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Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX, 5 STATES ELECTIONS IN INDIA

➔ DETAILS ON PAGE 4 & 5



BJP CLAIMS TO FORM GOVT IN BENGAL, RETAIN POWER IN ASSAM



TMC WILL RETAIN POWER IN NANDIGRAM & BENGAL



KEJRIWAL REITERATES SUPPORT TO FARMERS' PROTEST IN JIND



'I AM A LOYAL WORKER OF CONGRESS PARTY': NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU



AMARINDER SINGH PLANS TO PLAY ANOTHER INNINGS IN 2022

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

CANADA'S COVID-19 VACCINE DELIVERY TIMELINE RAMPS UP

OTTAWA, (IANS) Covid-19 activity has been steadily increasing for several weeks, with a rising number and proportion of more contagious variants driving epidemic growth in many areas in Canada, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Doug Ford, premier of Canada's most populous province of Ontario, announced on Tuesday that his government is considering additional restrictions to combat a surge in Covid-19 cases and urged people not to gather over the upcoming long weekend, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Ford said that he is extremely concerned about rising infections and stressed that residents must follow public health rules. "Don't make plans for Easter."

The province has seen rising Covid-19 rates for weeks, fuelled by the spread of more transmissible variants of the virus. Ontario reported 2,336 new cases of Covid-19 and 14 additional deaths on Tuesday.

Over the past week, there have been an average of over 4,600 new cases and 26 deaths reported daily, said Theresa Tam, Canadian chief public health officer, in a statement on Tuesday.

- Canada has approved four vaccine candidates till now, namely Pfizer- BioNtech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India's CoviShield, and finally Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- Schools in Brampton, Mississauga & Caledon moves to online learning from Tuesday April 6 for 2 weeks.
- Toronto & Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph's Medical Officers of Health ordered schools to close & move to remote learning effective Wednesday, April 7.
- Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) pauses AstraZeneca vaccine for people 55 years and below.
- Ontario Implements Provincewide 'Emergency Brake'; All 34 Public Health Unit Regions to Move into Shutdown Effective April 3.
- New Covid infection rates highest among Canadians aged 20-39.
- Ontario's Covid-19 hospitalizations increased by 41.7%, health officials say
- Peel & Toronto residents 60 & over can book vaccine appointments.
- York Region opens vaccine appointment bookings for residents aged 45 to 59 who live in select high priority communities on Wed, April 7.
- Ontario's 700 pharmacies to offer AstraZeneca vaccine to individuals aged 55 yrs+
- Humber River hospital to begin inoculating people 50 yrs+ with Pfizer vaccine.
- Residents with highest-risk and high-risk conditions can now book appointment at Sunnybrook Hospital.
- Every Canadian to receive inoculation by September
- Ontario aims to have all eligible Ontarians receive 1st Covid-19 vaccine shot by June 20.
- Ontario government expects to inoculate up to nine million people between April 2021 and July 2021.
- President Biden promises to inoculate all eligible Americans to inoculate by April 19; will administer 200 million vaccines in 100 days of his office.
- Canada received 3.2 million last week & 10 million vaccines in total so far
- Canada to receive 44 million vaccines in next 3 months & approx. 110 million vaccines to arrive before Sept. 30.

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Save Max gift to support expanding care at Trillium Health Partners



SAVE MAX GIFT \$2.5 MILLION TO SUPPORT EXPANDING CARE AT TRILLIUM HEALTH PARTNERS.

DETAILS ON PAGE 7

'SIMPLE GESTURE OF BAJWA'S MAGNANIMITY MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH'

LONDON, (IANS) The Directors General of Military Operations of both India and Pakistan took a bold decision in February to establish ceasefire across the Line of Control. Since then, it has been all quiet on the Kashmir front and the blazing guns have gone silent. This demonstrates the willingness of Pakistani Army chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, to sincerely refrain from any future cross-border firing, at least for now.

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DESHMUKH QUILTS IN A CLOUD, WALSE-PATIL IS NEW MAHARASHTRA HOME MINISTER

MUMBAI, (IANS) Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has resigned from his post, hours after the Bombay High Court asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh, a top Nationalist Congress Party leader said here on Monday. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has appointed senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, ex-Speaker and Labour Minister Dilip Walse-Patil as the new Home Minister.

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SAUDI NEWSPAPER SAYS J&K YOUTH RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO GOVT'S DEVELOPMENTAL INITIATIVES

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Youth from the Jammu and Kashmir region have responded positively to the Modi government's development initiatives and have shown their desire to become a part of the progress and prosperity of New India, Saudi newspaper, Saudi Gazette, reported.

CONTD. ON PAGE 5

BIJAPUR MAOIST ATTACK: 22 SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED, 31 INJURED

SHAH REVIEWS MAOIST ATTACK, SAYS FIGHT WILL CONTINUE TILL END

RAIPUR, (IANS) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday reviewed the gun battle in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur that claimed lives of 22 security personnel, asserting that the "fight against Maoists will continue and we will take it to the end". Shah took the stock of the situation of the ground in a high-level meeting with senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Intelligence Bureau and Central Armed Police Forces soon after he reached Delhi from Assam.

CONTD. ON PAGE 9



PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD INVESTIGATING RACIST INCIDENT THAT OCCURRED DURING VIRTUAL SIKH HERITAGE MONTH EVENT

Peel District School Board is investigating a racist incident that occurred during a virtual Sikh Heritage month event, in which Federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh was a guest speaker. Director of Education Colleen Russell-Rawlins and Supervisor Bruce Rodrigues issued an open letter, apologizing for the mishapening.

MAN ARRESTED IN HATE-MOTIVATED INVESTIGATION

Investigators from the Airport Division, Criminal Investigation Bureau with the assistance of Toronto Police Service have executed the warrant for the 47-year-old man in a hate-motivated investigation.

On Sunday, March 21, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., the suspect in this incident was present at the Toronto Pearson Airport located on the arrivals level at 6310 Terminal Three Road in Mississauga. At that time, it is alleged, the suspect entered the Inter-Faith Prayer Room and began causing damage, which investigators have deemed a hate-motivated incident.

UNEMPLOYMENT REMAINS TOP WORRY FOR URBAN INDIANS: REPORT

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Although the economy moves towards a rebound, unemployment remains the topmost worry among urban Indians, a report said. An Ipsos survey showed that joblessness remains India's topmost worry and has further increased by 4 per cent in 'worry' levels. Likewise, Covid-19 which is India's second biggest worry, after a major reduction last month in its intensity, has climbed up by 4 per cent in March 2021. The top five worries of urban Indians were unemployment or joblessness, Covid-19, financial and political corruption, while crime and violence and poverty and social inequality are tied at the fourth spot, and education.

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BJP to form govt in Bengal, retain power in Assam: Shah



GUWAHATI, (IANS) Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government will be formed in West Bengal and the party would retain power for the second time in Asam. Addressing a public gathering in Sarbhog in Barpeta district of western Assam on Sunday, Shah said that the BJP will win more than 200 Assembly seats in West Bengal.

"In the first two phases of election in Assam (on March 27 and April 1) the BJP has secured people's mandate to form the government once again in the state. After five years of the BJP rule we can now proudly say that in Assam there is neither terrorism nor there is agitation and protests, no illegal immigration, there is only peace, all-round development, progress and prosperity," he said. The former BJP national president said that after formation of the BJP government once again in Assam two lakh jobs would be created in the government sector and eight lakh jobs in private sector, thus a total of 10 lakh jobs would be created in the state in a year. The Home Minister in his speech on the last day of the election campaign ahead of the third and final phase of Assam assembly elections

on Tuesday, said that it was decided to create Guwahati as the 'Start-up Capital' of the entire northeast region and also the South East Asia. Lambasting the opposition parties, Shah said that the Congress party aligning with AIUDF (All India United Democratic Front) led by Badruddin Ajmal would never be able to stop illegal immigrations in Assam and they would not be able to protect Assam and its people.

