using the tools that are available now."

## ONTARIO EXPANDS EMERGENCY CHILD CARE TO MORE FRONTLINE WORKERS

**TORONTO** - Today, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, issued the following statement regarding the provision of emergency child care services:

"Beginning this Tuesday, emergency child care will be extended to additional frontline workers in Toronto, York Region and Peel. This will include construction workers working on essential projects that have been permitted to continue during the provincial shutdown, and transit workers who are unable to work remotely. While students in many parts of the province are returning or have returned to in-person learning, students in Toronto, York Region and Peel will be returning to class one week later, on February 16, 2021. During this period of remote learning, our government is supporting these key workers by ensuring their children are well cared for. This past week, based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, we gave parents certainty around the planned return to in-person learning for students across our province. For working families around the province, this means that they will be able to return to work knowing their child's learning and development is continuing in classrooms safely, with new measures in place to protect students and staff. Learning in class, alongside friends and teachers, is crucial for the mental health, development, and long-term success of students.

## Y MEDIA COVID AND VACCINE REPORT

**CONTD. FROM PAGE 1**

To stay updated and track the latest details, watch live shows on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Channel Y.

Listen to YudhvirJaswal's live radio show from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for an in-depth analysis of the Covid situation.

What is even more appealing is that you can ask questions during the live TV and radio shows in Hindi, English, Punjabi and Urdu. Read the 'Midweek' newspaper to stay informed with the current news worldwide and visit southasiandaily.com for timely updates.

## OSGC SENDS OPEN LETTER TO PM MODI

**CONTD. FROM PAGE 1**

As a follow up to our letter's addressed to you dated October 5th and November 29th, 2020, we are still waiting an honest and sincere update from the Government of India to show any concrete steps to negotiate a reasonable settlement with the Farmers of India and the unique situation of the farmers of India.

Instead what we witnessed on and since January 26th has shaken us to the core, the brutality and dishonesty shown by the authorities in relation to the "Farmers March" has led us to believe that the government is not serious or has any intentions to negotiate with the farmers. The planning with which the authorities sabotaged the planned march is being laid bare with each passing day after approving the route and then stopping the farmers from proceeding was nothing short of provoking the farmers. Hired hooligans and anti-social elements some even dressed in Police uniforms unleashed violence in the name of the farmers to malign the peaceful and organized march. The police stood silent witness to the various violent activities against the farmers, destroying the farm vehicles, tractors, the tents belonging to the farmers and the worst is the violence against elderly men and women is despicable.

We commend our farm leaders and labor brothers for showing such resolve and patience against such an organized terror, they showed such a restraint and did not retaliate. We are here for the farmers; we are here for the labor associated with farming in this fight against the bills that will put an end to the farming sector as we have seen. We fully support the farmer's right to protest and there right to use all peaceful means to bring the matter to the attention of the powers that be; we condemn the brutality shown by the law enforcement agencies and ask the Government of India to bring this brutality to an end against its own peace loving citizens. We at OSGC stand by our farming Brothers and Sisters throughout India and are truly hurt by the state of the Indian Farmer, we strongly urge the Government of India to rethink as by its own admission that the serious flaws will be addressed by suspending the laws for 18 months. So we ask why not totally withdraw them and get back to the drawing board sit down with the stake holders, 18 months is long enough time to come up with laws reasonable enough to satisfy both the Farmers and the Government. Hopefully you will listen and start a chapter of reconciliation with the farmers towards there upliftment.



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## PM TRUDEAU CALLS FOR VACCINE SUPPLY; PM MODI SAYS 'WILL DO OUR BEST'

POOJA LUTHRA

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calls Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to request Covid-19 vaccines that India has graciously gifted to 20 countries under its vaccine diplomacy.

An official statement from the Prime Minister's Office in India said, "Trudeau informed Modi about Canada's requirement for Covid-19 vaccines from India." Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "assured" the Canadian Prime Minister to "do its best" to support Canada's vaccination efforts. PM Modi tweets he "assured him (Trudeau) that India would do its best to facilitate supplies of COVID vaccines sought by Canada."

PM Trudeau appreciated India's vaccination efforts and said if the world manages to conquer Covid, it would be significant because of India's tremendous pharmaceutical capacity and India's strong-headed leadership in sharing this capacity with the rest of the world.

In a statement by Prime Minister's Office in Canada, "the two leaders agreed to work together on access to vaccines. The leaders also recognized the need for continued global coordination to respond to the pandemic and to promote recovery." The two leaders also reiterated the common perception shared by India and Canada on many critical geopolitical issues. They agreed to continue the close alliance between the countries in fighting global challenges like climate change and the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The leaders also discussed Canada and India's commitment to democratic principles, recent protests, and the importance of resolving issues through dialogue. Both the Prime Ministers looked forward to meeting each other in various critical international fora like G7 and G20 later this year and continuing their discussions on mutual interest issues.

### CONSTANT VACCINE DELAYS AND EU THREAT EXPORTS

Prime Minister's aim to vaccinate most Canadians by September saw constant hindrances due to shipment issues from Pfizer-BioNTech or export threats from European Regulators.

Canada is facing delays in vaccine delivery from Pfizer and Moderna; the only two approved vaccine candidates.

The Pfizer plant in Belgium is being retooled to increase production, while the Moderna delay's exact reasons are unclear.

To address this issue, Canada also signed a

memorandum of understanding with Novavax to pursue its COVID-19 vaccine production at the National Research Council of Canada's Biologics Manufacturing Centre in Montréal. However, it would be months before the vaccine production could start.

### DECISIVE ACTION

One might wonder if PM Justin Trudeau heard the suggestions of Y Media's Group Editor and CEO, YudhvirJaswal, who has been 'vocal' on Y Media different platforms as he interacts with various leaders like Minister Anita Anand that Canada should seek help from India on vaccine supply as India is one of the largest manufacturer of vaccine doses.

Or else, we could say PM Trudeau took this phrase 'better late than never' too seriously as he eventually calls India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi for vaccine supply. During a press conference earlier on Wednesday, PM Trudeau was questioned whether he had intended to reach out to PM Modi about ensuring supplies from India. He spoke in generalities in response but did not hint at speaking with India's prime minister later.

"We are continually in contact with our friends and allies around the world on the issues of vaccines, on the issue of fighting COVID. I can highlight that India has been a great partner in fighting COVID, whether it's helping us with the delivery of other pharmaceuticals or whether it's working together on potential vaccines," the prime minister said.

This came after Dr. Supriya Sharma, the chief medical adviser at Health Canada, said during the media briefing that Health Canada is on its "final stage" of reviewing the Oxford- AstraZeneca vaccine.

Canada has signed agreement of 20 million doses with Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate. India is one of the world's biggest drugmakers, and an increasing number of countries have approached it for procuring coronavirus vaccines. India has supplied 16.7 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) to 20 countries. This included nearly 6.3 million doses that were supplied free to 13 countries such as

Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bahrain and Oman, Barbados and Dominica. About 10 million more doses were supplied on a commercial basis to seven countries including Brazil, Morocco and South Africa.



## Land travellers to show negative PCR test proof from Feb. 15: PM Trudeau

POOJA LUTHRA

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced non-essential land travellers entering Canada via the US border must provide proof of the negative Covid-19 test from Feb. 15.

"As of Feb. 15, when you return to Canada through a land border, you'll need to show a 72-hour Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, just like air travel," Trudeau said during a press conference outside Rideau Hall. The prime minister said border officers could not legally deny entry to Canadians. However, those who fail to provide the test result could face severe penalties, including fines of up to \$3,000.

