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TERRORIST ATTACK MOTIVATED BY HATE: PM TRUDEAU ON LONDON, ONTARIO INCIDENT.

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Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

Ontario to Move to Step One of Roadmap to Reopen on June 11

Based on the provincewide vaccination rate and continuing improvements in key public health and health system indicators, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, will move the province into Step One of its Roadmap to Reopen at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, June 11, 2021.

"Thanks to the ongoing success of Team Ontario's vaccine rollout and the ongoing improvements in public health trends, we are able to enter step one of the Roadmap and begin to safely and cautiously lift restrictions," said Premier Doug Ford. "The only reason we're able to do so is because of the enormous sacrifices made by individuals, families and communities across Ontario. As we begin to enjoy the benefits of the first step in our roadmap like meeting friends on a patio or visiting your favourite local store, please do so safely by continuing to follow all public health guidelines."

In order to safely enter Step One of the Roadmap to Reopen, Ontario needed to have vaccinated 60 per cent of adults with at least one dose for two weeks or longer, ensuring the first dose offers a strong level of protection against COVID-19. As of June 6, 2021 at 8:00 p.m., 72 per cent of the 18+ population in Ontario had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine with over 10 million doses now having been administered. Before entering Step One, the province also needed to see continued improvement in key public health and health system indicators. During the period of May 25 to 31, 2021, the provincial case rate decreased by 35.1 per cent. As of June 6, the number of patients with COVID-19 in ICUs is 497, including 31 patients from Manitoba, as compared to 687 two weeks ago. The province's situation is currently exceeding the best-case scenario presented in recent modelling, which indicated the province would reach below 1,000 new daily infections by June 30, 2021. The province expects these trends to continue over the coming days before entering Step One.

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- *Ontarians 70+ or those who received a first dose of an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) on or before April 18, can now book second dose appointment.*
- *Remote Learning to Continue across Ontario for Remainder of School Year.*
- *Delta Variant, 'first detected in India, seen a major concern in Canada: Health Officials.*
- *Canada to receive over 2 million Pfizer vaccine doses every week until August end.*
- *All 51 million doses of Pfizer are set to arrive by end of September in Canada.*
- *US to share 80 million Covid-19 vaccine doses with countries including Canada and India.*

MP SONIA SIDHU'S NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIABETES ACT PASSES FINAL VOTE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MOVES TO SENATE

Sonia Sidhu, Member of Parliament for Brampton South, has been a champion for Canadians with diabetes, advocating for funding, research, awareness, and a national framework. MP Sonia Sidhu's Private Members' Bill C-237, An Act to establish a national framework for diabetes passed unanimously in the House of Commons.



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JARNAIL RANDHAWA, 64, CHARGED WITH MURDER AFTER WIFE KILLED IN BRAMPTON PARK

REGION OF PEEL — Investigators from the Homicide and Missing Person Bureau are asking for the public's assistance in the investigation regarding the death of a woman in the City of Brampton. On Wednesday, June 2, 2021, at approximately 9:01 pm, police received a call for an unconscious female located on a trail near Ross Road and Temple Hill Road in Brampton.

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3 AAP REBEL LEGISLATORS NAMELY SUKHPAL KHAIRA, PIRMAL SINGH AND JAGDEV SINGH KAMALU JOIN CONGRESS IN PUNJAB

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Signalling that he is among the tallest leaders in the Congress, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ahead of his meeting with the party high command in New Delhi on Thursday inducted three AAP rebel legislators — Sukhpal Khaira, Pirmal Singh and Jagdev Singh Kamalu — into the party.



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BJP PLANS OR UPCOMING 5 STATES ELECTION INCLUDING UP, PUNJAB

NEW DELHI, (IANS) BJP Chief J.P. Nadda and party's General Secretaries met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here and apprised him of the upcoming Assembly polls preparations in five states early next year. Assembly elections are scheduled in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur during February - March next year.



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AMID PUNJAB CM & NAVJOT SINGH SIGHU RIFT, CONGRESS PANEL TO FINALIZE ITS REPORT

AMARINDER TO REMAIN PUNJAB CM WITH SIDHU LIKELY AS DEPUTY CM: SOURCES

NEW DELHI, (IANS) With the party panel for Punjab set to submit its reports on the political turmoil in the state, sources say that it may not recommend removal of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and he is likely to the party in the state to the next elections.



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SANGITA SHARMA MURDER: PEEL POLICE ARREST 19-YEAR-OLD, FISEHA GIRMAY HABTEGABIR, FROM LONDON, ONTARIO.

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YOUNGEST NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, MALALA YOUSAFZAI, FEATURES AS BRITISH VOGUE'S JULY COVER STAR (MALALA YOUSAFZAI/ TWITTER).

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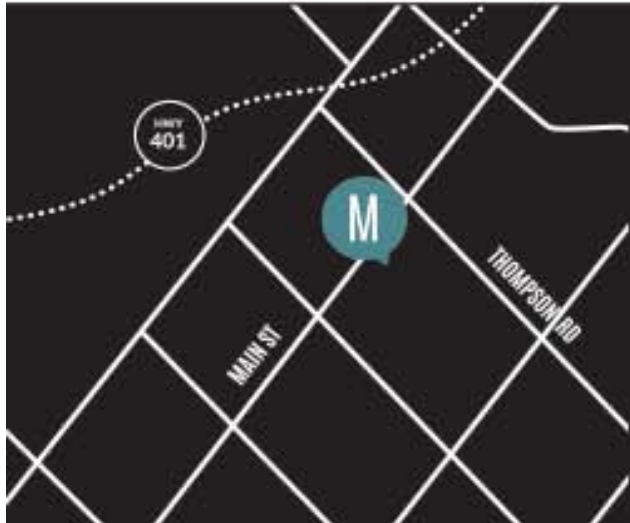


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TERRORIST ATTACK MOTIVATED BY HATE: PM TRUDEAU ON LONDON, ONTARIO INCIDENT

COMMUNITY MOURNS LOSS OF MUSLIM FAMILY AT VIGIL HELD IN LONDON, ONTARIO



The federal and provincial governments have condemned the "targeted" killing of four members of a Muslim family by a pick-up truck driver in Ontario city of London. Salman Afzaal, 46, his wife Madiha, 44, their 15-year-old daughter Yumna and Salman's 74-year-old mother were killed, while Fayez Afzaal, 9, survived the attack and is recovering from "serious injuries," according to a statement released to the media by a family spokesperson. Police said the killings were premeditated as the 20-year-old driver, identified as Nathaniel Veltman, was wearing a vest that looked like body armour. Veltman could face terrorism charges even though he has already been charged with four counts of first-degree murder and one attempted murder.

"We believe this was an intentional act. The victims were targeted because of their Islamic faith," the city's police chief said. "There is evidence that this was a planned, premeditated act, motivated by hate. There is no known previous connection between the suspect and the victims. In a press release, police mentioned, "We would like to offer sincere condolences on behalf of the London Police Service to the family, friends and loved ones of the victims of this tragedy. Our thoughts remain with the young boy still in the hospital." In a statement, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday: "I'm horrified by the news from London, Ontario. To the loved ones of those who were terrorised by yesterday's act of hatred, we are here for you. We are also here for the child who remains in hospital,

our hearts go out to you, and you will be in our thoughts as you recover." Sympathising with the Muslim community of Canada, he said: "We stand with you. Islamophobia has no place in any of our communities. This hate is insidious and despicable and it must stop." Ontario's Premier, Doug Ford, tweeted, "Hate and Islamophobia have NO place in Ontario. Justice must be served for the horrific act of hatred that took place in London, Ontario yesterday. My thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends during this difficult time. These heinous acts of violence must stop." London city Mayor Ed Holder called the incident "an act of mass murder, perpetrated against Muslims - against Londoners - and rooted in unspeakable hatred".

Meanwhile, Toronto Mayor John Tory announced to dim the Toronto Sign on Monday night "to mourn the London family - three generations of one family - targeted and murdered because of their Islamic faith and to stand in solidarity with our Muslim community". He added that the city stands "with the Muslim community in London and here in Toronto in the face of this tragedy. And we absolutely reject the hatred and Islamophobia that led to this deadly violence". The heart-wrenching incident in London, Ontario, shocked and disturbed the entire community. During the radio and TV shows, Y Media Group Editor and CEO Yudhvir Jaswal and the listeners have strongly condemned the incident and expressed their deepest condolences.

Meet the new, unstoppable Indian tech honchos on world map

NEW DELHI, (IANS) It is time to move over for Microsoft's Satya Nadella, Google's Sundar Pichai or Adobe's Shantanu Narayan as new faces have joined the high-profile league of Indian-led businesses, calling the shots in the Silicon Valley and leading the global digital transformation wave. The latest to join the elite tech CEOs' club is Rajesh Nambiar, currently the Chairman and Managing Director of Cognizant India, who has replaced Malcolm Frank, Executive Vice President and President, Digital Business and Technology at the IT major. Nambiar, who developed and led Operation C3 (Cognizant Combats COVID-19), brings deep knowledge of applications, data, AI, analytics, infrastructure, cloud, and consulting to his new role that began from June 4. In a short span of time, Nambiar has established himself as a trusted leader among the 200,000 associates of Cognizant in India. "Living and working in India, which I will continue to do, has helped me deeply understand our company's strong operating model and how we deliver value to clients," he said in an internal note after his elevation to the top role on May 28. Earlier in his career, Nambiar served as the global leader of IBM Application Services, where he was responsible for an \$8 billion P&L that included data, AI, and analytics, oversaw the building of technology practices offering a range of applications, and managed profitable delivery for thousands of clients. He joins Arvind Krishna, the newly appointed CEO of the world's oldest technology company IBM, taking the Indian talent to new heights. An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, Krishna replaced Virginia Rometty as the CEO of the IBM Group. Last month, enterprise software major VMware announced to appoint Raghu Raghuram as its new Chief Executive Officer and member of the Board of Directors, effective from June 1.