"Had there been the Congress government in Assam, not a single rhinoceros would be alive today. It was Assam Chief Minister SarbanandSonowal whose strong governance and strict policy led to complete elimination of poachers of rhinoceros from Assam," he observed.

The Home Minister cut short his campaigning in Assam and returned to Delhi in wake of the Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh that left at least 22 security personnel dead.

Ahead of the third and final phase of the Assam Assembly election on Tuesday, Shah was supposed to address three election rallies in Sarbhog, Bhabanipur and Jalukbari but only spoke at Sarbhog, before returning to the national capital.

BJP ALLIANCE WILL SWEEP TN, BENGAL, ASSAM AND PUDUCHERRY: NADDA

CHENNAI, (IANS) The BJP-led alliance will win the Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry while the party will become a force to reckon with in Kerala after the elections, party President J.P. Nadda said on Sunday.

Addressing reporters here, Nadda said under the AIADMK's leadership, the NDA will form the government in Tamil Nadu, as its people were very receptive of the issues raised by their alliance.

In West Bengal, the BJP is leading towards a victory as the ruling Trinamool Congress has "lost its mental balance" and in Assam, the party will retain power, he added.

Nadda said the people of Puducherry have been fed up with the Congress government led by V. Narayanasamy and the BJP, in alliance with the NR Congress, will form the government there.

About the party's prospects in Kerala, he exuded confidence of doing good and becoming a formidable force in the state to influence the policies there.

"People (in Kerala) have started supporting BJP," he added.

Queried about the raids by the income tax officials at the residences and other premises of politicians in Tamil Nadu, Nadda said they were conducted based on the information received by the tax department.

He said the Congress went down in Tamil Nadu as it did not listen to the regional sentiments whereas the BJP understands the regional culture, aspirations, language and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken in the United Nations in Tamil, the oldest language.

Citing the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government led by Congress banning the Tamil Nadu's traditional bull taming sport Jallikattu, Nadda said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who allowed the sport by a notification.

He also pointed that the DMK was part of the UPA that banned Jallikattu. The BJP leader wondered why DMK President M.K.Stalin did not con-



demn KarupparKootam that denigrated 'Kanda ShastiKavacham', the prayer in favour of Lord Murugan, and claimed that the DMK did not respect the regional aspirations.

Citing Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, Nadda said the Prime Minister had gone to war-torn Jaffna and the Indian government has built houses and temples for the internal war displaced Tamils here. He said it was Congress which is communal, having alliance with Muslim League and others in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Assam whereas the BJP has no such alliance.

Terming Triple Talaq as anti-Muslim women, he listed out various Muslim majority nations including Pakistan and Bangladesh where it has been abolished. He said that the Supreme Court has said the Triple Talaq should go and a law has thus been passed.

Queried about the delay in setting up the AIIMS in Madurai, Nadda said there were some issues relating to building design, soil testing and land allotment.

He said work on AIIMS in Madurai will start soon as big projects need lots of clearances.

BOMBAY HIGH COURT ASKS CBI TO PROBE EX-TOP COP'S ALLEGATIONS

MUMBAI, (IANS) Portending fresh troubles for the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the Bombay High Court on Monday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)



to conduct a preliminary probe into allegations of corruption levelled against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh by former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni has asked the CBI to complete its 'preliminary probe' within 15 days on the issues raised by Singh in his 'letter-bomb' last month. However, the court said that the CBI need not register a First Information Report (FIR) immediately as the Maharashtra government has already set up a 'high-level committee to probe the matter.'

"The Government Resolution by the state government for a high-level committee leads us to believe that there is no interference required," said Chief Justice Datta.

WHO IS MUKHTAR ANSARI?

LUCKNOW, (IANS) A special police team left for Punjab on Monday to take custody of mafia don and Bahujan Samaj Party MLA Mukhtar Ansari and bring him back from the Ropar jail to Uttar Pradesh's Banda jail. The Uttar Pradesh government unleashed a barrage of charges against the Punjab government for providing shelter to gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who is accused in several heinous cases in UP.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court that Ansari is getting five-star treatment in a Punjab jail, and questioned why state government is supporting a gangster?

The Solicitor General added added that Ansari is being vociferously defended by the Punjab government. He said the Punjab government claims that he (Ansari) is suffering from depression, but in reality he is enjoying his time in jail. Inspector General Chitrakoot K. Satyanarayana said, "After reaching Ropar in Punjab, the team will complete the paper formalities to take his custody and bring him back. Adequate security force is being sent to bring him back to UP safely." A medical check-up of Mukhtar Ansari may also be done in Punjab before bringing him back to the Banda Jail. On reaching the Banda jail, he will go for mandatory RT-PCR test and will be quarantined in a secluded high-security cell in the Banda jail.



JAYA BACHCHAN STARTS CAMPAIGNING FOR TRINAMOOLO CONGRESS



KOLKATA, (IANS) Congratulating Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for making Bengal one of the best states and assuring to stand beside her in her lonely fight against the BJP, veteran actor and Samajwadi Party Rajya Sabha MP Jaya Bachchan subtly hit back at the BJP, saying that no one has been successful in intimidating and threatening the Bengalis.

Subtly hinting at the outsider jibe of Trinamool against BJP campaigners from outside states, Bachchan, referring to her Bengali roots, introduced herself as a 'Bengali'. "I am Jaya Bachchan. Before that, I was Jaya Bhaduri. My father was Tarun Kumar Bhaduri and we are non-resident Bengali but we are Bengali," she said. "I am thankful to Akhilesh Yadav Ji for giving me a chance to come to Bengal and campaign for Trinamool Congress and Mamata Banerjee in particular," she added.

Bachchan, who is on a four-day election campaign in the state, will conduct rallies and roadshows and is likely to share the dais with chief minister Mamata Banerjee to garner support for the party in this crucial election. Speaking at a press conference at Trainmool Bhawan – the party office in Kolkata, she said, "I have lots of love and respect for Mamataji, who is one single woman fighting against all atrocities. Head broken, leg broken but they have not been able to break her heart and brain and determination to move ahead and make Bengal one of the best places in the world. She will accomplish what she wants. Bengal will witness further development under her leadership".

FINAL PHASE POLLING IN 40 SEATS IN ASSAM CRUCIAL FOR BOTH BJP, CONG ON TUES, APRIL 6

GUWAHATI, (IANS) The final phase of polling for the assembly elections on Tuesday in 40 seats in western Assam is very crucial for both the ruling BJP led alliance and the opposition Congress-led 'Mahajot' (grand alliance). At least 13 seats are Muslim majority, six reserved for the tribals and two reserved for the people belonging to the scheduled caste.

Tuesday's electoral battle in the 40 seats in 12 districts is extremely decisive for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the main opposition Congress as both the parties had won 11 seats each in the 2016 assembly polls. The BJP's ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) last time bagged four seats while the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) had secured eight and six seats respectively. Both the BPF and the AIUDF this time are allies of the Congress-led 'Mahajot'. In the last elections, the tribal-based BPF with its political base mostly in western Assam was with the BJP and the AIUDF a Muslim-based party, fought the polls independently. After the Bodoland Territorial Council polls in December last year, the BJP had forged an alliance with the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), both with bases among the indigenous people, discarding its old ally BPF, which had three ministers since the Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal led BJP dominated government came to power in 2016. The AGP remains an ally this time too. Besides the BPF and the AIUDF, seven other allies of the Congress-led 10-party 'Mahajot' are three Left parties — the CPI-M, the CPI and the CPI-ML, the Anchalik Gana Morcha, Athe Rashtriya Janata Dal and two community-based parties — the Jimochayan (Deori) People's Party and the Adivasi National Party. The Congress this time has fielded a total of 95 candidates and the BJP has put up 93 candidates, allotting the remaining seats to their allies. Out of the 40 seats, the 13 Muslim majority seats are Mankachar (Muslims 88.70 per cent), Salmara South (98.20 per cent), Dhubri (65.43 per cent), Gauripur (51.84 per cent), Bilasipara East (74.25 per cent), Abhayapuri North (51.36 per cent), Goalpara West (56.10 per cent), Jaleswar (83.13 per cent), Barpeta (51.73 per cent), Jania (92.83 per cent), Baghbar (95.57 per cent), Sarukhetri (56.52 per cent) and Chenga (92.83 per cent).