"What we can do is in cases of no test to show [is] apply a stiff penalty, a fine and demand and ensure a rapid and complete followup to make sure that they are getting tested, that they are properly quarantined, that they are not putting at risk the safety of other Canadians by returning home without a clear negative test," Trudeau said. "As of next Monday, people who show up at a Canadian land border on non-essential travel ... like returning snowbirds, will be expected to show a negative PCR test from the previous 72 hours." The exception to this rule applies to commercial truckers as they are involved in essential services. The stringent measures came after Canada Border Services Agency found that more people are coming into Canada via vehicle than on an airplane. The Canada Border Services Agency's data reveals 2.9 million people, excluding essential truck drivers, entered through a land border crossing, while only 2.4 million reached by flights since the end of March 2020. Canada-US border closure for non-essential travel commenced in March 2020 is set to lapse on Feb. 21, 2021.

## "CANADA, INDIA & OTHER DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES NEED TO COME TOGETHER" - YUDHVIR JASWAL

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

YudhvirJaswal has said on his radio show on Feb. 1 how India has supplied millions of vaccine doses to various countries worldwide, including South Africa, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and many others. He stressed that a conversation with India could ramp up the vaccine process in Canada as it has managed to vaccinate only around one million Canadians to date. He was optimistic that India would help Canada during its vaccine crisis. Group Editor and CEO, YudhvirJaswal, has welcomed the initiative taken by Prime Minister Trudeau to call PM Modi. He has also restated that world's leading democracies including Canada, India, US, UK, France, Germany, Australia, South Africa, and Japan should be working closely to rebuild the economy, fight against the pandemic and work together on climate change, terrorism and other global issues.



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## GOVERNMENT OF CANADA & ONTARIO INVEST IN BRAMPTON'S INFRASTRUCTURE RECREATION

**POOJA LUTHRA**

The government of Canada invests \$572,000, the government of Ontario provides \$476,619, while the City of Brampton contributes \$381,381 in the renovation of the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre.

Ruby Sahota, Member of Parliament for Brampton North, yesterday announced the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre's renovation funding. "Investing in community recreation centres promotes people's health and well-being and builds inclusive and sustainable communities where people want to live, work and raise families," MP Sahota said. She said the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre's remodelling would provide better access to recreational opportunities for Brampton residents and create more jobs.

The news release mentioned the project consists of interior and exterior renovations to the recreation centre to improve accessibility and user experience.

The Chinguacousy Wellness Centre upgrades are part of Brampton's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a renewal plan for Brampton's

recreation centres.

The interior upgrades include new washrooms, locker amenities, a sauna, change rooms, and shower conveniences. There would be upgraded floor drainage in all areas, including retiling the hot tub area to enhance safety, the news release said.

MP for Brampton East, Maninder Sidhu, said, "investing in community, culture, and recreational infrastructure is essential to creating communities that are inclusive and sustainable."

Sidhu further said the improvements to the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre would extend the facility's lifespan and ensure visitors can enjoy programs and activities.

Brampton's Mayor Patrick Brown expressed his gratitude by saying he is proud to welcome these significant investments from Canada's and Ontario's government.

Chinguacousy Wellness Centre remains closed due to the province-wide shut down in response to COVID-19. The renovations are assumed to take place starting in Spring 2021.

## Ontario Supporting COVID-19 Response in High Priority Communities

**TORONTO** - The Ontario government continues to implement its High Priority Communities Strategy to provide targeted supports to 15 communities hardest hit by COVID-19. As part of the strategy, the province is providing \$12.5 million to local lead agencies to work in partnership with

Ontario Health, public health units, municipalities, and other community partners to help high risk neighbourhoods contain the spread of the virus and access services to better protect individuals and families.

"We know that COVID-19 has impacted some communities much worse than others due to some of the barriers to accessing critical services," said Premier Doug Ford. "This strategy starts to break down these barriers by offering people assistance in a variety of languages to ensure these communities know where to get PPE, get tested or isolate safely away from loved ones."

The province is also investing up to \$42 million under the High Priority Communities Strategy to create about 1,500 spaces in approximately 11 COVID-19 isolation centres so people can self-isolate and keep their families and communities safe. The voluntary centres provide a range of wraparound supports and services, including meals, security, transportation, and links to health and social services, free of charge. The strategy will support other populations and communities facing barriers related to the determinants of health across Ontario who are at greater COVID-19 risk (e.g. Black and other racialized populations).

To further help those impacted by COVID-19 and in need of financial assistance, the government is also providing emergency income support to people who are facing a crisis situation and not receiving support from Ontario Works, or the Ontario Disability Support Program. A single individual could receive up to \$733 a month in emergency income support.

In addition, more than 160 Community Ambassadors have been engaged and more than 225 are being hired to deliver much-needed targeted outreach and communications to members of these communities. This outreach includes providing contact information and details on financial and isolation supports in multiple languages. In addition, through collaboration with local partners, the province is implementing and expanding multiple testing approaches including the opening of mobile and pop-up clinics and rapid testing. 184 testing sites have been opened and nearly 9,800 PPE kits have been shipped and distributed to community members.

"Our government is taking action to support communities that have been hit the hardest by this devastating virus," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Through the High Priority Communities Strategy, we are supporting local community agencies in strengthening outreach and education, improving access to testing and COVID-19-related services, and connecting individuals and families with the wraparound supports they need to help keep themselves and their loved ones healthy and safe."

### QUICK FACTS

From January 26 to February 1, 2021, 82,164 COVID-19 tests were performed in high priority communities.

If you are in a crisis or emergency situation, need help paying for food and housing, and are not already on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), you can apply for COVID-19 emergency assistance. Visit [Ontario.ca/EmergencyAssistance](https://Ontario.ca/EmergencyAssistance) for more information.

On February 8, 2021, the Ontario government announced it is maintaining the shutdown in the majority of the public health regions in Ontario, including the Stay-at-Home Order. When it is safe to do so, the province will gradually transition each region from the shutdown measures to a revised and strengthened COVID-19 Response Framework.

Testing is available by appointment for those within provincial testing guidance at assessment centres, participating pharmacies and specimen collection centres. Please visit [Ontario.ca/covidtest](https://Ontario.ca/covidtest) to find a testing location and for eligibility criteria to be tested.

COVID-19 isolation centres are open in Toronto and Ottawa as well as the regions of York, Durham, Peel and Waterloo. For information on isolation centres and supports individuals can contact their local service manager or public health unit.

Learn more about the province's emergency financial assistance at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/apply-emergency-assistance>

## Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB) Forecasts Strong Demand for Real Estate in 2021



**TORONTO**— The outlook for the GTA real estate market is healthy with strong buying intentions, a near-record sales forecast of more than 100,000, and a record average selling price over \$1 million.

Today, the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB) is unveiling its must-read Market Year in Review & Outlook 2021 Report and eagerly awaited digital digest containing TRREB's annual market outlook, up-to-date Ipsos consumer polling results, the most recent Altus new home and commercial statistics, rental market trends, research on innovative approaches to bring on more housing supply and mortgage market trends.

"The pandemic certainly resulted in an unprecedented year for real estate in 2020, but it hasn't put a damper on the overall demand," said Jason Mercer, TRREB Chief Market Analyst. "Looking ahead, a strengthening economy and renewed GTA population growth following widespread vaccinations will support the continued demand for both ownership and rental housing. But over the long run, the supply of listings will remain an issue, particularly in low-rise segments."

### 2021 Market Outlook

• Combined home sales reported through TRREB's MLS® System for the GTA, South Simcoe County and Orangeville are expected to reach 105,000.

• Strong sales growth will be supported by continued economic recovery, including jobs and record or near-record lows for borrowing costs.

• The pace of new condominium apartment listings will start to ebb, especially in the second half of the year. With low-rise listings remaining constrained, expect total new listings to come in at the 160,000 mark.

• Market conditions for low-rise homes, including detached houses, will remain very tight, with sales rising at a faster pace than listings.

• The overall average selling price for all home types and areas combined will eclipse the \$1,000,000 mark for the first time, reaching \$1,025,000 and representing a year-over-year increase of 10 per cent.