"I am thrilled to have Raghuram step into the role of CEO at VMware. Throughout his career, he has led with integrity and conviction, playing an instrumental role in the success of VMware," said Michael Dell, chairman of the VMware Board of Directors. The big change came as Dell Technologies announced to spin out VMware -- a move that will generate more than \$9 billion for the company that acquired VMware as part of the \$58 billion EMC acquisition (announced as \$67 billion) in 2015. VMware also appointed Sumit Dhawan as President who will lead all go-to-market functions including worldwide sales, worldwide partner and commercial organisation, customer experience and success (CXs), marketing, and communications. Another recent name is Indian-American Thomas Kurian, former Oracle President of product development and a respected technologist, who is now leading Google Cloud. "We have always been bullish on India, and you will see more investment coming from us towards that direction. India offers a great opportunity where Google Cloud Platform (GCP) with its latest agile, secure and scalable offerings can help enterprises, SMBs and the growing startup ecosystem amid the government's call for digital transformation," Kurian told IANS recently. Google Cloud in February this year announced that Bikram Singh Bedi, who set up the Amazon Web Services (AWS) operations in India, will succeed Karan Bajwa as its new Managing Director for India. Bajwa has already been elevated to become the new leader for Asia Pacific and is leading all regional revenue and go-to-market operations for Google Cloud, including on Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and Google Workspace. Google Cloud also continues to invest in India and is on track to launch its Delhi cloud region in India this year -- it's second after Mumbai which was launched in 2017.

'Delta' Covid variant 40% more transmissible than 'Alpha': UK minister

LONDON, (IANS) UK Health Minister Matt Hancock on Sunday said that the 'Delta' variant of Covid-19, first reported in India, is 40 per cent more transmissible than the 'Alpha' strain, detected in the UK itself. "We were previously told by the scientific advisory group for emergencies (Sage) that there would be problems if a variant was 40 per cent to 50 per cent more transmissible," Hancock was quoted as saying by the BBC. "The latest scientific advice is that the Delta variant, first detected in India, is 40 per cent more transmissible than the Kent strain," he said. While hospitalisations currently remain broadly flat, majorly because of the vaccination programme, the rapid spread of Delta would likely "lead to a substantial resurgence of hospitalisations" and put pressure on the NHS, Hancock said. Hancock also said he "wouldn't rule out" the continued wearing of face masks and working from home measures and noted that the UK government is "open" to delaying June 21 unlocking if needed, the report said. According to Public Health England (PHE), the Delta variant, the variant of coronavirus first identified in India, is now the dominant strain in the UK. The number of cases of the Delta variant has arisen by more than 5,000 since last week to 12,431, according to the data from PHE released on Thursday. An analysis of 38,805 sequenced cases in England revealed that the Delta variant was associated with a 2.61 times higher risk of hospitalisation within 14 days of specimen date than the Alpha variant, the Guardian reported. Data from Scotland supported the findings, also pointing to a more than twofold higher risk of hospitalisation for those infected with the Delta variant compared with the Alpha variant, it added. "Although only a small number of cases end up in hospital, the proportion is about twice as high for Delta cases than Alpha cases in both England and Scotland," Professor Adam Finn of the University of Bristol, was quoted as saying to the Guardian. "The number of cases is still small, but if this trend continues and case numbers continue to rise quickly, that would point to a larger number of people being seriously affected as this variant continues to replace the alpha variant over coming weeks," Finn added.



FACING FLAK, PUNJAB WITHDRAWS VACCINES FROM PRIVATE HOSPITALS



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) After facing criticism, Punjab government on Friday issued an order for taking back Covid vaccine doses from private hospitals. State Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said that the instruction to provide one-time limited vaccine doses to the private hospitals has been withdrawn by the state and all these vaccines will be administered free of cost to those in the 18-44 age group at the government vaccination centres. Sidhu said that as per the information provided by the state in-charge for Covid vaccination, Vikas Garg, about 42,000 doses were allotted to the private hospitals out of which only 600 were administered to the people. He said instruction has been issued to all civil surgeons that no fresh allotment to be made to any private hospital. Also, the private hospitals should return forthwith all the vaccine doses available with them.

AMID DISAPPOINTMENT, AIR CANADA SENIOR EXECUTIVES CHOOSE TO 'VOLUNTARILY RETURN THEIR 2020 BONUSES'



Air Canada in a news release mentioned, "Every step of the way, management and the Board have acted in the best interests of Air Canada and its stakeholders and have been mindful of their role in mitigating the consequences of the pandemic." Throughout 2020, Air Canada has accordingly sought to do its part, such as by flying repatriation flights to bring stranded citizens home, operating cargo flights to bring much needed PPE to Canada and leading the way in Bio-safety medical studies and protocols, and it will continue to do so. Unfortunately, there is now public disappointment around the actions relating to these 2020 executive compensation outcomes. As an acknowledgement of this, and in order to help address this unintended consequence, the current Executive Vice-Presidents and the President and CEO of Air Canada have chosen to voluntarily return their 2020 bonuses and share appreciation units. In addition, former Air Canada President and CEO Calin Rovinescu who retired in February 2021 will be donating the value of his 2020 bonus and share appreciation units to the Air Canada Foundation. Air Canada's leadership team is completely focused on Air Canada's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and preparations to welcome back furloughed colleagues and travelling customers as soon as possible. The airline looks forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders, notably the Government of Canada on many fronts, including the safe re-start of our industry.

G7 SETS MINIMUM TAX OF 15% FOR MNCs

LONDON, (IANS) The G7 group of leading economies have reached "a historic agreement" to reform the global tax system to make it fit for the global digital age. Speaking outside Winfield House in London's Regents Park on Saturday, the US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the minimum rate of at least 15 per cent would end "the race to the bottom in corporate taxation". In a tweet later, she added that global minimum tax would end the race-to-the-bottom in corporate taxation, and help the global economy thrive, by levelling the playing field for businesses and encouraging countries to compete on positive bases, such as educating and training their work forces and investing in research and development and infrastructure.

G7 DECISION TO FORCE AMAZON, FB, GOOGLE PAY TAX WHERE SERVICES SOLD: CAIT



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has hailed and appreciated the agreement reached out between members of Group of Seven (G7) at their meeting on Saturday where the world's richest nations agreed to close cross-border tax loopholes used by some of the biggest multinational companies and have decided to back a minimum global corporation tax rate of at least 15 per cent. This move, though at a very preliminary stage and if implemented, will certainly put checks and balances on the business practices of multinational companies and could be termed as a most progressive step which will bring a diagonal reform in international taxation system having vital bearings on the working of large number of multinational companies who are devising ways and means to avoid the tax liability to the exchequer of consuming countries, CAIT said.

SANGITA SHARMA MURDER: PEEL POLICE ARREST 19-YEAR-OLD, FISEHA GIRMAY HABTEGABIR, FROM LONDON, ONTARIO

Investigators from the Homicide and Missing Persons Bureau have arrested a 19-year-old man in relation to a homicide in the City of Brampton.

On Thursday, August 13, 2020, emergency services attended a residence on TreeLine Boulevard in Brampton and located the victim, Sangita Sharma, a 56-year-old woman suffering from a gunshot wound.

As a result of a lengthy investigation, members of the Peel Regional Police Homicide Bureau identified Fiseha Girmay Habtegabir, a 19-year-old man from London, Ontario, as the alleged murderer.

On Friday, June 4, 2021, Fiseha Girmay Habtegabir was arrested, with the assistance of London Police, for First Degree Murder and was held for a bail hearing. He appeared before the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton on Saturday, June 5, 2021.

Chief Duraipappah said, "Sangita Sharma's death was the tragic outcome of a callous act of violence. It carried deep impacts on her loved ones and our community. While we are pleased to share that this arrest has been made, we believe there are others responsible for her death. We are committed to ensuring they do not escape that responsibility." The investigation is continuing to identify additional suspects. Police are still searching for a connection between the suspects in London and the victim in Brampton.



11,951 HOME SALES IN GTA IN MAY 2021, DOWN 13% BETWEEN APRIL & MAY: TORONTO REGIONAL REAL ESTATE BOARD

Residential transactions reported through TRREB's MLS®System remained high in May 2021, but fell short of the 2016 record and were below this year's March peak. Despite a slight ebb in sales over the last two months, market conditions remained tight enough to push the average selling price to an all-time record in May. Greater Toronto Area REALTORS® reported 11,951 sales in May 2021 – more than double the result from May 2020, the second full month of the pandemic. May 2021 sales were below the May 2016 record of 12,789 but remained well above the average May sales of 10,336 for 2010 through 2019 period. Often, May is the strongest sales month in any given year; however, 2021 results bucked this trend, with May sales below the 15,646 deals reported in March.

"There has been strong demand for ownership housing in all parts of the GTA for both ground-oriented home types and condominium apartments. This was fueled by confidence in economic recovery and low borrowing costs. However, in the absence of a normal pace of population growth, we saw a pullback in sales over the past two months relative to the March peak," said TRREB President Lisa Patel.

The MLS® Home Price Index Composite Benchmark was up by close to 19 per cent year-over-year in May 2021. The average selling price across all home types was up by 28.4 per cent year-over-year, reaching a record \$1,108,453. On a seasonally adjusted basis, the average price increased by 1.1 per cent between April and May 2021.

"While sales have trended off the March 2021 peak, so too have new listings. This means that people actively looking to purchase a home continue to face a lot of competition from other buyers, which results in very strong upward pressure on selling prices. This competition is



becoming more widespread with tighter market conditions in the condominium apartment segment as well," said TRREB Chief Market Analyst Jason Mercer.