EC rubbishes Mamata's claim of voting discrepancies in Nandigram

KOLKATA, (IANS) Days after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged discrepancies during voting at the Boyal polling booth in Nandigram, the Election Commission on Sunday issued a point-by-point response refuting all the allegations.

Calling Banerjee's hand-written complaint "factually incorrect" and "devoid of substance", it said it is contemplating action under the relevant sections of the Model Code of Conduct and the Representation of the People Act.

The Chief Minister, in her complaint, had alleged that no genuine voters were allowed to enter the booth at BoyalMaktab Primary School and it was done in the presence of the Border Security Force (BSF). The Chief Minister sat on her wheel-chair outside the booth before she was escorted away by the BSF.

Considering the gravity of the allegation, the EC sought a report from the Special Observers Ajay Nayak (General) and Vivek Dube (Police), who submitted their final report on Saturday evening. It cited the reports by special observers and officials "at various levels" to say that there was "no mention of either outsiders or guns and goons capturing the said booth".

The EC also said that allegations made against BSF jawans deployed at the Boyal polling station in Nandigram are "far from the truth". A mock drill was conducted at 5.30 a.m. at the Boyal polling station in Nandigram and voting commenced at 7 a.m. on April 1. The EC also said that the polling agents of the BJP, CPI-M and an Independent were present inside the Boyal polling booth at the time of the mock drill, but the Trinamool Congress polling agent never showed up.

"The ECI cannot force any one unwilling to work as a polling agent," the Commission said in its letter.

"It is a matter of deep regret that a media narrative was sought to be weaved hour after hour to misguide the biggest stakeholders which is the voters by a candidate who also happens to be the honourable CM. ... All this was done when the election process was/is on. There could not have been a greater misdemeanor," it said.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that the Election Commission's reply is biased and a reflection of the allegations made by the the party time and again that the Commission is "acting in a partisan manner". "How can the Commission deny that though Section 144 was imposed, the BJP supporters assembled very close to the polling booth at Boyal and shouted slogans in support of their candidate. People of Bengal have witnessed what had happened on that particular day," he said. Making it clear that the allegations made by Banerjee were genuine, he maintained that the top brass of the party will communicate their standpoint about such a reply from the Commission in due course.

SAUDI NEWSPAPER SAYS J&K YOUTH RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO GOVT'S DEVELOPMENTAL INITIATIVES



CONTD. FROM PAGE 3

Saudi Gazette, established in 1978, is one of the leading English newspapers of the kingdom. Living upto its theme of "The Tone of Truth and Moderation", it has carved a niche for itself in the Saudi media industry. The Saudi newspaper said India's federal government has unveiled a number of initiatives and programmes in Jammu and Kashmir as part of its developmental push for the region in the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370. Youth from the region have responded positively to these development initiatives and have shown their desire to become a part of the progress and prosperity of New India. Even the local militants who gave up arms after August 5, 2019, have been rehabilitated and have become a part of the national mainstream, the report said. "Most of the local leaders of Kashmir who used to claim that 'if J&K's special status is revoked no one will be left in Kashmir to hold the tricolor' have been proven wrong as one can visit Gulmarg and witness how much Kashmiri youth have draped themselves in tricolor and are holding it close to their heart," it added. The initiatives that are being taken by the Indian government to boost sports in the Union Territory include recently organised programmes like the second edition of the 'Khelo India' winter games at Gulmarg in north Kashmir which ended this month. Recently, PM Narendra Modi, in his inaugural virtual address, pointed out that holding such an event is a step toward making India's presence felt in the international winter games arena and also make Jammu and Kashmir a hub of winter sports. As per the repot, the Indian Prime Minister stressed that these games in Gulmarg show that Jammu and Kashmir is eager to reach new heights of peace and development and these games will strengthen the resolve for 'Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat (One India, best India)' objective. The government of India's determination to build optimum sports infrastructure in the UT reflects in the development of two Khelo India Centres of excellence in Jammu and Srinagar and other Khelo India Centres in 20 districts, which will facilitate young

China reacts to India, says shared all data with WHO to probe Covid origin

NEW DELHI, (IANS) China said on Thursday that it has shared all data and analyses with the experts of the World Health Organization (WHO) tracing the origin of Covid-19, and it is ready to continue working with global experts to jointly study and analyze the data.

The joint study group of WHO and China to trace the origin of Covid-19 released a report two days ago, in which it flagged that more data will be made available to the investigators by Beijing.

A day after the report was released, India had demanded a comprehensive and expert-led mechanism to expeditiously investigate the origin of coronavirus. The US, the UK and several other countries have also voiced their concerns over the findings.

Reacting to India's demand, China said that they had twice invited WHO experts for the study of the origin of Covid-19 and offered necessary facilitation for the team's work, fully demonstrating its openness, transparency and responsible attitude. China further said that the joint study group tracing the origin of Covid-19 has unanimously agreed that the allegation of a 'lab leak' is extremely unlikely.

The experts of the joint mission made field trips to several institutions, including the Hubei Provincial Center for Disease Control, the Wuhan Center for Disease Control and the Wuhan Institute of Virology, besides visiting the biosafety laboratories, and had in-depth and candid exchanges with the experts there.

"Members of the mission unanimously agreed that the allegation of lab leaking is extremely unlikely, and this is an important scientific conclusion made clear in the joint study report released this time," said the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy.

The spokesperson also said that as for the question of further research, the experts of the WHO mission said that there has always been speculation about lab leak, and work could be done with laboratories around the world if there is further evidence that the hypothesis needs to be reassessed. The experts also said that the virus may have been spread in places other than China early on, and a global perspective is needed to carry out the origin-tracing work.

"The report also proposes multiple tasks to be conducted worldwide. We hope relevant countries can cooperate with the WHO expert mission in an open, transparent and responsible manner like China did," the spokes-

players. "The Central government's special scholarship scheme for Jammu and Kashmir students has helped many youth from poor family backgrounds to get admissions in professional colleges across the country. In fact, many of them have completed their degrees and have even taken up jobs in big corporate houses within the country and abroad. The Indian government has remained firm in its decisions to ensure that the region is pulled from the quagmire of uncertainty," the report said.

"It is, in this context, very much relevant to point out that the decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status and completely merge it into the Union of India, has already started paying dividends in terms of economic growth and development of Kashmir valley," the Saudi newspaper said.

"The biggest change that Kashmir witnessed was the number of youth becoming a part of stone pelting mobs declined manifold as new avenues being open up for Kashmiri youth at a faster rate," it added.

The government departments were asked to ensure that the benefits of the centrally sponsored schemes trickle down to youth so that they are enabled to choose a progressive path in life. In addition to the great scope being offered by the high potential tourism industry in the region, many Kashmiri youth have been imparted training under the 'Himmayat' scheme and have been benefitted in terms of getting jobs in companies across the country. "During the past one and half years, hundreds of youth have been placed and they are living decent lives. Recruiting agencies that had almost become defunct in Jammu and Kashmir advertised posts for unemployed educated youth and the process to employ them was expedited. Many of them have been absorbed by different units in the country. The boom in sports activities allowed youth to come forward and showcase their abilities and skills. Youth-oriented initiatives taken by central government has infused new life and enthusiasm in Kashmiri youth, who during the past three decades were being misguided by evil forces to take up arms in a proxy war against a welfare state," the report said.



person said. As for the issue on accessing raw data, after China and WHO agreed on the terms of reference in July last year China carried out data collection, collation and analysis in accordance with the suggestions of the foreign experts.