• While mortgage deferrals were initially a concern early on in the pandemic, Mortgage Professionals Canada does not anticipate any pronounced uptick in mortgage delinquencies that would create systemic concerns as we move through 2021. Most property owners who took advantage of mortgage deferrals did so out of an abundance of caution rather than financial necessity and therefore have resumed their regular payments.

### January 2021 Market Stats

• January home sales amounted to 6,928 – up by more than 50 per cent compared to January 2020. This strong start to 2021 included sales growth across all major segments, including condominium apartments, both in the City of Toronto and surrounding GTA regions.

• New listings were also up on a year-over-year basis in January, but not by the same annual rate as sales. This means market conditions tightened compared to January 2020, resulting in the continuation of double-digit growth in the MLS® Home Price Index and the average selling price.

• The average selling price for January 2021 was up by 15.5 per cent to \$967,885 year over year. The MLS® HPI Composite Benchmark was up by 11.9 per cent over the same period.

• Price growth was driven by the low-rise market segments, while the average condo apartment price was down in Toronto. However, if we continue to see condo sales growth outstrip condo listings growth, we could start to see renewed growth in condo prices later this year.

# MidWeek

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## PM MODI SPEAKS TO US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN, SAYS COMMITTED TO RULES-BASED INTERNATIONAL ORDER



IN NOVEMBER, AFTER THE US ELECTION RESULTS, BOTH SIDES HAD SPOKEN TO EACH OTHER AND DISCUSSED COOPERATION ON THE COVID PANDEMIC.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the new US President Joe Biden spoke to each other on Monday. This is the first conversation between the two after Biden took charge as the US President last month. In a tweet, PM Modi said "conveyed my best wishes for his success" and "We discussed regional issues and our shared priorities", with a focus on "co-operation against climate change".

In the tweet, he said, both sides are "committed to a rules-based international order" and are "looking forward to consolidating our strategic partnership" to "further peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond." In November, after the US election results, both

sides had spoken to each other and discussed cooperation on the COVID pandemic, its economic impact, and Indo Pacific. The Defence, External Affairs/secretary of state counterparts and National security advisors of both countries have already spoken to each other. Biden has been a supporter of close New Delhi-Washington ties, in his capacity as a senator and the vice president. In August 2001, Joe Biden had written a letter to then-President George W Bush calling on the new administration to drop US sanctions against India and during his tenure as the Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he worked towards the US Senate's approval of US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2008.

## PM MODI GIVES SHARP REPLY TO OPPOSITION IN RAJYA SABHA, QUOTES MANMOHAN SINGH OVER FARM LAWS



Amid the ongoing farmers' protest against the Centre's newly enacted farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday quoted his predecessor Manmohan Singh on the need for reforms in the farm sector and also cautioned the nation about a new form of "FDI" which he referred to as "foreign destructive ideology" as the agitation grabs global attention. Defending Centre's policies for farmers and referring to those taking a "U-Turn" from laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his reply to the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in Rajya Sabha said, "Manmohan Ji is here, I would read out his quote. Those taking a U-Turn (farm laws) will perhaps agree with him. 'There are other rigidities because of marketing regime set up in the 1930s which prevent our farmers from selling their produce where they get the highest rate of return...'"

"...It is our intention to remove all those handicaps, which come in the way of India realising its vast potential at one large common market," he added. "Manmohan Singh Ji had made his intentions clear to give farmers the freedom to sell their produce, and have just one market. And we are doing it now. You all should be proud. See, what Manmohan Singh Ji had said, Modi is having to do now. (woh Modi ji ko karna pad raha hai).

Be proud!" PM Modi said.

The Prime Minister also assured, 'MSP (Minimum Support Price) tha, MSP hai aur MSP rahega' (MSP was there, MSP is there, MSP will remain in the future). PM Modi also said that the need of the hour is to improve the lives of the country's small farmers and the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) initiated changes in the agriculture sector since 2014. He further said, "This country is proud of every Sikh. What have they not done for this country? Whatever respect we give them will always be less. I have been fortunate to spend crucial years of my life in Punjab. The language used by some against them and the attempt to mislead them will never benefit the nation."

On the other hand, while emphasising on the need for more FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), he cautioned the nation regarding a new form of FDI which he referred to as "foreign destructive ideology".

"The nation is making progress and we are talking about FDI but I see that a new FDI has come to the fore. We have to protect the nation from this new FDI. We need Foreign Direct Investment but the new FDI is 'foreign destructive ideology'. We have to protect ourselves from it," said PM Modi. His statement comes as farmers' agitation against the Centre's newly-enacted farm laws has got international attention with tweets by pop-star Rihanna and Swedish climate-activist Greta Thunberg backing the protesting farmers. Many farmers, mainly from Punjab, have been protesting for over 70 days at the borders of Delhi against the three newly enacted farm laws. They demand repealing of laws as well as the assurance of Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the government.

The Prime Minister further took a jibe at the Congress party saying that Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad had praised the recent elections held in Jammu and Kashmir, and hoped that Congress would take it in the right spirit "Ghulam Nabiji always speaks decently, never uses foul language. We should learn this from him, I respect him for it. He praised elections held in Jammu and Kashmir...I believe your party will take it in the right spirit and not commit the mistake of doing the opposite by listening to suggestions of G-23," said PM Modi in his reply to the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in Rajya Sabha. PM Modi's reference to G-23 was about the 23 senior Congress leaders who had written a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi, asking her for changes in the party.

## BAN ON CHINESE FIRMS: GOVT SAYS 92 COMPANIES REGISTERED IN INDIA, 80 ACTIVELY DOING BUSINESS

As India-China tensions continue despite the efforts being made to resolve the border issue, the government has said that as many as 80 Chinese companies are actively doing business in the country.

Replying to a question in Rajya Sabha regarding the restrictions on Chinese firms from doing business in the country, Minister of State (MoS) for Finance Anurag Thakur said that 92 Chinese companies are registered in India at present out of which, 80 companies are having the status of 'active' at present. Thakur added that adequate rules are in place and all companies are required to ensure compliance with them. He further informed that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India and, except in some sectors including defence, space and atomic energy, it is allowed with the government's permission.

Notably, the government had banned at least 59 apps belonging to Chinese companies last year including the popular short video platform TikTok and RPG game PUBG. The decision was taken citing security concerns over these apps in the aftermath of the Galwan Valley incident in eastern Ladakh.

The government has also issued fresh notices to make the ban imposed on video app TikTok and 58 other Chinese apps in June permanent, several media reports have claimed. When India first imposed the ban, the government gave the apps a chance to explain their position on compliance with privacy and security requirements. The companies, which include TikTok, Tencent Holdings' WeChat and Alibaba's UC Browser, were also asked to respond to a list of questions, reports said. "The government is not satisfied with the response/explanation given by these companies. Hence, the ban for these 59 apps is permanent now," business newspaper Livemint quoted a source familiar with the notices as saying. It said the notices were issued last week.



## BKU LEADER RAKESH TIKAIT RESPONDS TO PM MODI'S STATEMENT ON MSP, SAYS FARMERS READY TO TALK



After Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a strong response to those doing politics under the guise of farmers' protest and assured that Minimum Support Price (MSP) will remain, Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait has reacted to the statement, calling it an attempt to confuse. Tikait claimed that the farmers never said the MSP will be withdrawn but they were demanding a law on MSP. "When did we say that MSP will end? There should be a law on MSP," he said.

Tikait also added that the farmers' union is ready to talk to the PM if he wants to talk. "If the Prime Minister wants to talk then our front will talk. Just like PM Modi asked people to leave their gas cylinder subsidy, he should also appeal MPs and MLAs to leave their pensions," he said. To the motion of thanks on the address of President Ram Nath Kovind in the Rajya Sabha, doing politics under the guise of the new Farm Laws and Farmers Protest of the Center. Pressurized the opposition Earlier, this issue was about Punjab and Haryana. Then it became an issue for the Jat community. Now it is about small and big farmers. All farmers are equal, what is this small and big?" he asked. Tikait added that the price of food grains will be decided on the basis on hunger. "There will be no trade on hunger in the country. The price of food grains will not be decided on hunger. Milk is sold cheaper than water in the country. Its rate has to be fixed as well," he said.