"The housing supply shortage in southern Ontario has been well documented. Policymakers at all levels have acknowledged that supply is an issue. It is important to understand that dealing with this issue will be important not only for ensuring long-term housing affordability but also for the economic competitiveness of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. People and businesses are more likely to locate in regions that have an ample supply of affordable homeownership and rental options," said TRREB CEO John DiMichele.

EARLY SECOND DOSES FOR MORE PEEL RESIDENTS BEST DEFENSE AGAINST RISING DELTA VARIANT: HEALTH OFFICIALS



With concern due to the Delta variant growing in Peel, shortened second-dose bookings will open Monday for residents aged 70+ and those who received an mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna) vaccine on or before April 18. Appointments will be available at 8:00 am Monday, June 7 in the provincial booking system at covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/ or by calling the provincial booking line at 71-833-943-3900.

First doses for anyone 12 and older who have not already booked are available this weekend at Peel clinics. Some pharmacies and primary care providers in the region may offer eligible residents access to their second dose this weekend if supply allows. Information is available on current eligibility and how to book second doses.

According to projections from the Ontario Science Table, the Delta variant (B.1617) will replace B.117 as the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Peel in under four weeks. In addition to vaccination, adhering to safe public health practices remains a priority for Peel in reducing transmission of all variants of COVID-19. "The Peel community has worked too hard to lose what we have regained to yet another variant. We need to move quickly to provide second doses to residents to stay ahead of the new Delta variant and prevent a fourth wave in Peel, which ultimately helps prevent the fourth wave across Ontario. Two doses of vaccine are our best defence and significantly increase protection from B.1617" said Monica Hau, Associate Medical Officer of Health.

INDIAN SCIENTIST TOO FLAGGED WUHAN LAB LEAK WAY BACK

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Amid the clamour for an in-depth investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi were reportedly the first to have flagged the lab-leak theory. A team of biologists at the Kusuma School of Biological Sciences in IIT Delhi wrote a 22-page research paper that was released as a pre-print on bioRxiv on January 31, last year. It suggested an "uncanny similarity" between aspects of SARS-CoV-2 and HIV, MIT Technology Review reported.

Studying the protein structure of the virus, the team found four unique inserts in the novel coronavirus glycoprotein, not seen in any other coronaviruses. The inserts are critical for the virus to identify and latch onto their host cells in humans and then multiply, media reports say. However, in response to a deluge of criticism, the paper was withdrawn soon after it was posted. It was the first scientific study signalling the possibility of the virus being engineered. Various scientists and experts have piled up circumstantial evidence pointing to the theory that the coronavirus may have leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). The list also includes a Pune-based scientist couple, Rahul Bahulikar and Monali Rahalkar. Rahalkar is a scientist at Bioenergy Group, Agharkar Research Institute, Pune. Bahulikar is scientist at BAIF Development and Research Foundation, Pune. While the lab-leak theory has long been dismissed as a conspiracy, it has now become too substantial to ignore.

According to media reports, Bahulikar and Rahalkar started an online expedition at the end of March 2020 to unravel the origins of Covid-19. They read several scientific papers on coronaviruses and Covid-19 and found that a relative of SARS-CoV-2, RATG13, a coronavirus was collected from a mineshaft in Mojiang of Yunnan province in South China by the WIV. They also found that the mineshaft was infested with bats and six miners hired to clean the fecal matter were infected with pneumonia-like illness. They published their findings in the science journal Nature, post which they were contacted by a Twitter user called SEEKER. SEEKER has been part of a group of amateur sleuths called 'DRASTIC', who with few resources are working to reveal the dark secrets of WIV. DRASTIC stands for "decentralised radical autonomous search team investigating Covid-19" and it has set itself the mission of exploring the origins of SARS-CoV-2. "Thanks to DRASTIC, we now know that the WIV had an extensive collection of coronaviruses gathered over many years of foraging in the bat caves and that many of them – including the closest-known relative to the pandemic virus, SARS-CoV-2 – came from a mineshaft where three men died from a suspected SARS-like disease in 2012," Newsweek reported.

US SENDING COVID VACCINES TO INDIA, US VICE-PRESIDENT HARRIS TELLS PM MODI



NEW YORK, (IANS) US Vice President Kamala Harris has told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the US will be sending Covid-19 vaccines to India, following which Modi thanked her for the support from the US government and the Indian diaspora, in what was likely their first interaction. The electronic conversation took place as US President Joe Biden announced on Thursday that India will receive Covid vaccines directly from the US stockpile, the White House said.

Modi tweeted, "I deeply appreciate the assurance of vaccine supplies to India as part of the US Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing. I also thanked her (Harris) for all the support and solidarity from the US government, businesses and Indian diaspora."

Biden, who has faced international and domestic pressure to share surplus vaccines, said he is releasing the first set of 25 million doses of which six million will be shared between India, South Korea, Mexico and Canada. The six million "will be shared directly with countries experiencing surges, those in crisis, and other partners and neighbours," he said without giving a breakdown of how many doses will go to India. His spokesperson Jen Psaki said that the vaccines could go out as soon as Thursday "as we are working to operationalize this, which is kind of a historic Herculean effort."

Harris has spoken to several international leaders, but till Thursday there had been no mention by the White House of a conversation with Modi, whom she had criticized in the past.

Although Harris has refrained from criticizing him since assuming office, her niece Meena Harris has attacked Modi.

Calling Modi about the vaccine supply gives her clout while speaking to him. The White House said that she also spoke to Presidents Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico, and Alejandro Giammattei of Guatemala, and Prime Minister Keith Rowley of Trinidad, who is also the Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

She "notified each of the leaders that the Biden-Harris administration will begin sharing the first 25 million doses of Covid vaccines to their respective countries and others, as part of the Biden-Harris administration's framework for sharing at least 80 million vaccines globally by the end of June", to which they thanked her and "agreed to continue working together to address Covid-19 and advance our mutual interests around the world", the White House said.

Modi tweeted that they "discussed ongoing efforts to further strengthen India-US vaccine cooperation, and the potential of our partnership to contribute to post-Covid global health and economic recovery".

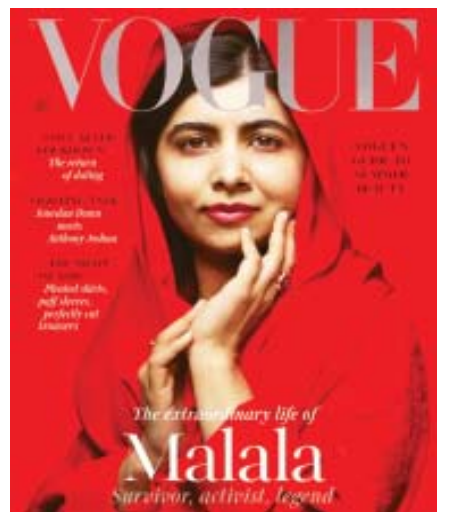
SUPREME COURT OF INDIA SEEKS DOCUMENTS OF 'THINKING' ON VACCINATION POLICY, DATA ON NUMBERS COVERED

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to furnish data on the percentage of the population vaccinated so far (with one dose and both doses), both in rural and urban areas, along with documents reflecting its thinking in connection with the vaccination policy. A bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat said: "UoI (Union of India) shall also ensure that copies of all the relevant documents and file notings reflecting its thinking and culminating in the vaccination policy are also annexed on the vaccination policy. Hence, we direct the UoI to file its affidavit within 2 weeks." It stressed on Centre bringing on record an outline for how and when it seeks to vaccinate the remaining population in Phases 1, 2 and 3. The top court also sought data on percentage of the population, which has been vaccinated (with one dose and both doses), as against eligible persons in the first three phases of the vaccination drive. The bench emphasized the data should include the percentage of the rural population as well as the percentage of the urban population vaccinated so far.

"The complete data on the Central Government's purchase history of all the Covid-19 vaccines till date (Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V). The data should clarify: (a) the dates of all procurement orders placed by the Central Government for all 3 vaccines; (b) the number of vaccines ordered as on each date; and (c) the projected date of supply," it said. As the Centre, in its May 9 affidavit, had said that every state/UT government will provide vaccination free of cost to its population, the court noted: "It is important that individual state/UT governments confirm/deny this position before this court. "Further, if they have decided to vaccinate their population for free, then, as a matter of principle, it is important that this policy is annexed to their affidavit so that the population within their territories can be assured of their right to be vaccinated for free at a state vaccination centre." The top court directed each of the state/UT governments to also file an affidavit within 2 weeks, clarifying their position and put on record their individual policies.

After interview with Vogue. Malala slammed for her views on marriage

The controversy in Pakistan sparked after Malala said: "I still don't understand why people have to get married. If you want to have a person in your life, why do you have to sign marriage papers, why can't it just be a partnership?" Malala's views on marriage were repeated in the KP Assembly, with members of the opposition PPP and Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal urging her family to clarify their position on the issue.



Pakistan most at risk due to climate change: PM Imran

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Pakistan is among the countries most at risk due to climate change, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Thursday. "We are more vulnerable than Bangladesh due to the melting of our glaciers. It is not our fault. There are giants that contribute to carbon emissions but countries like us face the consequences," Dawn news quoted Khan as saying at an event here. "For the first time in the US, President Joe Biden's administration is focusing on climate change. The previous administration was not thinking about environmental degradation," he added. Khan reiterated that it was imperative to take steps to protect the environment, which include making national parks, planting trees and carrying out urban forestry. "We need to utilize all available resources to increase the number of trees in the country." The Prime Minister lauded the fact that mangroves had increased in the country during the last 20 years despite deforestation. Regarding awareness about climate change among the public, especially among school children, he said: "We need to take this further so that our entire country is focused on ensuring a better future for coming generations."



DO YOU THINK IT IS THE RIGHT DECISION BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CANCEL CLASS XII BOARD EXAMS?