The Chinese authorities gathered relevant institutions and several hundred scientists to collect, collate data and conduct initial analysis, and present item by item raw data of particular concern to the WHO experts. The international experts have also said on many occasions that they had full and candid discussions with the Chinese side with regard to data issues.

As the medical files contain a large amount of information that concerns personal privacy, the relevant data are not allowed by the law to be copied or taken abroad, which is a common practice in many countries. The international experts said they completely understand the situation, the spokesperson said.

Going forward, China stands ready to continue working with international experts to jointly study and analyze the data.

The spokesperson further pointed out that the study of origins is a matter of science.

To politicize this issue will only severely hinder global cooperation in the study of origins, jeopardize anti-pandemic cooperation, and cost more lives.

It would run counter to the international community's aspiration for solidarity against the virus. "Study of origins is also a global mission that should be conducted in multiple countries and localities. We believe the joint WHO-China study will effectively stimulate global cooperation in origin-tracing," the spokesperson said.

GLOBAL STUDY ON COVID-19 ORIGINS FINDS LAB ORIGIN 'EXTREMELY UNLIKELY'



BEIJING, (IANS) The WHO-China joint team on the global study of the origins of Covid-19 found that introduction through a laboratory incident is "extremely unlikely," a senior Chinese expert of the joint team said on Wednesday.

Experts from the World Health Organization and China jointly conducted the research in China and made an assessment of the likelihood of possible pathways, according to Liang Wannian, head of the Chinese side of the joint team, the Xinhua news agency reported. According to a report on the China Part of the study, Covid-19 introduction through an intermediate host is "likely to very likely," introduction through cold/food chain products is "possible," and introduction through a laboratory incident is "extremely unlikely," Liang said.

PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID VAX SHOWS 100% EFFICACY IN 12-15 YRS OLD

NEW YORK, (IANS) Pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech on Wednesday announced that their Covid-19 vaccine — BNT162b2 — demonstrated 100 per cent efficacy and robust antibody responses in a Phase 3 trial in adolescents between 12 to 15 years old. The Phase 3 clinical trial enrolled 2,260 adolescents aged between 12 to 15 years old in the US.



"We share the urgency to expand the authorization of our vaccine to use in younger populations and are encouraged by the clinical trial data from adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15," Albert Bourla, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Pfizer, said in a statement.

In the trial, 18 cases of Covid-19 were observed in the placebo group (n=1,129) versus none in the vaccinated group (n=1,131).

Vaccination with BNT162b2 elicited SARS-CoV-2-neutralising antibody geometric mean titres (GMTs) of 1,239.5, demonstrating strong immunogenicity in a subset of adolescents one month after the second dose. This compared well (was non-inferior) to GMTs elicited by participants aged 16 to 25 years old (705.1 GMTs) in an earlier analysis. Further, BNT162b2 administration was well tolerated, with side effects generally consistent with those observed in participants 16 to 25 years of age. The BNT162b2 has not been approved or licensed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) but has been authorized for emergency use by FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to prevent Covid-19 for use in individuals 16 years of age and older. "We plan to submit these data to FDA as a proposed amendment to our Emergency Use Authorisation in the coming weeks and to other regulators around the world, with the hope of starting to vaccinate this age group before the start of the next school year," Bourla added.

CANADA'S FEDERAL BUDGETARY DEFICITS FOR 2020-21 AND 2021-22 WOULD AMOUNT TO \$363.4 BILLION & \$121.1 BILLION, RESPECTIVELY: PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) today released his pre-budget outlook. The report incorporates fiscal measures announced by the federal government in its Fall Economic Statement, except for the \$70-to- to \$100 billion earmarked for stimulus spending. Based on current policy, the PBO projects economic growth of 5.6% in 2021 and 3.7% in 2022, up by almost a full percentage point in both years compared to the September 2020 outlook.

Before any Budget 2021 measures, budgetary deficits for 2020-21 and 2021-22 would amount to \$363.4 billion and \$121.1 billion, respectively (or 16.5% and 5.0% of GDP). The federal debt-to-GDP ratio would rise to 49.8 per cent of GDP in 2021-22 and then gradually decline to 45.8 per cent of GDP in 2025-26. "The improved outlook reflects higher commodity prices, a stronger U.S. recovery and the earlier-than-expected arrival of effective vaccines," says PBO Yves Giroux. "We project employment to reach its pre-pandemic level by the end of 2021 and the unemployment rate to decline steadily through 2022." Compared to the PBO's pre-crisis outlook, the projected level of nominal GDP is essentially unchanged from 2022 to 2025. This rebound in the Government's tax base effectively returns budgetary revenues to their pre-pandemic path. Setting aside the Government's earmarked stimulus and potential Budget 2021 measures, the risks to the improved outlook are roughly balanced. "However, the Government's \$70 to \$100 billion earmarks for stimulus spending and potential budget measures pose an upside risk to our economic outlook and will increase the deficit," adds Mr. Giroux. According to Mr. Giroux, "Should measures in the upcoming budget translate into new permanent programs that are deficit-financed, the sustainable debt-to-GDP trajectory we project over the medium- and long-term could be reversed."



Polling begins to elect new 140 member Kerala Assembly

Thiruvananthapuram, April 6 (IANS) At sharp 7 a.m on Wednesday, polling got underway to elect a new 140-member Kerala Legislative Assembly. The fate of 957 candidates would be decided by an electorate of 1,41,62,025 women, 1,32,83,724 men and 290 transgender voters. Polling is taking place according to strict Covid protocols and while in the 2016 Assembly polls, 21,498 polling booths were there, this time due to the Covid pandemic the number of polling booths has been increased to 40,771.

The poll will end at 7 p.m. and the last hour has been kept aside for Covid positive patients and for those in quarantine.

The principal political fronts contesting the elections are the ruling CPI-M led Left Democratic Front (LDF) the Congress led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In the outgoing Assembly (2016 polls) the LDF had 91 seats, the UDF 47 the NDA one seat and there was one independent candidate. Across the state people was seen queuing up before the polling time. The poll officials at 5.30 a.m. conducted a mock polling to see that all the electronic voting machines are in order. 59,292 Kerala police officials and 140 companies of CISE, CRPF and BSF officials are also deployed for duty, which is by far the biggest deployment of central forces for any poll in the state. Counting of votes will take place on May 2.

MOSQUE IN HYDERABAD PROVIDING FREE HEALTHCARE TO POOR

HYDERABAD, (IANS) A mosque in the old city of Hyderabad is providing free healthcare facilities to poor, thanks to the initiative taken by an NGO. Masjid Omer Al shifa, in Saif colony in Shaheenagar, is providing basic health services to nearly 300 people every day. The mosque was in the news last year after it opened its doors for the people affected by floods in several slum areas in Osmanagar. People rendered homeless by the one of the worst floods in the city's history had taken shelter in the mosque. As the flood victims faced health issues, Helping Hand Foundation came forward to set up healthcare centre. Since then, the centre has treated over 30,000 people. The NGO identified the area to provide its services as it has no government-run primary health centre. There are also no Basti Dawakhana, the community health centres run by the Telangana government in parts of the city. Due to increasing number of people seeking health services, the NGO also opened a night clinic which operates till 9 p.m. Residents, majority of whom are daily wage workers, say the facility is immensely benefiting them. The centre not only provide primary health services but also extent adjuvant services like prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), dental health, Hijama (cupping therapy), children and women's health and nutritional services.