## CLIMATE ACTIVIST GRETA THUNBERG'S 'ADMIRER' GIVES HER A LESSON ON INDIA'S AGRI SECTOR



International teen climate activist Greta Thunberg has come under attack for using her "bully pulpit" to wade into political issues, such as the farmers' protest in India. Mohinder Gulati, Former Chief Operating Officer, United Nations Sustainable Energy for All, has written a letter to Thunberg, which is also marked to the United Nations Secretary-General. "I had admired your courage, commitment, and capturing the global imagination on climate justice when you stood up at the 2018 UNCCC," Gulati said in the letter to Thunberg. "However, I am writing to you with some disappointment that you have started using your well-earned bully pulpit to wade into political issues, such as farmers' protest in India, which may not be as simple and as straightforward as you may have been led to believe," he added. "Walking into the thicket of local political issues, often mired in a battle with corrupt and vested political interests, would undermine your ability to keep the moral high ground to exhort world leaders into action for a sustainable future. I would urge you not to expend your political and moral capital on controversial local political issues," Gulati said in the letter. Through his letter, the ex-UN official tried to educate her on four issues related to India's farming sector, that are Emissions from crop residue burning, Food waste, water crisis and Corruption-controlled agriculture markets. Meanwhile, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri quoted Gulati's letter and said, "celebrities often require a fact & reality check! No one better to do this than an admirer who is also a domain specialist! This open letter from the former COO of a UN environment-related partnership to Greta is an eye-opener & a must read," Puri tweeted. Gulati said in the letter that there are other strong vested interests benefiting from the status quo. The government procures large quantities of wheat and rice for the public distribution system and pays a pre-announced minimum support price (MSP). Out of about 210 Mt of wheat and rice produced in the country, the government procures about 85 Mt for sale to the poor at one-tenth of the procurement price. About 52 per cent of this procurement is made from only three states - Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh - the hub of agitating farmers, he added.

## NO PAYMENT MADE TO RIHANA - MO DHALIHAL

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Denying these allegations, Mo Dhaliwal, along with Anita Lal (Poetic Justice Foundation co-founder), posted a statement on the organizations' website saying the information spread is "incorrect" and entirely invented. It reads, "Poetic Justice Foundation did not coordinate Rihanna, Greta Thunberg or any number of specific celebrities to tweet about the #FarmersProtest. We didn't pay anyone to tweet — and certainly didn't pay anyone \$2.5m to do so."

Both Lal and Dhaliwal also consider themselves "radical advocates for love." They have hoped that Indian media and government would focus on the real issue: farmers' protest and "invest their time and resources" in that.

## DEEP SIDHU SENT TO 7-DAY REMAND



NEW DELHI: ACTOR DEEP SIDHU, ACCUSED IN THE VIOLENCE ON REPUBLIC DAY DURING A FARMERS' TRACTOR RALLY, ARRESTED BY DELHI POLICE SPECIAL CELL IN NEW DELHI, TUESDAY. (PTI PHOTO)

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"He provoked the people and gave speeches with a loud hailer thus inciting violence," the police's lawyer said.

The judge sent Sidhu to seven-day police custody.

On January 26, thousands of protesting farmers who reached ITO from the Ghazipur border clashed with police.

Many of them driving tractors reached the Red Fort and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted. Over 500 police personnel were injured and one protester died.

The police today told the court that Sidhu congratulated the person who hoisted the flag at Red Fort and also did a Facebook Live from the spot. The defence counsel, however, rejected the charges

against the actor happened to be at the wrong place at wrong time. Sidhu's lawyer also said that his client was not evading arrest.

Sidhu was arrested by a team of Delhi Police's Special Cell late on Monday night. The police said they have started the process of identifying the co-conspirators in the incident of violence on Republic Day. Since Sidhu kept changing his location after the day of the violence, police teams will visit all those places.

In the FIR registered in connection with the Red Fort violence, police said two magazines with 20 live cartridges were snatched from two constables by protesters who also damaged vehicles and robbed anti-riot gear.

## UTTARAKHAND FLASH FLOODS LIVE UPDATES: DEATH TOLL RISES TO 31; AMIT SHAH SAYS RESCUE OPS ON WAR-FOOTING



With the recovery of five more bodies on Tuesday, the death toll from the Uttarakhand glacier disaster rose to 31, even as a multi-agency operation to rescue around 35 workers feared trapped inside a swamped tunnel at the Tapovan power project in Chamoli district continued on Tuesday, officials said, reported PTI.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also issued a statement in Rajya Sabha on the avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district and said all concerned agencies of Centre and State are monitoring the situation. Members of Rajya Sabha also paid tribute to victims of the disaster. In Lok Sabha, Shah said that Centre is monitoring the situation. "PM himself is monitoring it. Both the control rooms of the Home Ministry are monitoring the situation round the clock and the state is being

provided with all the possible help," he said.

Earlier during the day, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat conducted an aerial survey of areas affected due to the glacier disaster and took stock of the situation.

Personnel of the ITBP, NDRF and Army worked to locate around 170 people, mostly labourers working at two power projects, who are still reported missing.

Officials said rescue operations are centred around a 1,900-metre-long tunnel at NTPC's Tapovan site, where at least 35 people are believed to be trapped. A barrage at the project site had been washed away in the flood that saw water rise up to 70 feet, leading to debris blocking the 20-feet-wide opening of the tunnel.

## EFFORTS UNDERWAY TO RESCUE THOSE TRAPPED IN UTTARAKHAND TUNNEL: AMIT SHAH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that efforts are underway on a war footing to rescue those who are trapped in a tunnel after a glacier burst in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Sunday.

Sharing details of the disaster in Lok Sabha, the Home Minister said, "About 25-35 people are feared to be trapped in the second tunnel of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) project. The efforts are underway on war footing to rescue them."

"A total of 12 people of NTPC project were safely rescued from one tunnel. Fifteen people of Rishiganga project were also rescued at the time of the incident," the Minister said.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has set up its control room and its 450 jawans are carrying out search and rescue operations, he added. He said, "A total of five teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are at the site. Eight teams of Army also there, one medical column and an ambulance are also positioned at the site of the incident. "A diving team of Navy has also been deployed in the state," he added. Giving more details on the rescue operation, he added, "A total of 5 helicopters of the Air Force have also been deployed in the operation. One control of the Army has also been set up at Joshimath." The state government has announced an ex-gratia of ₹4 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased, he later said. (ANI)

## DELHI RECORDS ZERO COVID-19 DEATHS IN LAST 24 HOURS

Delhi on Tuesday reported no new fatalities due to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in the last 24 hours, according to the health department's bulletin on Tuesday. The national capital recorded 100 new cases of the infection and 144 recoveries in the said, as per the bulletin. This is a great milestone for Delhi that struggled with raging cases and fatalities caused by the deadly virus since March last year. Delhi health minister Satyender Jain congratulated the people of Delhi for following Covid protocol and taking precautions as well as healthcare and frontline workers who have been fighting the battle against Covid-19 since the first case was reported in March 2020. "Today no death has been reported due to Covid infection. Delhi's collective will is gradually winning over the infection. I congratulate the people of Delhi for taking proper precautions and our healthcare and frontline workers who have fought this battle tooth and nail," Jain said. The positivity rate of coronavirus cases in Delhi has dropped to 0.18 per cent. There are a total 1,052 active coronavirus cases currently in the capital. The coronavirus caseload in Delhi amounts to 6,36,260.