	Yes	No	Can't Say
18 - 25 years	55.90%	36.30%	7.80%
26 - 35 years	51.30%	41.90%	6.80%
36 - 45 years	64.90%	27.00%	8.10%
46 - 55 years	57.10%	33.70%	9.20%
56+ years	67.30%	25.00%	7.70%
Total	58.40%	35.90%	7.70%

DO YOU THINK IT IS THE RIGHT DECISION BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CANCEL CLASS XII BOARD EXAMS?			
	Yes	No	Can't Say
18 - 25 years	55.90%	36.30%	7.80%
26 - 35 years	51.30%	41.90%	6.80%
36 - 45 years	64.90%	27.00%	8.10%
46 - 55 years	57.10%	33.70%	9.20%
56+ years	67.30%	25.00%	7.70%
Total	58.40%	35.90%	7.70%

Source: IANS-CVoter

DO YOU THINK STATES SHOULD ALSO CANCEL CLASS XII BOARD EXAMS?			
	Yes	No	Can't Say
18 - 25 years	54.90%	38.40%	6.70%
26 - 35 years	52.60%	43.50%	3.90%
36 - 45 years	65.50%	25.00%	9.50%
46 - 55 years	57.10%	33.70%	9.20%
56+ years	71.20%	26.90%	1.90%
Total	58.60%	37.10%	6.30%

Source: IANS-CVoter

Ayodhya mosque to be name after freedom fighter

AYODHYA, (IANS) The proposed mosque and hospital complex that is to be built in Dhannipur village in Ayodhya, will be named after noted freedom fighter and revolutionary Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah Faizabadi, who died 164 years ago.

The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) has decided to dedicate the entire project comprising the mosque, hospital, museum, research centre and community kitchen, after Faizabadi, also called 'Lighthouse of Independence' for keeping Awadh free of British dominance for over two years after the 1857 revolt.

IICF secretary Athar Hussain, said: "On his martyrdom day, we have decided to name the entire project after his name. In January, we dedicated the research centre to Maulvi Faizabadi, who was the icon of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. Even 160 years after the first war of independence, Ahmadullah Shah Faizabadi is yet to get his due in the annals of Indian history. Masjid Sarai, Faizabad, which was Maulvi's headquarters during the 1857 mutiny, is the lone surviving building that preserves his name." After being killed and decapitated by a British agent, they buried his body and head in two different places to prevent people from turning his grave into a mausoleum, said Husain. War veteran and mosque trustee Captain Afzaal Ahmad Khan said:



"The British feared Maulvi was as dangerous in death as he was during his lifetime. It's unfortunate that even though British officers like George Bruce Malleson and Thomas Seaton have mentioned his courage, valour and organizational capabilities in the history of Indian mutiny, Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah is blanked out in our school and college textbooks."

Researcher and historian Ram Shankar Tripathi, said: "While being a practising Muslim, he was also the epitome of religious unity and Ganga-Jamuni culture of Faizabad. In the revolt of 1857, royalties like Nana Sahib of Kanpur, Kunwar Singh of Arrah fought alongside Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. His 22nd Infantry Regiment was commanded by Subedar Ghamandi Singh and Subedar Umrao Singh in the famous Battle of Chinhat.

"Maulvi wanted Raja Jagannath Singh of Pawayan, a zamindar in district Shahjahanpur to join the anti-colonial war. On June 5, 1858, with prior appointment, he went to meet Raja Jagannath Singh in his fortress. On arriving at the gate, he was greeted with bullets from Jagannath Singh's brother and retainers. The Maulvi died on the spot."

The Ayodhya mosque and hospital project will be built on the on the five-acre land given to the Muslims in the Supreme Court verdict of November 2019. The IICF trust constituted by Sunni Waqf Board had taken a decision not to name the mosque after Mughal emperor Babur.

AMID PUNJAB CM & NAVJOT SINGH SIGHU RIFT, CONGRESS PANEL TO FINALIZE ITS REPORT

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

The panel members are also tight-lipped about the change of guard in the organization but sources say that a non-Sikh member is likely to be recommended by the panel to lead the state unit if Sunil Jhaxhar the incumbent state president is to be replaced. Fate of cricketer-turned-politician Sidhu is still not clear but he may be recommended for the Deputy Chief Minister's post in the Punjab cabinet despite Amarinder's reservations and he could be seen accommodating a deputy in the cabinet, sources said. Last week the panel headed by Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress' Punjab in-charge Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Aggarwal met all the stakeholders in the party. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh appeared before the three-member Congress panel. After the meeting Captain Amarinder Singh said: "The meeting was to discuss the preparations for the Assembly elections scheduled early next year. These are our inner party discussions and I don't propose to share them with you." The rift in Punjab Congress had surfaced after former state Cabinet Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu along with Pargat Singh opened a front against the Chief Minister. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) was forced to constitute a committee to listen to the grievances of its Punjab leaders, after a group led by Sidhu suggested change in the state leadership. However, sources said that there has been no discussion on replacing Amarinder Singh. The Congress wants to pacify Sidhu and retain him in the party by making some minor adjustments, without going for a major shake-up, sources said. The panel has already discussed the issue with former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, besides meeting the party MPs from Punjab and the ex-state unit chiefs. Disgruntled Congress leader Sidhu, who has targeted Amarinder Singh on various issues, including the 2015 sacrilege case, had also met the Congress panel and presented his views. Interacting with reporters after the meeting, he had said: "I came here on the call of the party high command and I have presented people's voices from the grassroots level to the party. My stand on democratic power remains the same that the 'power of the people' must return to the people. Every Punjabi must be made a shareholder in Punjab's progress."

56.4% HAPPY WITH INDIAN GOVT'S DECISION TO CANCEL CLASS XII BOARD EXAMS



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The IANS-CVoter CBSE Snap Poll conducted in the aftermath of the Union governments decision to cancel Class XII board exams in view of the Covid-19 pandemic has found that as many as 56.4 per cent of respondents are happy with the government decision. Similarly, 56.6 per cent of those interviewed said that state board exams for Class XII should also be cancelled because of the prevailing Covid situation in the country. The IANS-CVoter CBSE Snap Poll was conducted in the aftermath of the Union government's decision to cancel the Class XII board exams taken on June 1. The all-India sample size for the snap poll was 5,422 and the fieldwork was conducted on June 2. Notably, while several states like Rajasthan, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand have cancelled the Class XII board exams, Chhattisgarh is holding offline exams. Others, including Karnataka and Odisha, are yet to announce their final decision on the matter.

The majority of the respondents said that while career is important for the students, health risks should be avoided keeping in view of the spread of the deadly virus in the country, stating that conducting offline exams can prove fatal at this juncture. A total of 60 per cent of those surveyed said that cancelling Class XII exams can have an adverse impact on the career of the students and to avoid such a situation, the government should opt for alternate mechanism like digital mediums to conduct various exams.

A whopping majority of the respondents -- 76.4 per cent -- said the government should think of using digital mediums to conduct various competitive exams like IIT/JEE, NEET and for admissions to universities and colleges in a fair manner to prevent loss of a career year of the students.

COVID SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS



NEW YORK, (IANS) Covid-19 has had a significant, detrimental impact on adolescent mental health, especially in girls, according to a large study published in The Lancet Psychiatry. A team of Icelandic and North American behavioural and social scientists analysed over 59,000 Icelandic adolescents. The study found that negative mental health outcomes were disproportionately reported by girls and older adolescents (13-18-year-olds), compared to same-age peers prior to the pandemic. At the same time, it revealed a decline in cigarette smoking, e-cigarette usage and alcohol intoxication among 15-18-year-old adolescents during the pandemic.

"The decrease observed in substance use during the pandemic may be an unintended benefit of the isolation that so many adolescents have endured during quarantine," said John Alagante, Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

The study represents a "landmark contribution to what we now know about just how psychologically devastating being socially isolated from peers and friends during the ongoing pandemic has been for young people", added Thorhildur Halldorsdottir, a clinical psychologist and Assistant Professor of Psychology at Reykjavik University in Iceland. The study compared current data with several pre-pandemic time points, which enabled the researchers to separate the effect of Covid-19 from other recent, downward trends in adolescent mental health.



DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX, PRINCE HARRY AND MEGHAN MARKLE WELCOME DAUGHTER LILIBET 'LILI' DIANA MOUNTBATTEN-WINDSOR (DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX/TWITTER).