'SIMPLE GESTURE OF BAJWA'S MAGNANIMITY MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH'



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However, at this point in time, a ceasefire simply is not enough to promote mutual trust between India and Pakistan to a level where diplomatic level negotiations or international mediation could be rushed into. More practical measures need to be taken by the Pakistani Army chief to mend the trust deficit.

Currently, there are 13 military brigades stationed in Pakistani-occupied Jammu Kashmir alone - two of which were added only recently. The whole occupied region is dotted with military check-points. All hospitals in the occupied territory of Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are under the direct command of the Pakistani military.

The hydroelectric power projects in PoJK and PoGB are being guarded by the military as well and at least 6,000 Chinese personnel, who claim to be engineers and skilled labour, are stationed in PoJK alone. Last but not least, PoJK is dotted with jihadi terrorist training camps where local as well as Punjabi and Pashtun youth receive jihadi terrorist training including learning, among other skills, making of 'sticky bombs' and IEDs.

Hence, a simple gesture of Gen Bajwa's "magnanimity" might not be enough to convince the Indian public and the broader world community of the Pakistani military establishment's sudden craving or sincere desire for regional peace. In order for the Pakistani military's gesture to be taken seriously, it has to match its words with actions. First and foremost, the Pakistani military has to begin unflinching withdrawal of anti-India rhetoric on domestic and international public fo-

runs.

Secondly, extension of a hand of peace, as General Bajwa said in his address to the Islamabad Security Dialogue seminar on March 18, needs to be reciprocated with an all-encompassing withdrawal of jihadist infrastructure including the training camps and launch pads dotted across PoJK and the Line of Control.

And finally, desire for peace cannot be conditional.

Gen Bajwa also said in his address of March 18 that it was time to "bury the past". Well, the past cannot be buried without the withdrawal of Pakistani troops and aliens from all Indian territories that have been occupied by her since October 22, 1947.

Hence, it is necessary for the Pakistani Army chief to admit the folly of the then military establishment of his country for attacking the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is rather crucial for Gen Bajwa to show his willingness to establish a truth and re-conciliation commission which would properly investigate the atrocities committed by the raiders of Kashmir against the civilian population of Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Bhimber, Rajauri, Baramulla and other cities where thousands were massacred only because they did not share the same religious faith with the invaders.

The past cannot be buried unless investigations into Operations Gulmarg, Data Khel, Kargil War are conducted and unless an apology is officially issued by the state of Pakistan for breaching the peace of our region for the past 73 years.

Once Pakistan sheds its anti-India stance and sincerely recognises its wrong-doings only then could Gen Bajwa's statements be taken seriously. Negative propaganda against India and time and again attempts made to stir unrest in the Vale of Kashmir has only helped to strengthen the resolve of the Indian nation but it has left Pakistan a divided and broken country.

Fanatical Jihadi narrative has eaten up Pakistan's internal national homogeneity like a moth. It has sunk Pakistan into an economic crisis from which it seems impossible to pull out. China has not only made Pakistan a victim of her debt trap but has physically encroached its territory from Gilgit-Baltistan to Gwadar.

And now, the worst is happening as Pakistan is about to lose its control of the State Bank.

Today, IMF loans, especially the recent one released only this week of \$500 million, come with the harshest conditions ever. According to the conditions laid down by the IMF, any money the Pakistan economy generates will first be used for repaying the loan and other IMF-related debts and interests.

This means that the Cabinet or even the Parliament cannot guarantee Pakistan's sovereignty any longer.

Pakistan, slipping into negative growth, will soon find herself unable to pay the salaries of her soldiers and I would not be surprised one bit if Pakistan army starts issuing IOUs to its staff.

The insurgency in Baluchistan is steadily gaining momentum and seeing better coordination. Similarly, the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army has geared up its offensive against Pakistani law enforcing agencies, specially the Rangers which is, after all, a para-military force headed by an army general. Pashtun Tahafuz Movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is also becoming progressively vocal in its criticism of the role of the Pakistan military in killing and abducting innocent Pashtuns in South and North Waziristan. There is not a single day that goes by without protests, strikes and sit-ins in both PoJK and PoGB.

Finally, Punjab, which provides the bulk of recruits for the Pakistan military has witnessed a sharp rise in dissent. The Pakistan Democratic Movement, an alliance of 9 political parties, has politicised the Punjabi urban lower and middle class to an extent that in case of any attempt of adventurism by the Pakistan army could push the country towards civil war.

In the final analysis, the Pakistani military leadership has good reason to extend hand of peace towards India and make an appeal to burying the past. Pakistan is in dire need of economic resuscitation. The coffers of the state are nearly empty and what is available is already being pledged to those from whom Pakistan has borrowed money. Political, Pakistan has become the most unstable country in the region and the state only continues to exist due to the patience of its people but which they are losing fast. If, however, Pakistani military establishment fails to match its words with actions as suggested earlier in this write up, then it will only have to blame itself for the impending degeneration and finally, breakup of its state.

In a nut shell, when it comes to Pakistan's aforementioned desire for regional peace and burying the past, she has to dismantle its terrorist infrastructure completely. And last but not least, Pakistan must hand over those who have been responsible for carrying out attacks on Indian soil from Delhi to Mumbai and from Pathankot to Pulwama.

Past will be buried once Gen Bajwa musters up enough courage to take a leap of faith and disassociate himself and the Pakistan Army, as an institution, from all forms of saboteur norms designed to undermine India's territorial sovereignty.

India hold no grudges against her neighbours or the wider world. She never has. The Indian nation is always willing to help their neighbours. However, when it comes to Pakistan, it is our neighbour who has to show that she is ready to change. Therefore, just a simple gesture of magnanimity from Gen Bajwa might not be enough.

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

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"The ongoing increase in infection rates is now playing out in our hospitals, with rising trends in severe and critical illnesses placing renewed strain on the health system," Tam said.

Over the past week, over 2,200 people with Covid-19 were being treated in hospitals each day on average, representing a six per cent increase over last week. Over 660 of these patients were being treated in intensive care units, which was 14 per cent higher than last week.

Most concerning is the continued increase in the number and proportion of variants that spread more easily and increase the risk of severe illness outcomes.

"Over the past week, there has been a 64 per cent increase in new variant cases. To date, over 9,000 variant of concern cases have been reported across Canada," Tam said. The variant cases include 8,381 B.1.1.7 variants, 358 P.1 variants, and 270 B.1.351 variants.

"New variant case numbers represent the tip of the iceberg as there are thousands of more cases that have screened positive for problematic mutations," Tam added in the statement.

Ontario's 700 Pharmacies To Offer

AstraZeneca Vaccine To Individuals

Aged 55 Yrs+ Starting Saturday, April 3

TORONTO — The Ontario government is steadily increasing capacity in its COVID-19 vaccine rollout with the addition of over 350 additional pharmacies and more primary care settings across the province. All of these locations will be offering the AstraZeneca vaccine to individuals aged 55 and over, with some locations to begin offering the vaccine as early as Saturday, April 3, 2021.

"Ontario's capacity to get needles in arms continues to grow by the day," said Premier Doug Ford. "Thanks to the determination and commitment of members of Team Ontario we are ahead of schedule and administering more vaccines than all of the other provinces combined. We are ready to dramatically increase the number of vaccines we can administer once we receive a steady and reliable supply from the federal government."

Earlier this month, Ontario began offering the vaccine to individuals aged 60 and over at pharmacies and primary care settings. With today's expansion bringing the total number of pharmacies offering the vaccine to nearly 700 locations, it is expected that this number could reach approximately 1,500 by the end of April.

"Thanks to the hard work of our dedicated frontline health care providers, Ontario's vaccine rollout in primary care settings and pharmacy settings has been a success," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "With more locations coming on board, these settings will make receiving the COVID-19 vaccine easier and more convenient for eligible populations across the province. I encourage everyone to sign up when it's their turn. Until we receive enough vaccines so that the majority of Ontarians can be vaccinated it remains critical for everyone to continue following public health measures we know work and keep us safe." The province also continues to work with primary care professionals to offer vaccinations in primary care settings and community locations, such as physician offices, in collaboration with public health units. This initiative is expanding from locations in six public health unit regions to offering the vaccine in every region across the province covering all 34 public health units.