## 'Will never forget Ghulam Nabi Azad's response when Gujaratis were stuck in Kashmir': PM gets emotional

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday became emotional as he bid farewell to Congress Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Nabi Azad on Tuesday. Calling Azad a "true friend," Modi said the Congress leader had "has set very high standards as MP and Opposition leader." "Posts come, high office comes, power comes and how to handle these, one must learn from Ghulam Nabi Azad Ji. I would consider him a true friend," PM Modi said. "Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad has distinguished himself in Parliament. He not only worries about his party but also had a similar passion towards the smooth running of the House and towards India's development. His work will inspire generations of MPs to come," Modi said in his address today. Recalling his association with Ghulam Nabi Azad, the prime minister said, "I will never forget Shri Azad's efforts and Shri Pranab Mukherjee's efforts when people from Gujarat were stuck in Kashmir due to a terror attack. Ghulam Nabi Ji was constantly following up, he sounded as concerned as if those stuck were his own family members."

## SC STAYS ARREST OF SHASHI THAROOR, RAJDEEP SARDESAI OVER 'MISLEADING' TWEETS

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the arrest of senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, journalist Rajdeep Sardesai and others in cases lodged over their alleged "misleading" tweets on Jan 26 tractor rally violence, PTI reported.

Tharoor and Sardesai had last week approached the Supreme Court. FIRs have been filed in five states against Tharoor and six journalists. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde issued notices and sought responses from the Centre and others on the petitions filed by Tharoor, Sardesai and journalists Mrinal Pande, Zafar Agha, Paresh Nath, Vinod K Jose and Anant Nath. When the bench said it was issuing notice in the matter, senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, appearing for Tharoor, said that no coercive action be taken against the petitioners in the meantime. "Nothing is going to happen. Where is the danger," said the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian. "We will hear you after two weeks and stay the arrest in the meanwhile," the bench said. Cases have been registered at Gurgaon, Bengaluru and Noida on Thursday. Four similar cases in different districts of Madhya Pradesh earlier. In New Delhi, the case has been transferred to the Crime Branch.

## 'WORD OF MOUTH' WAR BETWEEN PM MODI & FARMERS

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Responding to his comments, the farmers' body said 'andolanjeevis' helped India break free from colonial rule. A statement by the SanyuktaKisanMorcha read, "We condemn the charge made by the PM, and we would like to remind him that it was andolanjeevis who helped India break free from colonial rulers, and so we are proud of being andolanjeevis."

"It is the BJP and its forefathers who have never participated in an agitation against the British. They were always afraid of people's movements, and that is why they are afraid of people's movements even now."

PM Modi reassured that MSP would continue and said, "hollow statements on MSP won't help the farmers in any manner, and opposition had made such meaningless statements in the past as well."

On the contrary, farmers demand a legal guarantee to be given on MSP for all crops.

On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi smashed the narrative against his government on the farmers' issue. He cautioned the country against the new FDI that now stands for "Foreign Destructive Ideology."

Regarding this, the farmers' body statement said, "we are opposed to all kinds of FDI. The PM's FDI comment is also dangerous, even we want to keep away from any Foreign Destructive Ideology."

## PRESIDENT BIDEN CALLS PM MODI HINTED AT DEEPENING 'PARTNERSHIPS' BETWEEN COUNTRIES

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"The leaders agreed to continue close cooperation to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, including support for freedom of navigation, territorial integrity, and a stronger regional architecture through the Quad," it added.

Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is an informal strategic forum between the democracies of India, the U.S., Japan and Australia. After receiving the call, PM Modi tweeted, "President @JoeBiden and I are committed to a rules-based international order. We look forward to consolidating our strategic partnership to further peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond." Both the leaders agreed that shared commitment to democratic values is the bedrock for the U.S.- India relationship and discussed the military "coup" in Myanmar. PM Modi and President Biden "resolved that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld in Burma," said the White House's statement.

According to the statement, both the leaders consented to stay in close touch on a range of global hurdles. They also look ahead to what the United States and India will achieve together for their people and their nations.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the opportunity to invite President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden to visit India at their earliest convenience, according to the statement by Prime Minister's Office.

## INDIA IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTNERS IN INDO-PACIFIC: US STATE DEPARTMENT



THE UNITED STATES ALSO WELCOMED INDIA'S EMERGENCE AS A LEADING GLOBAL POWER AND ITS ROLE AS A NET SECURITY PROVIDER IN THE REGION.

The United States on Tuesday called India one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region and welcomed its emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region. "India is one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region to us. We welcome India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region," said US State Department spokesperson Ned Price during a press briefing. "We cooperate on a wide range of diplomatic and security issues, including defense, non-proliferation, regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, environment, health, education, technology, agriculture, space and oceans and that list is not exhaustive," he added. Price also welcomed India's tenure at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member, adding that the US remains India's largest trading partner, with total bilateral trade increasing to USD 146 billion in 2019. The State Department spokesperson also mentioned the conversation between US State Secretary Antony Blinken and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. "Secretary Blinken today spoke with his Indian

counterpart Foreign Minister Jaishankar. I think I would start by saying that the US-India comprehensive strategic partnership is both broad as well as multifaceted. We will continue to engage at the highest levels of our government to deepen cooperation on many fronts and we are confident that the strong and upward trajectory of our partnership will continue," he said. According to a statement by US State Department spokesperson Ned Price, Blinken and Jaishankar discussed regional developments, including the value of cooperation across the Indo-Pacific. Both sides also looked forward to expanded regional cooperation, including through the Quad and to address the challenges of COVID-19 and climate change. Speaking on India-China talks on border dispute: "We are closely monitoring the situation. We know the ongoing talks between governments of India and China and we continue to support direct dialogue and a peaceful resolution of those border disputes." He further commented that the US is concerned by Beijing's pattern of ongoing attempts to intimidate its neighbours. The leaders also expressed concern over the military coup in Myanmar and discussed the importance of rule of law and democratic process in the country.

## MAMATA BANERJEE COMPARES HERSELF TO 'ROYAL BENGAL TIGER', CALLS BJP AS 'OUTSIDER PARTY'



As the West Bengal Assembly election 2021 dates near, all parties are eyeing to capture power in the state. Leaders cut across party lines are at their fiery best. On Tuesday, addressing a public rally at Behrampur in Murshidabad district, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee branded the BJP as an 'outsider party'. She said that "BJP is not Bengal party, it's a party from Gujarat". Mamata Banerjee also added that "people of Bengal will rule the State". Compares party defectors to Mir Jafar Comparing herself to a Royal Bengal Tiger, Mamata Banerjee said that she is not a weak person who can be intimidated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Addressing a rally in Murshidabad's Baharampur, the capital of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daullah's empire, CM Mamata Banerjee also compared those who left the TMC to join the saffron party to Mir Jafar, a commander of his army who betrayed him in the Battle of Plassey against the British in 1757. "There is no reason to think I am weak, I am not a person to be afraid of anything. I am a strong person and will keep my head high as long as I live and till then I will live like a Royal Bengal Tiger," CM Banerjee said. Accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of wrongly claiming at a BJP meeting in Haldia on Sunday, that government employees in West Bengal do not get salaries properly, she alleged that it is the Centre which is selling off BSNL, SAIL and privatising the Railways and insurance companies.

"Will continue to support farmers" Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister held a public rally at Kalna in Bardhaman, and reiterated her stand against the controversial three Central farm Bills. Until they were withdrawn, she would continue to extend support to the agitating farmers. "See what is happening to Modi babu's farmers in Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh. Barbed wires and nails are being used to keep people out. Those three black bills will loot everything from the farmers. You [the farmers] will produce the crops and they will sell it to the Adanis," she alleged. "No support during cyclone Amphan or COVID-19" CM Banerjee also claimed that the Centre did not give any assistance to West Bengal for dealing with the devastation caused by cyclone Amphan last year, nor did it do anything to support the state to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Raking up the outsider issue, the TMC supremo claimed that the BJP is a party of Gujarat and Delhi, which is bringing in National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR). Mamata hits out at Congress and Left She also attacked the Congress and the Left which will contest the assembly polls jointly in the state. "Congress cannot fight the BJP and does not want to do it. The CPI(M) is the BJP's big friend," she said, claiming that it is only the TMC which can take on the might of the saffron party in the state.