PALESTINE, THE OLD CONFLICT IN A NEW CONTEXT



BY D.C. PATHAK

The recent spell of violence lasting eleven days in which rock ets fired on Israel from Hamas-controlled Gaza and the dead lier missile offensive of Israel that demolished entire build ings on the other side resulting in loss of some 250 civilian lives including children -- mostly Palestinians -- was the culmination of a simmering conflict in East Jerusalem around the Al Aqsa mosque sparked off by the action of Israel Police in not letting the local Mus- lims assemble at the mosque in course of Ramadan. The conflict between Hamas and Israel is fundamentally about the claim on what is the third most important religious site for Muslims after Mecca and Medina and the Temple Mount, the holiest place in Judaism -- both located in the same premises. It is on the mediation of Egypt that Hamas and Israel accepted a cease-fire -- even as the UNSC failed to bring about any agreement despite several meetings, on account of differences amongst the members on familiar political lines. The whole episode is yet another warning that a conflict on religion had the potential of precipitating a 'war'. US President Joe Biden, in a response aimed at promoting reconcili- ation, has promised financial aid for the rehabilitation of Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and firmly supported the idea of two states as the final solution of the longstanding problem in Palestine. He has reiter- ated the US decision to reopen its Consulate at Jerusalem. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has since met President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority at Jerusalem to assure him of the American stand that justice had to be meted out to Palestinians, emphasise the

need for Palestinian unity and call for a peaceful political solution without recourse to acts of terrorism. The Biden Presidency is adopting an even-handed approach while retaining its special equation with Israel. India has also chipped in with its support for the two-state resolution but unlike in the past it does not show any pro-Palestine tint. That the ceasefire could at best be a fickle truce was manifest in the fresh trouble that blew out be- tween Israel Police and Muslims gathered at the Mosque for Friday prayers on May21, hours after the agreement was made public. The Palestine-Israel conflict signifies one of the oldest disputes rooted in religious claims and has seen many transactional phases in which the two sides received endorsement from different quarters. It is presently caught in an amalgamation of three strands -- clash of 'faiths', differing geopolitical alignments and the state of intra-Palestinian ri- valry between Hamas and the PLO. The problem has touched a new milestone as the present paradigms point to a mix that was not seen before. In the play of religion, the familiar tussle between the secular nationalism of PLO and the rising hold of Hamas -- an offspring of Muslim Brotherhood with its deep commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine -- had been a prime determinant of the developments there in the era of Cold War. Hasan al-Banna, the Is- lamic thinker who established Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria in 1928, was driven by the desire to replace the regimes there with an Islamic rule that would base itself on the puritanic message of Quran. The Muslim Brotherhood disapproved of the idea of nationalism itself and when the Baathist leaders of Syria and Egypt, Hafez al-Assad and Nasser, aligned themselves with the Soviet camp it launched Jihad against them -- with direct and indirect endorsement of the US. Banna put forth the thesis that an Islamic state was a 'reformed' entity that could live in 'competition not conflict' with a Western democratic state. There had been since then a Western tilt towards Hamas at the cost of the PLO. When Nasser hanged Sayyid Qutb, leader of the Brotherhood, Syed Ramadan, his deputy, had managed to get away and he was kept with Western help at an Islamic Centre at Geneva by Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, an admirer of Banna who had earlier set up Jamaat-e-Islami at Lahore in 1941 with the same mission as of Brotherhood -- for the Indian subcontinent. More recently, when Muslim Brotherhood used the Egyptian revolution of 2011 against the Hosni Mubarak regime to install Mohammad Morsi as President, the US was happy. His successor Gen. el Sisi restrained Brotherhood at home but remained on the right side of the US and had an outreach to both Hamas and Israel because of his advocacy of two-state solution in Palestine. He was able to mediate for the current cease-fire that elicited a lot of appreciation from President Biden too. The equation of the US-led West with Muslim Brotherhood that existed in the Cold War scaled down steadily because of the path of competitive extremism that the latter chose in parallel to Islamic radicals -- who were

the sole target of the US-led West in the 'war on terror' resulting from 9/11 -- possibly because of the desire not to lose ground to the latter. Islamic radicals of Al Qaeda-Taliban combine and ISIS, unlike the Muslim Broth- erhood, carried the historical legacy of an inborn enmity towards the West. There is consequently a three-way division in the Muslim world as of now -- Islamic radical forces with their acolytes spread across geo- graphical boundaries, Saudi Arabia and UAE at the helm of OIC being totally in the US camp and an emerging group of Pakistan, Turkey, Malay- sia and Qatar which had no problem with either radical Islam or Muslim Brotherhood and was not willing to toe the American line in geopolitics. Anti US sentiment and hostility towards Israel led Iran to help Hamas with arms while the Russia-China combine, upholding the cause of Pal- estine right through the Cold War, extended support to PLO and President Abbas of Palestinian Authority. Russia did not, however, want any esca- lation and its foreign minister was in touch with US and UN to stop the conflict. China had a similar position but was more explicit about Israel halting its aggression first. In an interesting turn of alignments, the Muslim world is getting 'politically' divided between pro-US countries led by Saudi Arabia- UAE axis who are opposed to radicalisation and others who were accom- modative towards Islamic radicals and extremists and were not willing to toe the American line. The latter, significantly, are now on the right side of the China-Russia camp, politically. President Biden views the world through the lens of human rights and is apparently not bothered so much with ideological and religious divides, which explains his line of moderation towards the 'threat' of radicalisation, silence on Pakistan -- a country viewed by the international community as a harbinger of Islamic militants -- and endorsement of the politically guided two-state solution in Palestine without relaxing on the staunch defence of Israel. What would not go unnoticed by India is Biden's refusal to call Islamic terrorists or to decry Pakistan's military alliance with China that had a strategic 'give and take' basis. As an upshot of these shifts, Hamas and PLO may hopefully be pushed towards political recon- ciliation and coexistence with Israel. The world had been moving fast towards faith-based 'wars' and it is to be seen if the trend of a visible shift towards a 'political' bipolarity between US and China would remain free of the added aggravation of a religious conflict. Unfortunately, in our side of the globe the Sino-Pak alliance represents this dangerous mix and India has to formulate a strategy that enables it to handle Islamic mili- tants set upon India by Pakistan while the country negotiates its own position as an independent global power on the emerging world scene. India has to maintain a close relationship with the US as the lead player of the democratic world, be an active part of the multilateral group like QUAD for the security of the Indo-Pacific against Chinese incursions, deal with the two hostile neighbours on the borders, keep up the policy of punishing Pakistan for any mischief in Kashmir or elsewhere and counter its manipulations in Afghanistan and finally use its own political and economic strength and influence to emerge as a major power on the global stage in general and in South Asia in particular. A threat specific to India is from the unhindered plans of Pakistan, en- couraged by Sino-Pak alliance -- to use radicals and extremists for its 'proxy war' against India. It got affiliates of Al Qaeda and ISIS to make their appearance in Kashmir and could draw in elements of Hamas, wedded to Jamaat-e-Islami's doctrine of Islamic state, to join the subversive forces there as well. Intemationally, Pakistan is gaining from the support of Turkey, Malaysia and Qatar on Indo-Pak issues including the Kashmir 'dispute' and the emerging scene in Afghanistan. The Biden administration contin- ues to presume that Pakistan was still a useful ally because of its potential as an influencer with regard to Taliban -- that would ease the process of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Considering the level of violence Afghan Taliban has maintained even after the Doha agreement, it seems US is willing to pull out of Afghanistan anyway and leave the Ashraf Ghani govern- ment to sort matters out with the Taliban. Pakistan will like to secure the 'strategic depth' it was seeking in Afghanistan all through these years of conflict there. India has to handle the challenge in South Asia largely on its own.
Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this article are the personal ideas of the author. The facts and conclusions appearing in the article do not reflect the views of Y Media and Midweek Newspaper, and Y Media does not assume any responsibility or liability for the same.

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Impact of new wage code on INDIAN employees largely positive: Experts

BY VENKATACHARI JAGANNATHAN

CHENNAI, (IANS) Mixed views were expressed by various experts on the impact of the new wage code on the pay packets and the retirement benefits of employees/workers. They also said it is "myopic" to term social security as a cost to the company. One view is that the companies may rejig the salary structure in such a way that there will not be any additional outgo, which, in turn, may reduce the monthly take home pay. The other view is that there will not be any reduction in the take home pay as the companies may have to compensate any shortfall in the take home pay with a small hike in case the pay structure is rejigged. "There is limited scope for corporates to rejig their pay structure as per the Wage Code," Labour Economist & Professor at Xavier School of Management (XLRI), Jamshedpur, Dr K.R. Shyam Sundar, told IANS. Experts also said owing the new wage code, the terminal benefits of an employee/worker may go up due to higher provident fund (PF) corpus. "Companies may go for restructuring their employee pay structure. But some may have to pay extra to protect the take home pay of its employ- ees to avoid dissatisfaction and to retain talent," Ciel HR Services Private Ltd Co-Founder, Director and CEO, Aditya Narayan Mishra, told IANS. He also agreed that all companies may not be able to bridge the shortfall in the take home pay and there may be a pay reduction for some. As a part of labour law reform, the Central government has brought in four labour codes merging various standalone laws. The four codes are: Code on Wages, Code on Social Security, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, and Industrial Relations Code. As the new law, 50 per cent of the gross salary should be towards basic wages (Basic Pay and Dearness Allowance). The ceiling on the allow- ances will be 50 per cent of the gross salary. Corporates in order to reduce their contribution towards the employee Provident Fund (PF) companies used to fix the basic pay at a low level and allowances at a higher level, and the contribution to the PF is calcu- lated on the basic wages. "The new definition ensures at least 50 per cent or the prescribed limit comes within the definition of wages for the pur- pose of social security benefits. So, it is a step forward for the social security of the workers," senior advocate V. Prakash, who has appeared in several labour cases, said. The corporates are dwelling on the pos- sible reduction in the take home pay to influence the employees. But Sundar said: "Viewing social security as a cost is a dangerous qual-

ity. It hurts the very foundation of securing for the future." He said owing to the Wage Code, employees will know the fixed compo- nent in the pay and can do financial planning and there will be a decent sum at the time of retirement. The Wage Code challenges the myopic view that take home pay is the most important one, Sundar said. According to Mishra, the state governments have to bring in their own rules/guidelines to implement the Central law and the compliance cost may be there. "Initially there will be a lot of paperwork as most state government labour offices in the country do not have an online system," he added. He also pointed out that there is already confusion as to PF contribution. Mishra said as per a Supreme Court judgement, the PF contribution should be 12 per cent of the gross pay or on Rs 15,000 which is Rs 1,800. Some companies are paying 12 per cent of the gross pay as PF contribu- tion. Hoping that there will be clarity on this as well, Mishra said with capping the allowances at 50 per cent, there is also the possibility of the Central government making all the allowances taxable in the future. However the general view is that the Wage Code is employee positive. Meanwhile, nearly half of the companies in India are confident about their readiness to implement the new labour codes, according to Grant Thornton Bharat's Industry Expectation Survey on New Labour Codes. The survey was released this March.