Additional pharmacies and primary care settings will continue to join and increase access points for vaccines across the province. "As we bring more distribution channels on board, we need a consistent and reliable flow of vaccines to ensure all Ontarians who want to be vaccinated will receive that vital shot in their arm," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "With the increasing spread of variants of concern and case counts in the thousands each day, we encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated and protect yourself and your family. For those still waiting, please be patient as your turn is coming."

Ontario Implements Provincewide

'Emergency Brake'; All 34 Public

Health Unit Regions to Move into

Shutdown Effective April 3

TORONTO — The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, is imposing a province-wide emergency brake as a result of an alarming surge in case numbers and COVID-19 hospitalizations across the province. The province-wide emergency brake will be effective Saturday, April 3, 2021, at 12:01 a.m. and the government intends to keep this in place for at least four weeks.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Dr. Adalsteinn (Steini) Brown, Co-Chair of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table.

"We are facing a serious situation and drastic measures are required to contain the rapid spread of the virus, especially the new variants of concern," said Premier Ford. "I know pulling the emergency brake will be difficult on many people across the province, but we must try and prevent more people from getting infected and overwhelming our hospitals. Our vaccine rollout is steadily increasing, and I encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. That is our best protection against this deadly virus."

Ontario's key indicators and latest modelling show that additional measures must be taken. From March 26 to 28, 2021, provincial case rates have increased by 7.7 per cent to 101.1 cases per 100,000 people. Current COVID-19 related ICU admissions are already over the peak of wave two and hospitals in regional hotspots will need to further ramp down scheduled surgeries. COVID-19 related ICU admissions are projected to exceed 650 beds in a few weeks.

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CANADA INVESTS MILLIONS IN SANOFI TO STRENGTHEN MADE-IN-HOME VACCINES

TORONTO: The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, together with the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, announced an investment of up to \$415 million to support Sanofi Pasteur Limited (Sanofi) in building an end-to-end influenza vaccine manufacturing facility in Toronto, Ontario. This new facility will ensure drug product formulation, fill-and-finish and inspection. As part of this project, Sanofi will invest more than \$455 million as well as create and maintain 1,225 highly skilled jobs in Canada. The Government of Ontario will also invest \$55 million, making this a \$925-million project. In addition, the company will also invest at least \$79 million a year to fund Canadian research and development. After a global search, Sanofi has chosen Canada as the home of its international production and distribution centre for their high-dose seasonal influenza vaccine, FLUZONE® High Dose Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (FLUZONE® HD QIV). In addition to creating jobs and funding Canadian research, this facility means better pandemic preparedness for

all Canadians. In the event of a future flu outbreak, Sanofi will be able to manufacture pandemic influenza vaccine at a population scale at its new Toronto facility. It will have the capacity to produce enough vaccine doses to support the entire Canadian population within approximately six months of the World Health Organization (WHO) identifying a pandemic influenza strain. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a strong domestic biomanufacturing sector. Today's announcement will not only reinforce Canada's biomanufacturing capacity but also strengthen our country's pandemic preparedness. Over the last 12 months, the government has made investments of more than \$1 billion to advance industrial research and development in vaccines and pharmaceuticals as well as expand biomanufacturing capacity. It will continue enhancing pandemic preparedness today and in the future by making Canada more self-sufficient while reducing exposure to possible future economic impacts and supply chain challenges.

SCHOOLS IN BRAMPTON, MISSISSAUGA & CALEDON TO MOVE TO ONLINE LEARNING FROM TUESDAY, APRIL 6 FOR 2 WEEKS

BRAMPTON, ON. – Peel Public Health has issued a Section 22 order, under the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act, to close all schools in Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga for 2 weeks effective April 6, 2021, at 12:01 a.m. and move to remote learning only. In accordance with the order, all schools in Peel will be moving to remote learning starting Tuesday, April 6 and the closure will remain in place through the end of day Thursday, April 18. Further decisions to extend the order will be made, as required. Late last week and through the weekend, Peel saw significant increases in case counts and the spread of variants in the community. This closure will allow students and staff at least two weeks out of school to break any chains of transmission and protect them from exposure. Closures include: All Dufferin-Peel Catholic District schools, Peel District schools, Conseil scolaire Viamonde, Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir, and all private schools including all elementary staff and students, secondary staff and students and Special Education staff and students. All April Break spring camps for school-age children will be cancelled. Licensed child care programs will remain open for children under 6 years of age who are not attending school. If your child attends a school in the Peel region, they are not allowed to attend child care centres or day camps, including those offered by child care providers, during this closure. Peel Public Health continues to work closely with our school board partners to prioritize the health and safety of staff and students. Schools



in Peel already have strong measures in place to prevent transmission in their settings. This opportunity will keep the rising spread of variants across Peel from entering school settings from the community. Further decisions on extending the section order will be based on the disease picture in Peel. "This closure is a necessary step to protect staff and students in Peel Region. With increasing case counts and the presence of variants of concern, we need to break chains of transmission and keep our schools safe. I know this will be challenging for parents to navigate and we appreciate all the sacrifices parents continue to make as we continue to fight COVID-19 in our community." - Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health, Peel Region.

Save Max gift to support expanding care at Trillium Health Partners



Save Max Group of Companies is pleased to announce a generous pledge of \$2.5 million dollars in support of Trillium Health Partners (THP). The gift will help support the redevelopment and expansion of THP's Mississauga Hospital and will also provide essentials to help ensure the best possible start for babies born at all THP hospital sites. PHP is committed to building a new kind of health care for a healthier community, just as Save Max gives back generously to strengthen the communities they serve. The hospital is thrilled to partner with Save Max to contribute to the much-needed redevelopment of the Mississauga Hospital and to support the parents of the more than 8,000 babies born at THP every year. "To continue delivering exceptional health care we rely on the generosity of donors like Save Max, who see the important role health care plays in caring for our community, especially for those just starting their life journeys," said Caroline Riseboro, president and CEO, Trillium Health Partners Foundation. Save Max believes in a meaningful and personalized approach to charitable giving so, in addition to the financial contribution, Save Max will also present a gift basket to all new parents of infants born at THP. The gift baskets will contain necessities including a blanket, bib, socks, onesies, non-scratch mittens and more to ensure a warm welcome for each baby, as well as mom and dad. The inspiration behind this partnership comes from Save Max CEO Raman Dua: he and his wife, Nidhi, are expecting their third baby shortly. Raman wanted to mark the occasion with a warm gesture to welcome his baby, which made him think that all babies at THP should enjoy a special gift. That way he could bring smiles to all newborns and their families. This is just one of the many ways Raman has contributed to the betterment of the local community. During the beginning of the pandemic, the Save Max team partnered with a local start-up to deliver essentials like groceries, medicine, and pet food to individuals unable to safely leave their homes. Save Max also donated money to hospitals including THP, and various food banks to aid in their pandemic response efforts. Save Max even organized their own food drive, serving approximately 500 quarantined families. Save Max also believes in investing in the community's infrastructure. The company bought the naming rights for the Brampton Soccer Centre in later October of 2020, which is now known as the Save Max Sports Centre. The company is responsible for maintaining the facility, a big benefit to society as it reduces the burden on taxpayers. "We have always envisioned a more perfect society, and we are trying to create the same in the real estate world. But we also try and seek to gain the same perfection in the health sector, which plays a vital role in society. Trillium Health Partners has been an excellent hospital for providing the best health care solutions. I hope this partnership goes beyond this project and that we can come up with better solutions to society in terms of both health care and real estate," said Raman Dua, President and CEO, Save Max Group of Companies. To learn more about Save Max, please visit www.savemax.ca or call 905.459.7900 and to donate to the Save Max Campaign in support of Trillium Health Partners, please make your donation here: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/SaveMax>