## DEMOCRACY IS WOVEN IN OUR BREATH, EVERY THOUGHT, INITIATIVE: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded the participation of women MPs during the discussion on motion of thanks on the President's address in Lok Sabha and said they enriched the proceedings with their thoughts. In his reply to the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the address by President Ram Nath Kovind showcased India's "sankalp shakti" (will power). "His words have boosted the spirit of confidence among the people of India," he said. "During the discussion on the President's speech, a large number of women MPs took part. This is a great sign. I want to congratulate the women MPs who enriched the House proceedings with their thoughts," he added. The Prime Minister said that people of the country must make a new resolve on where to take the country when India will celebrate 100 years of indepen-

dence. "We are knocking at the doors of 75 years of independence. It's a matter of pride for every Indian and an occasion to move forward. We may be in any corner or belong to any strata of society but we must make a new resolve that where do we want to take India at 100 years of freedom," he said. PM Modi said that when the country became independent, the last British commander used to say that India is a continent of many countries and no one will be able to make it a nation. "But we have proved them wrong. Indians proved them wrong. Today we have stood as a ray of hope for the world." "The post-COVID world is turning out to be very different. In such times, remaining isolated from global trends will be counter-productive. We will have to emerge as a strong player. That is why, India is working towards building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat," he added.

## Drugs worth Rs 1.7 crore concealed in lehengas found before being smuggled to Australia



Customs officials in Delhi found over 3,900 grams of the drug MDMA, commonly known as "ecstasy" in a consignment of lehengas, that was being sent to Australia. According to the customs officials, the seized drug worth Rs 1.7 crore. The drug was caught at the foreign post office (PFO) by intelligence officials based in Delhi. The stock was hidden inside the delivery package of the lehengas. The official said they found over 3,900 grams of the drug MDMA commonly known as 'ecstasy', these were found concealed in the intricate work on the traditional Indian wear. A person may experience the intoxicating effects of MDMA within 30 minutes after taking a single dose. Those effects include an enhanced sense of well-being, increased extroversion, agony or empathy toward others, and a willingness to discuss emotionally-charged memories. However, MDMA can also cause several adverse health effects as it is a dangerous drug, that is chemically similar to both stimulants and hallucinogens, the synthetic drug can lead to panic attacks and in severe cases a loss of consciousness or death. Earlier on February 7, customs officials in Delhi seized around 60 lakh cigarettes of a foreign brand worth Rs 7.5 crore.

## Twitter suspends 500 accounts in compliance with Centre's orders



Twitter on Wednesday said that it has suspended over 500 accounts in response to orders by the PM Narendra Modi-led government. In an extensive statement "to set the record straight", the social media giant said, "We took a range of enforcement actions — including permanent suspension in certain cases — against more than 500 accounts escalated across all Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology orders for clear violations of Twitter's Rules." The government had sent two orders—on January 31 and another on February 4 for blocking 257 and 1178 accounts respectively in the backdrop of farmers' protests. The orders pointed out that these accounts were trying to trend genocide and many of them were backed by the Pakistan-Khalistani combo that could play mischief amid the protests. Other than suspending accounts, Twitter said that it took "steps to reduce the visibility of the hashtags containing harmful content" and withheld accounts under "country withheld content policy", which means these accounts will be available outside of India. Twitter had informed the government about its actions on Wednesday itself even as the tiff between the social media giant and Centre has been escalating, with the Centre willing to exercise penal provisions under section 69A of the Indian IT act. Meanwhile, Twitter said it has not taken any actions on accounts of news media entities, journalists, activists, and politicians saying, "we believe, would violate their fundamental right to free expression under Indian law."

## NO COVID-19 DEATHS REPORTED IN 24 HOURS IN 15 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, SAYS CENTRE

In some positive news for the country, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday (February 9) reported that 15 states and Union Territories haven't reported any death due to COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. NITI Aayog member Dr VK Paul praised the improvement in the COVID-19 situation in national capital Delhi. "The number of cases (of COVID-19) is also falling. So that is good news. In the last 24 hours, no death was recorded in Delhi. So that is also good news," Dr Paul had said. The National Capital has observed a steady decline in the number of Coronavirus cases. Till Monday morning, Delhi recorded 125 new cases and two fatalities. According to the Health department's data, the positivity rate stood at 0.23 per cent. Paul also noted that the figures of daily mortality per million population in India over the last seven days have been among the lowest in the world. The centre also reported that seven states and Union Territories have recorded no fatalities in the last three weeks. These seven states and Union Territories are Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar, Tripura, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Nagaland, Mizoram and Lakshadweep. The number of fresh daily cases has been on a steady decline and over the last five weeks, there has been a 55 per cent decline in the average daily deaths, said the Union Health Ministry. The NITI Aayog official, however, requested everyone to not be complacent, pointing out that the nationwide sero survey "tells us that over 70 per cent of our population is still vulnerable".

## UAE MAKES HISTORY AS HOPE PROBE SUCCESSFULLY ENTERS MARS ORBIT AFTER SEVEN-MONTH TRIP



UAE HAS NOW BECOME THE FIFTH COUNTRY IN HISTORY TO REACH THE RED PLANET AND THE ARAB NATION'S FIRST INTERPLANETARY MISSION.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) made history on Tuesday after its first-ever interplanetary Hope Probe mission successfully entered orbit around Mars following a seven-month journey.

The country's first mission to the red planet which travelled over 494 million kilometres entered the orbit in its very first attempt. The Emirates Mars Mission, known as the Hope Probe, sent a signal back to earth to confirm the success. It will soon start sending data about the Martian atmosphere and climate.

"Success! Contact with #HopeProbe has been established again. The Mars Orbit Insertion is now complete," according to a tweet from the mission's Twitter account at 11:16 am ET (9:46 pm IST).

UAE has now become the fifth country in history to reach the red planet and the Arab nation's first interplanetary mission. The Mars programme is part of the UAE's efforts to develop its scientific and technological capabilities and reduce its reliance on oil. The UAE Space Agency even has an ambitious plan for a Mars settlement by 2117. The Hope Mars Mission is considered as the biggest strategic and scientific national initiative announced by UAE's President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and His Highness

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in 2014. "I am grateful for the performance of the spacecraft, and what has made this mission remarkable, Becky, it is not only the 200 Emiratis working on this, but it is the 450 people from different continents, and from different backgrounds and beliefs. This is truly an international endeavour, and this is what science needs to be. This is what exploration is all about," said Sarah bint Yousef Al Amiri, deputy project manager for the mission and UAE's the minister of state for advanced sciences.

The Hope Probe is the first of the three UAE interplanetary missions. All three missions launched around the same time due to an alignment between Mars and the Earth on the same side of the sun, making for a more efficient journey to Mars. Of the other two missions, Tianwen-1 is expected to arrive on February 10 and Perseverance on February 18.

"Congratulations @HopeMarsMission on your safe arrival to Mars' orbit! Your bold endeavor to explore the Red Planet will inspire many others to reach for the stars. We hope to join you at Mars soon with @NASAPersevere," tweeted Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

## UNSC RAISES CONCERN OVER MYANMAR COUP, CALLS FOR AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S RELEASE

The United Nations Security Council on Thursday issued a press statement expressing concern over the developments in Myanmar and called for the release of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

"Members of the Security Council expressed deep concern at the declaration of the state of emergency imposed in Myanmar by the military" and the "arbitrary detention of members of the Government, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint and others. They called for the immediate release of all those detained," read the statement.