CANADA'S DEPUTY PM AND FINANCE MINISTER, CHRYSTIA FREELAND, MEETS UK CHANCELLOR, RISHI SUNAK, AS G7 SETS A MINIMUM TAX OF 15% FOR MNCs (CHRYSTIA FREELAND/ TWITTER)

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

Ontario to Move to Step One of Roadmap to Reopen on June 11

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“Thanks to the tremendous efforts of every Ontarian, beginning June 11 we will be able to cautiously lift public health measures in the settings we know are safest,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “While this is exciting news, as we move to enter Step One of Ontario’s Roadmap it remains critical that all Ontarians continue to follow public health advice and roll up their sleeves to receive the vaccine.” Step One of the Roadmap focuses on the resumption of more outdoor activities with smaller crowds where risk of transmission is lower. It will also permit more limited indoor settings to be open, all with restrictions in place. In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Ontario government has amended Step One to also permit indoor religious services, rites and ceremonies, including wedding and funeral services limited to 15 per cent capacity.

Step One of the Roadmap to Reopen includes but is not limited to:

- Outdoor social gatherings and organized public events with up to 10 people;
- Outdoor religious services, rites, or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services, capped at the number of people that can maintain a physical distance of two metres;
- Indoor religious services, rites, or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services permitted at up to 15 per cent capacity of the particular room;
- Non-essential retail permitted at 15 per cent capacity, with no restrictions on the goods that can be sold;
- Essential and other select retail permitted at 25 per cent capacity, with no restrictions on the goods that can be sold;
- Outdoor dining with up to four people per table, with exceptions for larger households;
- Outdoor fitness classes, outdoor groups in personal training and outdoor individual/team sport training to be permitted with up to 10 people, among other restrictions;
- Day camps for children permitted to operate in a manner consistent with the safety guidelines for COVID-19 produced by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health;
- Overnight camping at campgrounds and campsites, including Ontario Parks, and short-term rentals;
- Concert venues, theatres and cinemas may open outdoors for the purpose of rehearsing or performing a recorded or broadcasted concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance with no more than 10 performers, among other restrictions;

Ontario enters **Step 1** on June 11th

More than 60% of adults have one dose

- ✓ 72% of adults have received at least one dose as of June 6
- ✓ Declining hospitalizations
- ✓ Declining ICU admissions
- ✓ Declining case rate
- ✓ Declining per cent positivity

Continuing improvements in key public health and health care indicators

Outdoor spaces begin reopening

- Gatherings for 10 people
- Patio dining for 4 people
- Outdoor attractions
- Overnight camping at campgrounds and campsites, including Ontario Parks
- Outdoor sports and fitness classes
- Day camps for children

With restrictions for smaller, well-managed crowds where risk of transmission is minimized

Limited indoor settings with restrictions

- Essential retail permitted at 25% capacity
- Non-essential retail permitted at 15% capacity
- And more...

With restrictions for smaller, well-managed crowds where risk of transmission is minimized

Outdoor horse racing tracks and motor speedways permitted to operate without spectators; and Outdoor attractions such as zoos, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens with capacity and other restrictions. In addition, to support students who have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic, the government is enabling school boards for public and private elementary and high schools to invite students back for brief outdoor end-of-year celebration. Any in-person school year celebrations will need to meet specific requirements. The province will remain in Step One for at least 21 days to evaluate any impacts on key public health and health system indicators. If at the end of the 21 days the province has vaccinated 70 per cent of adults with one dose and 20 per cent of adults with two doses and there are continued improvements in other key public health and health system indicators, the province will move to Step Two of the Roadmap. All public health and workplace safety measures currently in place will remain in effect until the province moves to Step One on June 11, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. During this time, the government will continue to work with stakeholders on their reopening plans, including targeted measures for specific sectors, institutions and other settings to ensure that they have full awareness of when they can begin to safely reopen and how. “While we have reached the point where we can safely move into Step One, now is not the time to get complacent,” said Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health. “We must all remain vigilant, as the fight against COVID-19 is not over. By continuing to follow public health advice and measures we can continue to reduce transmission, safeguard health system capacity and save lives.”

MP SONIA SIDHU’S NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIABETES ACT PASSES FINAL VOTE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MOVES TO SENATE



CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Now, it is moving on to the Senate. In March, MP Sonia Sidhu’s Bill C-237 was passed unanimously at the second reading and also passed at the committee stage. Before entering politics, MP Sidhu served as a diabetes educator and is now a proud member of the Standing Committee on Health. She is also the Chair of the All-Party Caucus on Diabetes. MP Sonia Sidhu welcomes partnership between Canada and the Netherlands to accelerate type 2 diabetes research. MP Sonia Sidhu welcomes the new partnership between Canada and the Netherlands to advance research on type 2 diabetes as announced by Jennifer O’Connell, Member of Parliament for Pickering-Uxbridge, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health. The Netherland-Canada Type 2 Diabetes Research Consortium aims to help prevent diabetes and improve the quality of life for those diagnosed with T2D. The partnership seeks to foster sustainable collaborations between Dutch and Canadian researchers for the faster development of T2D research. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has committed to providing \$2 million over the next 5 years to fund the initiative. This initiative commemorates the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin and invests in new research that will support the development of new preventive and therapeutic approaches to reverse the upward trajectory of diabetes prevalence and associated morbidities and reduce the impact of diabetes on individuals, families and communities. “Diabetes has an effect on far too many Canadians and we must keep working to address this public health priority. As Canada partners with the Netherlands, we hope to improve the lives of those living with type 2 diabetes by collaborating with our international partners. I am excited to see how this new Netherlands-Canada Type 2 Diabetes Research Consortium will contribute to our existing research efforts in Canada and across the world.” — Sonia Sidhu, Member of Parliament for Brampton South

JARNAIL RANDHAWA, 64, CHARGED WITH MURDER AFTER WIFE KILLED IN BRAMPTON PARK

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Upon arrival, police located a woman suffering from obvious signs of trauma. Paramedics attempted to render assistance; unfortunately, she succumbed to her injuries at the scene. The victim is Dalbir Randhawa, a 64-year-old woman from Brampton. The victim’s husband, Jarnail Randhawa, a 64-year-old man from Brampton, has been arrested. He is in custody and will be charged with Second Degree Murder. He will be held for a bail hearing and will attend the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton on June 3, 2021. “This was a tragic loss of life which will carry rippling impacts for family, friends, and our community. Our sincere condolences to all those affected by this tragedy and the loss of Dalbir Randhawa,” said Deputy Chief Nick Milinovich. Anyone with any information, dashcam or video footage is asked to contact the Homicide and Missing Person Bureau at 905-453-2121, extension 3205.

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PM Trudeau will attend G7 Leaders’ Summit, NATO Summit, and Canada-European Union Summit in-person

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced that he will participate in the G7 Leaders’ Summit in Carbis Bay, the United Kingdom from June 11 to 13, 2021. Following the Summit, he will attend the NATO Summit on June 14 followed by the Canada-European Union (EU) Summit in Brussels, Belgium.

The G7 Leaders’ Summit, NATO Summit, and Canada-EU Summit are all crucial opportunities for the Government of Canada to work with our global partners to find real solutions to the challenges that Canadians and people around the world are facing. Together, we will end the COVID-19 pandemic, create new jobs, grow our middle class, fight climate change, and build a more resilient world for everyone. This year’s G7 Summit will focus on those key global priorities, as well as finding coordinated approaches to promoting international rules and human rights, democracy, and gender equality. In addition to G7 members, the United Kingdom has also invited leaders from Australia, India, South Africa and South Korea.

At the NATO Summit, Prime Minister Trudeau will join other leaders to recommit to working together to address future trans-Atlantic security threats and challenges, and to strengthen shared security commitments that keep our people safe.

During the Canada-EU Summit, the Prime Minister will meet with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to discuss areas of further collaboration. Together, they will discuss ways to tackle climate change, fight COVID-19, and further our economic ties to build on the benefits of the Canada-European Union Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which has created jobs and growth for all Canadians and Europeans.

When we work with our global partners to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow, Canadians benefit. Together, we will finish the fight against COVID-19, and coordinate a recovery that creates jobs,

grows the middle class, and builds a better future for everyone.

“Now more than ever, world leaders need to come together to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow. Canada will continue to work with our global partners to keep our people healthy, create jobs and opportunity, grow the middle class, fight climate change, and strengthen democratic values. Only together can we bring an end to this pandemic and build a future that works for everyone,” said PM Trudeau.