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KEJRIWAL'S JIND KISAN MAHAPANCHAYAT AN ATTEMPT TO REACH TO JAT COMMUNITY



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday addressed the 3rd kisan Mahapanchayat at Jind district of Haryana in support of the farmers protesting against the three farm laws. During his address, the Delhi CM didn't asked the AAP leaders and volunteers to get ready for the upcoming panchayat polls in the state but the kisan mahapanchayat at Jind organised by the AamAadmi Party's (AAP) Haryana unit is seen as a move to reach out to Jat community as the district is the Jat dominated area as Kejriwal even extended support to the farmer leader Rakesh Tikait. He said, "I couldn't see Tikaitji (Rakesh Tikait) crying on camera after violence on Republic Day. I called him immediately. During our discussion, he said

that the BJP is trying to derail the farm protest. I assured him of support against the farm laws." The Delhi government is provided all the basic facilities including water, generators, sanitation facilities etc. two days after the January 26 incident," Kejriwal added. The CM also accused the BJP-led Union government of conspiring against the protesting farmers for shifting them in nine stadiums from the three borders. "When you (farmers) had reached Delhi to protest against the farm bills, the Centre sent police and asked to oust you all from nine stadiums in Delhi. I rejected Delhi police's file because your fight is genuine. BJP wanted to convert those stadiums into jails to subdue the intensifying protest," Kejriwal said.

PM MODI REVIEWS COVID SITUATION, SEEKS 'MISSION-MODE' APPROACH IN MOST-HIT STATES

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Taking note of the alarming rate of growth of Covid-19 cases and deaths in the country with 10 states contributing more than 91 per cent of cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chairing a high-level meeting on Sunday, directed that the "mission-mode" approach be continued in states and districts reporting high cases. Reviewing the pandemic situation and vaccination programme across the country, he exhorted all states to take required stringent measures with comprehensive restrictions in places so that the collective gains of Covid management in the country in the last 15 months are not squandered. It was emphasised that the reasons for the sharper rise in cases could be mainly attributed to the severe decline in compliance of Covid-appropriate behaviour, primarily in terms of use of masks and maintaining '2 GajkiDoori', pandemic fatigue and lack of effective implementation of containment measures at the field level. Although the exact contribution of mutant strains to the escalation of cases in some states remains speculative, the measures to control the pandemic remain the same and hence, implementation of various protocols for Covid-19 management are all the more critical in those areas. The Prime Minister stressed on the need for awareness of the community witnessing high surge to curb the spread. "Public involvement is paramount and there is a need to continue Jan Bhagidari and Jan Andolan for Covid-19 management."

He mentioned that the five-fold strategy of Testing, Tracing, Treatment, Covid appropriate behaviour, and Vaccination, if implemented with utmost seriousness and commitment, would be effective in curbing the spread of the pandemic.

In the review meeting, it was decided to hold a special campaign for Covid appropriate behaviour with emphasis on 100 per cent mask usage, personal hygiene and sanitation at public places, workplaces and health facilities. The campaign will be organised from April 6 to 14. The Prime Minister highlighted the need to enforce Covid appropriate behaviour in the coming days and ensure the availability of

beds, testing facilities and timely hospitalisation. He called for avoiding mortality under all circumstances by ramping up healthcare infrastructure, availability of oxygen, ventilators besides required logistics, and ensuring that clinical management protocols are followed across all hospitals as well as for those in-home care. He directed that central teams consisting of public health specialists and clinicians be sent to Maharashtra in view of high case load and deaths, and likewise to Punjab and Chhattisgarh because of the disproportionate number of deaths being reported there. The Prime Minister especially highlighted the need to ensure effective implementation of containment measures, besides the involvement of community volunteers in active case search and management of containment zones.

Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhattisgarh are of serious concern with their highest contribution in Covid cases. As of date, Maharashtra has contributed 57 per cent of total cases in the last 14 days and 47 per cent of deaths during the same period. In Maharashtra, the total number of new cases per day has touched 47,913 which is more than double its earlier peak. Punjab has contributed 4.5 per cent of the total number of cases in the country in the last 14 days. However, it has contributed 16.3 per cent of the total number of death, which is a matter of serious concern. Similarly, though Chhattisgarh has only contributed 4.3 per cent of total cases in the country over the last 14 days, its contribution in total death has exceeded 7 per cent during the same period. The 10 high burden states and UTs are contributing 91.4 per cent of total cases and 90.9 per cent of total deaths in the country. The meeting was held at a time when India recorded 93,249 new cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day spike since September 2020, taking the total tally to 1,24,85,509. It was suggested that daily analysis of vaccination performance should be shared with states and UTs as feedback for corrective actions.

Delhi, Mumbai report record high cases as India witnesses surge in infections



COVID-19 cases in the country continue to show an upward trend with various states reporting a record high number of cases in 2021. The national capital on Sunday (April 4) reported 4,033 fresh cases of COVID-19, highest single day increase this year, said a state health bulletin. This new addition has taken the state total tally to 676,414. In the past 24 hours Delhi recorded 21 fatalities taking the total death toll to 11,081. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday (April 2) said that state is witnessing fourth wave of COVID-19. The state has seen a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks. Within a span of just five days, COVID-19 cases in the national capital have multiplied four times. Last Tuesday (March 30), Delhi reported 992 fresh cases. Meanwhile, the maximum city also continues to witness a surge in COVID-9 cases. Mumbai on Sunday (April 4) recorded 11,163 positive cases, highest since the pandemic started. The total active caseload of city stand at 68,052. Maharashtra on Sunday (April 4) reported 57,074 fresh COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours and 222 deaths. In a bid to curb the rising number of COVID-19 cases, the state government has imposed a weekend lockdown and night curfew in the state from 8pm on Friday to 7am from Monday. India on Sunday (April 4) recorded 93,249 new cases of COVID-19, the highest single-day rise this year, taking the total tally to 1,24,85,509. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (April 5) chaired a high-level meeting to review the COVID-19 Pandemic situation and vaccination program in the country. PM Modi said that the five-fold strategy of Testing, Tracing, Treatment, Covid-appropriate behaviour and Vaccination if implemented with utmost seriousness and commitment would be effective in curbing the spread of the Pandemic.

DESHMUKH QUILTS IN A CLOUD, WALSE-PATIL IS NEW MAHARASHTRA HOME MINISTER

The CM also tweaked his cabinet by handing over the Labour department to Minister Hasan Mushrif, and the State Excise portfolio to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. Among the seniormost leaders in the state, Walse-Patil, 65, has been a 6-time MLA from Ambegaon in Pune district, has been a Minister with experience in handling diverse departments, and served as the Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 2009-2014. Earlier, the high court verdict triggered off a high-level political drama in the state culminating in Deshmukh's resignation. "Soon after the high court directives, Deshmukh met NCP President Sharad Pawar and offered to resign to ensure an impartial probe. After the nod, Deshmukh has gone to meet Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to submit his resignation," NCP National Spokesperson and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik told media persons. In his resignation letter to the CM, Deshmukh said: "In the wake of the HC ruling, I feel it would be improper for me to continue in the post on ethical grounds. Hence, I have decided to voluntarily keep away from the post. Kindly relieve me from this responsibility."

The fast-paced development came shortly after a division bench comprising Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G. S. Kulkarni directed the CBI to conduct a 'preliminary probe' within 15 days into Singh's allegations against Deshmukh.

On March 30, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government had appointed a high-level committee by a retired Bombay HC judge, Justice K. U. Chandiwal to probe the matter. Meanwhile, Deshmukh rushed to New Delhi late this evening amid speculation that he would challenge the Bombay HC verdict in the Supreme Court.