On Monday, the country saw a bloodless coup with the military overthrowing the civilian government in an action that led to strong reactions globally. Interestingly, the UNSC statement doesn't use the word coup. UNSC members in the statement "emphasized the need for the continued support of the democratic transition in Myanmar" and "stressed the need to uphold democratic institutions and processes, refrain from violence, and fully respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The country saw elections last year with National League for Democracy getting huge support. The actions by the military halts the democratic transition for the country, which started in 2010 after the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The top UN body "encouraged the pursuance of dialogue and reconciliation in accordance with the will and interests of the people of Myanmar". Concerns have also been expressed at the "restrictions



on civil society, journalists and media workers" in the statement. The UNSC had met on Tuesday to discuss the issue. UK is the president of the UNSC for this month and had backed the discussion on the issue at the high table. The statement mentions the Rohingya crisis with the UNSC members reiterating the "need to address the root causes of the crisis in Rakhine State and to create conditions necessary for the safe, voluntary, sustainable, and dignified return of displaced persons."

The statement saw strong support to regional organizations, in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and welcomed the ASEAN Chair's Statement dated 1 February 2021 on the issue. The ASEAN statement called for adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and good governance.

## EU PARLIAMENTARIANS BACK INDIA-SOUTH AFRICA'S PROPOSAL FOR IPR WAIVER ON COVID-19 VACCINE PATENTS

European Union Parliamentarians have strongly backed India and South Africa's joint proposal at the World Trade Organization for a waiver on intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccine patents in a letter to EU leadership. The letter by 14 EU MEPs or members of the European Parliamentarians has called for a moratorium on the suspension of COVID-19 vaccine patents. "South Africa and India sent a joint proposal to the World Trade Organization requesting an exemption from patents and other intellectual property rights concerning drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, personal protective equipment, and other medical technologies throughout the pandemic and this proposal is still pending," read the two-page letter. The letter seen by WION has asked European Union to "support for India and South Africa's proposal at the WTO" with the aim to "guarantee widespread and equitable access to vaccines on a global scale." WTO had met in December to take up the proposal for waiver of intellectual property over coronavirus vaccines but failed to arrive at the decision over stiff opposition from United States, European Union and others. The proposal for waiver on IP rights for the vaccines means affordable access to everyone even as countries try to vaccinate their population.

The letter by the EU MEP has been sent to President of the European Council Charles Michel, President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen, EU high representative for foreign affairs Josep Borrell, European Commissioner for Trade Valdis Dombrovskis and European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Honorable Stella Kyriakides.

The MEPs who have sent the letter are--Andrea Cozzolino, Maria Arena, Eva Kaili, Alex Agius Saliba, Boguslaw Liberadzki, Tiemo Woelken, Milan Brglez, Patrizia Toia, Irene Tinagli, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Pina Picierno, Giuliano Pisapia, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Franco Roberti. The development comes amid the ongoing tiff between EU and AstraZeneca over vaccine supplies. Media reports are calling the India-South African proposal as a "nuclear option" and it is already leading a divide in the already divided group. In fact, the Italian Parliament had backed the proposal as far as December. A patent pause amid the coronavirus pandemic looks a humane action but for many license holders would see it as a loss, and would call for a pushback against it.



## HEALTHY VOLUNTEERS FOR COVID-19 RESEARCH MUST BE PAID SUBSTANTIALLY: REPORT



Healthy people volunteering to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, in order to help scientists better understand how to tackle the virus, should receive payment -- if it is determined that these studies are otherwise ethical to proceed, new research suggests.

The researchers assessed the ethics of paying participants to take part in the so-called 'Human Infection Challenge Studies' (HICS) and said that they do not necessarily endorse the use of HICS for Covid-19. But if HICS proceed, not only should participants be paid, but their payment should be "substantial". "Our work was spurred by concerns that payment for SARS-CoV-2 HICS might require a novel ethical framework, which we ultimately determined to be unfounded," said lead author Holly Fernandez Lynch from the University of Pennsylvania. "Payment for HICS participation should be treated like payment in other clinical studies involving healthy participants," Lynch added. Over the past few months, there has been vast media coverage and discussion about the first Covid-19 HICS in the world planned to begin in the UK later this year. This type of study can be particularly valuable for testing vaccines and can speed up the development of new vaccines, the team said. Using HICS for a disease that can be fatal and currently lacks a cure is ethically controversial. Part of that controversy has to do with whether participants should be paid for such a risky endeavour and how payment might affect their consent, they added. For the study, published in the journal American Journal of Bioethics, the research team created a framework for scientists to follow in order to ethically assess payments for people taking part in HICS. They also looked at payment in similar studies but noted the difficulty of finding out this information. The framework the team has developed is split into two parts. The first focuses on three main motives for payment -- 'reimbursement' (for out-of-pocket expenses), 'compensation' (which includes payment for time, burden, inconvenience of isolating, etc.), and 'incentive' (to broaden the range of individuals willing to consider participation). The second part considers appropriate compensation in the event any harm materializes -- ranging from injury to death.

## WALLET LOST 53 YEARS AGO RETURNED TO 91-YEAR-OLD US METEOROLOGIST



Imagine you lose something and then after ages you get it back. What will be your reaction? Mixed feeling of surprise, happiness and amusement for sure. A man from San Diego in California was shocked when he was returned the wallet he lost 53 years ago in Antarctica.

A 91-year-old man in the US was pleasantly surprised to get back his wallet he had lost more than five decades ago, all the way in Antarctica. On January 30, the now-91-year-old Paul Grisham was returned his long-lost wallet, which was found behind a locker during the demolition of a building at McMurdo Station, the southernmost town on Earth. The entire incident has left the old man and netizens in amusement.

In October 1967, US Navy meteorologist Paul Grisham shipped out to Antarctica, where he worked as a weather forecaster for a science station and airport on Ross Island. Thirteen months later, he returned back to California where his family lived. However, he had lost his wallet in Antarctica and came home empty handed.

The wallet contained Grisham's Navy ID, his driver's license, a tax withholding statement, a recipe for homemade Kahlua and several other items. It contained no cash, as there was nothing to buy at the station.

New Hampshire's Stephen Decato, who previously worked for an agency that does snow cap research in Antarctica, said his former boss got in touch with him last month to seek his help in finding the owners of two wallets found during the demolition of the McMurdo station building. Decato's daughter Sarah Lindbergh reached out to Bruce McKee, of the Indiana Spirit of '45 nonprofit foundation, who contacted Gary Cox of the Naval Weather Service Association for help finding the owner of the other wallet. Cox was able to get Decato in touch with Grisham.

The second wallet belonged to a man named Paul Howard who died in 2016. His family was grateful to receive it.

## NO INDICATION OF COVID IN WUHAN BEFORE DEC 2019, VIRUS UNLIKELY TO HAVE LEAKED FROM CHINA LAB: WHO

中国—世界卫生组织  
新型冠状病毒溯源研究联合专家组  
新闻发布会  
WHO-convened Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part  
WHO-China Joint Study Press Conference



THE WHO TEAM RECOMMENDED THAT MORE STUDIES ARE REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF COVID-19 SPREAD IN THE WORLD.

Members of a World Health Organization-led team looking for clues about the origins of COVID-19 held a briefing on Tuesday after nearly a month of meetings and site visits in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the disease was first identified.

A member of the WHO-China joint study team, Liang Wannian, said that there is no evidence of transmission of the novel coronavirus before December 2019 in Wuhan.

The WHO team recommended that more studies are required to identify the source of Covid-19 spread in the world.

Another World Health Organisation expert said the coronavirus is unlikely to have leaked from a Chinese lab and most probably jumped to humans via an intermediary species.

WHO food safety and animal diseases expert Peter Ben Embarek made the assessment in a summation Tuesday of a WHO team's investigation into the possible origins of the coronavirus in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Embarek said that cold chain transmission of the virus is a possibility and warrants further investigation. 'Cold chain' refers to the transport and trade of frozen food. China has pushed the idea that the virus can be transmitted by frozen food and has repeatedly announced findings

of coronavirus traces on imported food packaging.