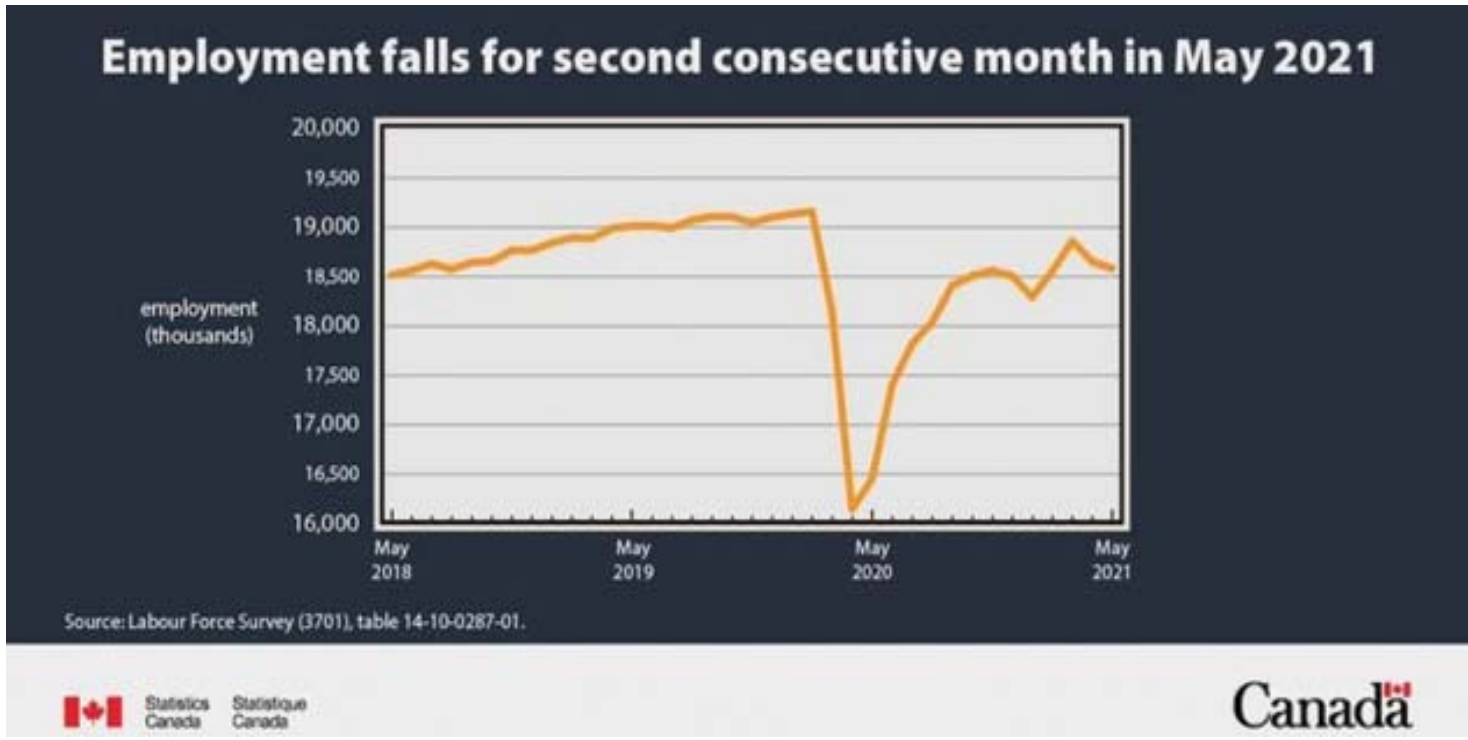
QUICK FACTS

The Prime Minister and the Canadian delegation travelling to the UK and Belgium will follow strict public health protocols and procedures during their visit, while in transit, and when they arrive home. Leaders of the G7 have come together since the 1970s to discuss issues of domestic and global concern. This will be the first in-person meeting of G7 leaders since 2019 and the fifth G7 Summit Prime Minister Trudeau will attend.

The G7 includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. Canada last held the presidency of the G7 in 2018. The United Kingdom holds the presidency in 2021, and Germany will hold it in 2022. NATO is a cornerstone of Canada’s international security policy. It is the primary international forum in which to engage other nations on transatlantic defence and security.

Canada and the EU’s Strategic Partnership Agreement deepens and broadens bilateral cooperation on a wide range of issues such as international peace and security, counter-terrorism, human rights and nuclear non-proliferation, clean energy and climate change, migration and peaceful pluralism, sustainable development, and innovation. CETA has been providing Canadians and Europeans with preferential market access since September 2017, and all economically significant parts of the agreement are in force.

‘Employment fell by 68,000 (-0.4%) in May:’ Statistics Canada



EMPLOYMENT FALLS FOR A SECOND MONTH UNDER THIRD-WAVE RESTRICTIONS

Employment fell by 68,000 (-0.4%) in May. Almost all of the decline was in part-time work (-54,000; -1.6%).

The number of self-employed workers was virtually unchanged in May but remained 5.0% (-144,000) below its pre-pandemic level.

Among people working part-time in May, almost one-quarter (22.7%) wanted a full-time job, up from 18.5% in February 2020 (not seasonally adjusted).

The number of Canadians working from home held steady at 5.1 million. After falling in April, total hours worked were little changed in May.

Ontario and Nova Scotia accounted for most of the overall employment decline in May.

Employment increased in Saskatchewan, while there was little change in all other provinces.

UNEMPLOYMENT LITTLE CHANGED

The unemployment rate was little changed at 8.2% in May, as the number of people who searched for a job or who were on temporary layoff held steady.

The unemployment rate among visible minority Canadians aged 15 to 69 rose 1.5 percentage points to 11.4% in May (not seasonally adjusted).

Long-term unemployment—the number of people unemployed for 27 weeks or more—held relatively steady at 478,000 in May.

STUDENTS START OFF THE SUMMER AHEAD OF 2020 BUT BEHIND 2019

In May 2021, the unemployment rate among returning students was 23.1%, compared with 40.0% in May 2020 and 13.7% in May 2019.

Driven in part by labour market conditions faced by students, total employment among youth aged 15 to 24 fell by 27,000 (-1.2%).

Employment held steady among both women and men aged 25 to 54.

The participation rate for women aged 25 to 54 dropped for the second consecutive month, falling 0.5 percentage points to 83.1%.

Among people aged 55 and older, employment was little changed for men, while it fell 18,000 (-1.0%) among women.

EMPLOYMENT DECLINES HIT GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR

In May, total employment in the goods-producing sector decreased for the first time since April 2020.

The number of people working in manufacturing fell by 36,000 (-2.0%), the first decline in the industry since April 2020.

Employment also fell in retail trade (-29,000) and “other services” (-24,000), two industries that continue to be affected by ongoing public health restrictions.

There were employment gains in transportation and warehousing (+22,000) and natural resources (+8,600).

Natural resources is the industry furthest along in its post-COVID recovery, with employment surpassing February 2020 levels by 29,000 (+9.3%).

COVID-19 VACCINE SCHOOL POP-UP CLINICS OPEN FOR YOUTH 12+ IN PEEL REGION

BRAMPTON: Beginning Saturday, June 5, 2021, youth in Peel can receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at a variety of familiar school pop-up locations. Walk-in appointments are available for youth enrolled in special education programs, or youth seeking a different environment from a mass clinic experience.

Planning was completed in consultation with school boards in Peel. Second doses will be provided at the same location in August.

School pop-up clinics

École Secondaire Catholique Sainte-Famille
1780 Meadowvale Blvd, Mississauga
Date: June 5
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Stephen Lewis Secondary School
3675 Thomas St, Mississauga
Date: June 5
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Iona Catholic Secondary School
2170 S Sheridan Way, Mississauga
Date: June 6
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Fletcher’s Meadow Secondary School
10750 Chinguacousy Rd, Brampton
Date: June 12
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
St. Michael Catholic Secondary School
9130 Columbia Way, Bolton
Date: June 13
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Ascension of Our Lord Secondary School
7640 Anaka Dr, Mississauga
Date: June 19
Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Walk-in: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Appointments for youth 12 to 17 can be booked through these instructions. Youth will need to be 12 at the time of their vaccination appointment.

“Offering vaccine clinics in schools is an exciting next step in the pandemic response. This continued partnership with schools across Peel Region helps ensure students and youth have access to the best available support and protection, as we together strive to put COVID-19 behind us, and get back to learning in a more normal way in the next school term,” said Dr. Monica Hau, Associate Medical Officer of Health.

Parents are encouraged to talk to your child about the risks and benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Visit our vaccination for children page for more information.

Visit peelregion.ca for regular updates on youth vaccination information and clinic locations and follow @regionofpeel on social media for news on COVID-19 and vaccine availability.



CANADA COMMEMORATES D-DAY WITH SMALL CROWDS (JUSTIN TRUDEAU/ TWITTER).



CANADA HELPING FARMERS AND AGRI-BUSINESSES ADOPT CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES TO REDUCE EMISSIONS AND ENHANCE COMPETITIVENESS (MARIE-CLAUDE BIBEAU/ TWITTER).



'Lifeline' Metro resumes as Delhi unlocks partially

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Public movement, transport, markets, and malls will restart partially in the national capital from Monday after one and half months' lockdown imposed from April 19 onwards following an unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases.

Along with the reopening markets, government and private offices are also set to resume work.

The national capital's lifeline Metro services, which were closed following an unprecedented spike in Covid cases, will resume for general public from Monday with 50 per cent seating capacity, as the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) directed on Saturday. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Corporation (DMRC), in a public notice issued ahead of resuming its services, said that only half of the available trains will be inducted into service with a frequency ranging from about 5 to 15 minutes on different lines.

"General public is advised to cooperate with the Metro authorities ensuring compliance to Covid appropriate behaviour inside metro premises throughout their travel," it said.

DMRC had on Saturday stated that no standing passengers would be allowed inside the metro rail and in order to ensure social distancing and compliance, only 50 per cent seating will be permitted inside

trains. More trains will be available on schedule from Wednesday onward. In a process to unlock Delhi for the second consecutive week, after permitting construction and manufacturing/ factories since last Monday, the DDMA, in its order issued on Saturday, has allowed to markets and malls to open on alternate days (odd-even basis), which will be decided on the basis of the shop's number. However, the weekly markets will remain shut till June 14.

"Situation of Covid-19 in NCT of Delhi has again been reviewed and observed that, though the number of Covid-19 patients and positivity rate is declining, the situation is still precarious, therefore in order to contain the spread of the virus and to further break the transmission chain, curfew needs to be further extended for another week in the territory of NCT of Delhi (except essential and permitted activities/ services) along with the reopening of some more prohibited activities in phase manner in areas outside the containment zones for overall well being of NCT of Delhi," the DDMA order stated. Delhi on Sunday reported 381 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, the lowest since March 10, when the city had reported 370. The daily positivity rate, which has been below 1 per cent for over a week, was at 0.50 per cent, according to the health bulletin, against 0.52 per cent on March 10.