BIJAPUR MAOIST ATTACK: 22 SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED, 31 INJURED

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He cut short his campaigning in Assam and returned to Delhi in wake of the Saturday's Maoist attack.

"Our fight against Naxalites will continue with strength, perseverance and intensity and we will take it to the end," Shah said during the meeting.

In a major Maoist attack this year, a total of 22 security personnel were killed and 31 injured in a fierce gun battle with a platoon of over 300 People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, officials said.

Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPFs) Rakeshwar Singh Manhas from the 3.25 lakh strong paramilitary force's elite CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) unit is still missing, and search operation is still on to trace him.

There are reports of heavy damage to the Maoists too. The security forces also recovered the body of a woman Maoist commander--identified as MadaviVanoja-- along with an Insas rifle, said the CRPF and the state police officials.

Besides, citing intelligence inputs, the CRPF said more than 12 Maoists were killed in the operation and over 16 faced grievous injuries in the gun battle. "All the injured Maoist cadres were learnt to be taken into two-three tractor towards Jabbamarka and Gomguda region in the area."

The gun battle took place on Saturday noon near Tekulgudem village under Tarrem police station in which eight personnel of Chhattisgarh's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and six of Special Task Force (STF), seven from CRPFs CoBRA and one from its Bastaria Battalion lost their lives.

A shootout began soon after a joint team of CRPF and Chhattisgarh police's DRG and STF men reached the spot following the tip off regarding presence of wanted Maoist Hidma -- the commander of PLGA's Battalion No. 1 -- and his associates. The PLGA's Battalion No. 1 is one of the guerrilla forces that are very rampant in Chhattisgarh.

A total of 31 security personnel also injured in the shootout, including 10 from DRG, five from STF, and 16 from CoBRA-210 Battalion. Of the 31 injured, 13 suffered critical injuries and are being treated at a hospital in Raipur while 18 faced minor injuries and getting treatment in Bijapur. Sharing fresh inputs received from the spot, CRPF Inspector General (Operations) C.G. Arora told IANS that it was a dense forested area and core region of the Maoist where the gun battle took place. "This is an interior place inside the jungle where access is very limited." Union Minister Amit Shah has cut short his poll campaign in Assam and returned to Delhi in the backdrop of the Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh -- an ambush similar to the one executed by the Maoists in Tadmella in 2010 and Minpa in 2020 in which 76 CRPF and 17 security personnel were killed respectively. Shah earlier in the day spoke to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel over the phone and had a detailed discussion on the gunfight with the Maoists. During the conversation, the Chief Minister apprised the Home Minister of the ground reality of the encounter. The Home Minister said the state and the Centre will jointly win the battle against the Maoists and assured the Chief Minister of all necessary help. He informed the Chief Minister that he had issued instructions to the Director General of CRPF to visit the site of the incident. On March 23, five personnel of the District Reserve Guard were killed and several were injured in an IED blast -- the first major Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh this year -- in what the police said was a Maoist strike targeting a bus carrying more than 20 security personnel.

UNEMPLOYMENT REMAINS TOP WORRY FOR URBAN INDIANS: REPORT

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The survey showed that global citizens continue to worry most about Covid-19, though it has seen a reduction over February. The other worries of global citizens included unemployment, poverty and social inequality, financial and political corruption, and crime and violence. "India is in the recovery mode and while the job market is starting to look up, it is not keeping pace with the expectations. The pandemic was ruthless in job losses and job cuts. Further, India is amid the second wave of the pandemic. Some cities have reported fresh wave of infections which is leading to increased concern among urban Indians, even though the vaccination drive is catching speed," said Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India. "For stability to set in, in terms of more jobs and tiding over the pandemic, while it will take time, at the same time, the solace of the vaccine is making Indians worry less of the nagging virus," he added.

BANGLADESH IMPOSES 7-DAY NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN AMIDST SPIKE IN COVID-19 CASES



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

Bangladesh on Monday clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, amidst demonstrations by small business owners against the move.

According to a government circular issued on Sunday, the directives will remain in effect from 6 am of April 5 till 12 midnight of April 11, the Dhaka Tribune reported. People have been asked not to move out from their homes from 6 pm to 6 am, the report said.

The decision was taken in light of the current situation in the country where the rate of infections and deaths have increased in recent weeks. The government has said that they are increasing the number of Covid-designated hospitals and ICU beds to deal with the rising number of patients, it said.

Bangladesh has registered 7,087 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 6,37,364, in the last 24 hours until Sunday which is the highest number of infections since the start of the pandemic, the United News of Bangladesh reported.

Besides, the deaths due to coronavirus rose to 9,266 with 53 new fatalities during this period. The mortality rate fell to 1.45 on Sunday from Saturday's 1.46 per cent.

All public transport services (roads, river, railway and domestic flights) were suspended and only emergency services remained op-

erational. However, all government/non-government/autonomous offices, courts and private offices will be able to facilitate the commute of their employees to work using their own transport on a limited scale.

Thousands of people left Dhaka on Sunday fearing getting trapped during the lockdown. Most of the people who left were unemployed or in poverty.

Many shop owners and employees have, however, taken to the streets protesting the government's decision to shut down all shopping malls and markets during the weeklong lockdown, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

Several hundred traders staged their demonstrations in Dhaka's New Market area blocking the road.

This is the second time lockdown has been imposed in Bangladesh. The country earlier imposed a 66-day lockdown from March 26 to May 30 last year when a nationwide holiday was also enforced.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people to help curb the spread of the virus in a speech in Parliament.

"I know everyone will face difficulties. Despite this, I say lives should be given preference over everything," Hasina said Sunday.

Hasina has sought everyone's cooperation to combat the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

UK PM BORIS JOHNSON TO SET OUT TRAVEL PLANS AFTER VACCINE PROGRAMME TAKES OFF

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will set out plans to reopen the economy and eventually relaunch international travel on Monday when he updates the coronavirus roadmap, aided by one of the fastest vaccine rollouts in the world. As much of Europe enters new lockdowns to tackle surging cases, Johnson will give an update on his staggered plan to ease restrictions in the coming months, a huge boost for one of the worst-hit countries during the pandemic. Johnson is expected to confirm that non-essential retail, outdoor hospitality and hairdressers can reopen on April 12 in England, while he will also give more details on vaccine passports and international travel.

Airlines are fighting for survival after a year of nearly no travel, and the government's plan to use a traffic-light system for countries based on infection and vaccination levels gives a glimmer of hope that some form of holidays could take place. Under the current plan international travel will not resume until May 17 at the earliest.

COVID-19: Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine shows 91.3 % efficacy even after six months

Pfizer and BioNTech have announced that data from the ongoing Phase 3 clinical trial of their COVID-19 vaccine shows that it remains highly effective for up to six months after the second dose.

Results from the analysis of 927 confirmed symptomatic coronavirus cases observed in their pivotal Phase 3 study showed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, BNT162b2, was 91.3 per cent effective against the disease, measured seven days through up to six months after the second dose, Xinhua news agency reported citing a joint statement issued by the companies on Thursday. As per a statement, the vaccine was 100 per cent effective against severe disease as defined by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and 95.3 per cent effective against severe Covid-19 as defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Safety data from the Phase 3 study have been collected from more than 12,000 vaccinated participants who have a follow-up time of at least six months after the second dose, demonstrating a favourable safety and tolerability profile, it added.

"These data confirm the favorable efficacy and safety profile of our vaccine and position us to submit a Biologics License Application to the US FDA," said Albert Bourla, Chairman and CEO of Pfizer. "These data also provide the first clinical results that a vaccine can effectively protect against currently circulating variants, a critical factor to reach herd immunity and end this pandemic for the global population," Ugur Sahin, CEO and co-founder of BioNTech, was quoted as saying in the statement.



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