"We know the virus can survive in conditions that are found in these cold, frozen environments, but we don't really understand if the virus can transmit to humans" or under which conditions, he told the briefing. He said that work to identify the origins of the coronavirus points to a natural reservoir in bats, but it is unlikely that they were in Wuhan. The WHO team that includes experts from 10 nations arrived in Wuhan on January 14 and after two weeks of quarantine, visited key sites like the Huanan seafood market, the location of the first known cluster of infections, as well as the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which has been involved in coronavirus research.

While the virus is widely believed to have originated from an animal source and spread to humans through an intermediary, the WHO team emphasised on studying the possibility of the transmission of the virus through frozen food, along with other possibilities.

Another team member, infectious disease expert Dominic Dwyer, said it would probably take years to fully understand the origins of COVID-19. The first clusters of COVID-19 were detected in Wuhan in late 2019, prompting the government to put the city of 11 million under a strict 76-day lockdown.

## Farm laws: UK MP Claudia Webbe supports farmers' agitation



UK Member of Parliament Claudia Webbe also expressed solidarity with the Indian farmers. "Solidarity to the Indian Farmers. Thank you Rihanna. In an era where political leadership is lacking we are grateful for others stepping forward," she wrote along with sharing a screenshot of Rihanna's tweet. Author and niece of US Vice President Kamala Harris, Meena also showed her support on social media towards the agitating farmers as well. She wrote on Twitter, "It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault." "This is related. We ALL should be outraged by India's internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters," she added.

Harris wrote further, "Militant nationalism is just as potent a force in politics as it is in India or anywhere else. It can only be stopped if people wake up to the reality that FASCIST DICTATORS aren't going anywhere. Meanwhile, the Haryana government has extended the suspension of mobile internet services in several districts of the state till 5 pm on February 3. Farmers have been protesting on the different borders of the national capital since November 26 last year against the three newly enacted farm laws: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and farm Services Act 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

## SHOCKING DETAILS EMERGE ABOUT MURDER OF NORTH KOREAN LEADER KIM JONG UN'S HALF BROTHER IN NEW DOCUMENTARY 'ASSASSINS'

In 2017, Kim Jong Nam, the half-brother of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, was attacked and murdered by a nerve agent at the International Airport in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur. Now, American documentary filmmaker Ryan White has created a documentary called 'Assassins', which investigates many aspects related to the murder of Kim Jong Nam.

It is to be noted that Kim Jong Un's half brother was the likely heir of their late father and former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il.

Ryan White's crime thriller documentary 'Assassins' revolves around the prosecution of the two women accused of the crime, and the mysterious circumstances surrounding the murder.

Nam was assassinated after being exposed to a VX nerve agent. The movie shows the footage of a woman wrapping her hands around Nam's eyes who died shortly after. Two women- Indonesian Siti Aisyah and Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong-were charged with poisoning Nam by putting the banned chemical weapon VX on his face. Defense lawyers maintained they were mere pawns in an assassination conducted by North Korean agents. Moreover, the women maintained that they were part of a reality prank show, and had no knowledge of the plot to assassinate Nam. Both the women were released from jail. Siti was freed in March 2019 after a Malaysian court dropped charges, and Huong was released the following day after pleading to a lesser charge of causing harm using dangerous means.

The film also deals with the threat King Jong-un faced from his half brother, in his ascent to power. The filmmaker said to Rolling Stones that the story of Kim Jon Un's brother was swept aside as Trump's ascent to the Presidency dominated the headlines.

"Trump was just taking office when Kim Jong-Nam was assassinated in 2017," White tells Rolling Stone. "So, this murder was a top story for a couple of days, but then it basically disappeared as Trump dominated the airwaves. Almost everybody I talk to remembers the headline, but few people know what happened after or what the truth is." Ryan said in an interview with Rolling Stones.

He further revealed that he hadn't met the women who were accused of killing him as they were facing a trial. At one point of time the women were facing mandatory death penalty in Malaysia.

## Agricultural reform is India's domestic policy issue says British govt, supports India-China talks

New Delhi: In the backdrop of farmers' protests in India, the British govt has said that the agricultural reforms are Indian government's domestic policy issue.

In response to a written question on Friday in the British Parliament, Nigel Adams, Minister of Asia in British Foreign Office said, "We are aware of concerns in India and here in the UK about how these reforms might affect farming communities", pointing out, "Agricultural reform is a domestic policy issue for the Indian authorities to address." Asked about the British govt's assessment of the protests by farmers on January 26, the minister said, "The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. Handling of protests is an internal matter for the Indian authorities." In fact, last week saw several questions being asked by British MPs on other India-related issues, with the British govt clearly reiterating its stance which is largely supportive of New Delhi. A question was asked on China's aggressive actions towards India, to which Adams said, "as neighbours, India and China have an important relationship with one another" and London "welcomes discussions" while continuing to "support a peaceful resolution" between India and China of the border question. China's aggressive actions in 2020, especially with India at Galwan, had led to a major blow in Delhi-Beijing ties. The country's action in Hong Kong with a new law has perturbed the UK and led to sharp exchanges between London and Beijing. In a related question, on UK govt's ties with QUAD--Australia, India, Japan and US, the minister said, "No decisions have yet been made on the form UK engagement with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue could take." When asked about Kashmir, Adams said, "The UK's position remains that it is for India and Pakistan to identify a lasting political resolution to the situation, one that takes into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people."

He elaborated that Kashmir was "raised" by British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab during his India visit in December with his Indian counterpart External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar. On human rights issues in the union territory, Adams said, "Officials at the British High Commission in New Delhi engage regularly with human rights organizations on the situation. Any allegation of human rights abuses is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently."

## Joe Biden's statement on Myanmar is directed to all countries in the region, says White House

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said on Monday (February 1) that a statement by President Joe Biden about the military coup in Myanmar is directed at all countries in the region when asked if it was directed at China.

On Sunday, the White House put out a statement saying the United States opposes any attempt to alter the outcome of recent elections or impede Myanmar's democratic transition and will take action against those responsible if these steps are not reversed. Biden also released a separate statement on Myanmar on Monday. Western leaders condemned the coup by Myanmar's military against Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government and hundreds of thousands of her supporters took to the social media to voice their anger at the takeover. The sudden turn of events in the early hours of Monday derailed years of efforts to establish democracy in the poverty-stricken country and raised more questions over the prospect of returning a million Rohingya refugees. The UN Security Council will meet on Tuesday, diplomats said, amid calls for a strong response to the detention of Suu Kyi and dozens of her political allies, although Myanmar's close ties with council member China will play into any decision. Biden said the coup was a direct assault on Myanmar's transition to democracy and the rule of law. The army handed power to military chief General Min Aung Hlaing and imposed a state of emergency for a year in the country, saying it had responded to what it called election fraud.

## Russia will begin re-issuing visas to all categories of Indian citizens

Russia on Saturday announced that it will resume issuing visas to all categories of Indian citizens for those travelling by air as well as the ones with residence permits. On January 25, the Russian government had ordered to restore "international air traffic on a reciprocal basis with a number of foreign states, including India". The move has come in wake of the decision made by the Russian Covid-19 Emergency Response Centre on January 16.

"In this regard, issuing of visas of all categories (including student visa) to enter Russia via air checkpoints is resumed for the Indian citizens, as well as for persons who have a residence permit," the Russian embassy in New Delhi said in a statement.

The people applying for visas have to provide the necessary documents listed on the website of the Russian embassy. They also need to produce a valid medical document stating a negative Covid-19 PCR test result.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday (January 28) extended the suspension on scheduled commercial international flights to and from the country till February 28, 2021. The restrictions, however, shall not apply to international air-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by DGCA. Earlier, after the discovery of the UK strain of the coronavirus, flights were suspended till January 31, 2021.

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