3 AAP REBEL LEGISLATORS NAMELY SUKHPAL KHAIRA, PIRMAL SINGH AND JAGDEV SINGH KAMALU JOIN CONGRESS IN PUNJAB



CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

The Congress ruled in the heading for the assembly elections likely in March next year. "Chief Minister @capt_amarinder Singh before leaving for Delhi today welcomed @SukhpalKhaira MLA and former Leader of Opposition and his two AAP MLA colleagues namely Jagdev Singh Kamalu, MLA Maur and Pirmal Singh Dhaula, MLA Bhadaur into the party fold," the Punjab Congress informed in a tweet.

Firebrand Khaira, once the hard critic of Amarinder Singh, had quit the Congress and joined the AAP in December 2015. He was elected from the Bholath assembly seat in 2017.

However, Khaira, a former leader of opposition in the Punjab Assembly, resigned from the primary membership of the AAP in January

2019 and had also floated his own outfit, the Punjabi Ekta Party. The other two MLAs, Kamalu and Dhaula, are first-timers.

Patiala Member of Parliament and the Chief Minister's wife, Preneet Kaur, were present during their simple joining ceremony.

Amarinder Singh was summoned to Delhi to meet the Congress committee looking to resolve infighting in the Punjab unit.

The Chief Minister said the induction of the three legislators has been approved by Congress President Sonia Gandhi.

"Since the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in charge of Punjab, Harish Rawat, and state unit chief Sunil Jakhar are busy in the consultation process with the three-member committee in Delhi, their blessings will be sought in a few days," the Chief Minister said.

PUNJAB, CHANDIGARH, TN AMONG TOP 5 IN PGI INDEX 2019-20

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Punjab, Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Kerala have occupied the highest grade (Grade A+++) in Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20. The information comes after the Centre on Sunday approved the release of the grading index for states and Union Territories (UTs) that catalyses transformational change in the field of school education.

The grading index helps the states and UTs to pinpoint the gaps and accordingly prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' made the approval with a set of 70 parameters. The PGI for states and the UTs was first published in 2019 with reference year 2017-18. The PGI 2019-20 is the third publication in this series. The PGI exercise envisages that the index would propel states and UTs towards undertaking multi-pronged interventions that will bring about the much-desired optimal education outcomes. Most of the states and UTs have improved their grade in PGI 2019-20 compared to the earlier years. Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have improved overall PGI score by 10 per cent that is 100 or more points. "Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Punjab have shown improvement by 10 per cent (8 points) or more in the PGI domain: Access," said a statement issued by the Ministry of Education. "As many as thirteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10 per cent (15 points) or more in the PGI domain: Infrastructure and Facilities. Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Odisha have shown improvement by 20 per cent or more." The Ministry said that Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Odisha have shown more than "10 per cent improvement in the PGI domain: Equity." "Nineteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10 per cent (36 points) or more in the PGI domain: Governance Process.

BJP PLANS OR UPCOMING 5 STATES ELECTION INCLUDING UP, PUNJAB

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Gujarat Assembly polls are also slated for 2022 end.

Sources said that Modi was apprised of the outcome of the discussion held on the upcoming Assembly polls preparations and the ongoing organisational works including 'Sewa Hi Sangathan 2.0'.

"Main focus of the discussion with the Prime Minister was the Assembly polls, especially Uttar Pradesh," they said.

BJP General Secretary Bhupender Yadav said, "We had a meeting with the national president. Poll-bound states were discussed in the meeting. Future programmes of the party are also discussed in the two-day meeting."

It is also learnt that the results of the recently-held Assembly polls were also discussed in Nadda's two-day meeting with the General Secretaries. Sources added that the works done by the state units under 'Sewa Hi Sangathan 2.0' campaign, which was launched to provide help and relief to the people during the second wave of Covid pandemic, were also reviewed.

PUNJAB POLICE BUST COVID-19 CYBER SCAM, THREE HELD



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Punjab Police have busted an interstate high-profile gang of criminals in Mohali district indulging in Covid-19 cyber scams, a police official said. All the three arrested accused have been found to be cheating patients by falsely promising them to deliver fake Remdesivir and other medicines, Superintendent of Police, Cyber Crime, Gurjot Kaler told IANS.

They used to lure the victims by calling them on their WhatsApp numbers and then after getting advance payments in different bank accounts, they used to switch off their numbers, he said. Kaler said the entire cheated money of Rs 14 lakh was recovered from them.

CENTRE FIXES MAXIMUM CHARGES FOR COVID JAB AT PRIVATE HOSPITALS

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Central government on Tuesday fixed the maximum price that private hospitals can charge for Covid vaccines, amid sharp allegations that people are being forced to pay a heavy amount to get a jab at private hospitals.

As per the notification issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) on Tuesday, the price of Covishield has been fixed at Rs 780 per dose, Covaxin at Rs 1,410 and Russian vaccine Sputnik V at Rs 1,145 per dose.

This also includes taxes as well as a Rs 150 service charge for the hospitals. Meanwhile, the Centre has also asked the state government to ensure that private hospitals don't levy more than Rs 150 as service charge. The state governments have been asked to monitor the private hospitals regularly and take strict action against any private vaccination centre charging more.

"The price of vaccine doses for private hospitals would be declared by each manufacturer, and any subsequent changes would be notified in advance. The private hospitals may charge up to a maximum of Rs 150 per dose as service charges. State government may monitor the price being charged," according to a ministry circular.

DEFENCE REFORMS WILL MAKE INDIA GLOBAL POWERHOUSE IN COMING TIMES: RAJNATH



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Expressing confidence about the reforms in defence sector, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday that these reforms will make India a global powerhouse in the times to come. Addressing a gathering during launch of a e-booklet, he said the booklet is a reflection of the resolve of the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to make the defence sector stronger and more efficient.

The e-booklet, titled '20 Reforms in 2020', provides a brief overview of defence reforms undertaken in the year by the Ministry to bring about greater cohesion and modernisation of the armed forces through policy changes, innovation and digital transformation.

Reforms also focused on 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat', increased collaboration with industry to boost defence exports, measures to accelerate defence acquisitions with greater transparency, digital transformation, strengthening of border infrastructure, increased participation of women in armed forces, transformation in research and development to boost innovation, expansion of NCC to remote locations, and aid extended to the civil administration in fight against Covid-19.

Rajnath Singh also mentioned the appointment of India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and creation of Department of Military Affairs (DMA) as one of the major decisions taken by the government.

The post of CDS was created to increase efficiency and coordination among the armed forces and reduce duplication, while the DMA was established to ensure improved civil-military integration.

To promote 'Make in India' in defence sector, a list of 101 items was notified in August 2020, a 52,000 crore budget earmarked for indigenously-made defence equipment in 2020-21, and corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) approved in May 2020 for greater efficiency and productivity, the ministry stated.

It also said that there was an unprecedented push towards new technology developments. Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) developed a ventilator in record time to meet Covid-19 requirements in May 2020. In November 2020, the Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile, indigenously designed & developed by the DRDO, hit bullseye at medium range and medium height, while indigenously built Pinak rocket system cleared test of 45-60 km range. The increased partnership with the private sector has led to a substantial rise in defence exports, with their value rising from Rs 1,941 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 9,116 crore in 2019-20. Also, for the first time, India figured in the list of defence equipment exporting nations, as the exports expanded to more than 84 countries. In highest-ever thrust towards modernisation in last 10 years, there was 10 per cent budget increase in 2020-21 over the previous year. Policy reforms for increased transparency included launch of new Defence Acquisition Procedure in September 2020 and revision of DRDO Procurement Manual in October 2020. To encourage start-ups, a provision was introduced for procurement as Buy Indian-IDDM, while leasing for non-mission critical requirements was introduced for the first time. First five Rafale fighter aircraft arrived in India in July 2020 and several more since then, adding firepower to the arsenal of the Indian Air Force. Despite the Covid-19 challenge, the aircraft were delivered timely and inducted into IAF.



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NEW ISRAELI COALITION GOVT PUSHES FOR EARLY SWEARING-IN

TEL AVIV, (IANS) Israel's new coalition government is pushing to be sworn in by Parliament as early as June 7, according to media reports on Thursday. The reports said the factions around the leader of the Yesh Atid (Future) party, Yair Lapid, are also trying to replace parliamentary speaker Yariv Levin, DPA news agency. According to the reports, the reason behind the move is efforts by long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's camp to prevent the planned coalition of eight parties. A spokesperson for Lapid did not initially comment on the matter. On Wednesday evening, the former opposition leader Lapid informed President Reuven Rivlin that he formed a coalition with eight parties from all political camps. The coalition has a slim majority of 61 out of 120 seats in the Knesset. Initially, it was said that the necessary vote and swearing-in ceremony in Parliament would probably take place on June 14. Among others, the ultra-right Yamina (Rightwards) party of former Defence Minister Naftali Bennett is part of the coalition. The new coalition also includes Ra'am, an Islamist party headed by Mansour Abbas, marking the first time for an Arab party to be part of a coalition in Israel. According to a rotation agreement, Bennett will initially become premier and be replaced by Lapid two years later. This would be the first time in 12 years that a government has been formed without the right-wing conservative head of government Netanyahu.



Pakistan, Tajikistan agree to further deepen ties



ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Pakistan and Tajikistan have agreed to further deepen bilateral relations in diverse fields with a special focus on promoting trade and economic cooperation, according to a joint declaration issued by the Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad. According to the declaration, both sides reached the understanding during a meeting between Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and visiting Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported.

A Tajik delegation led by Rahmon arrived in Islamabad on Wednesday on a two-day visit and held a series of meetings and signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding with the Pakistani side, including cooperation in culture, trade, investment, transport, energy, tourism, education, connectivity, climate change and people-to-people contacts. Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the steadily growing relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan and expressed their resolve to elevate bilateral ties to a new level of strategic cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two countries and peoples. During the talks, the two sides accorded particular focus to bolstering bilateral economic and trade ties by exploring new opportunities and avenues and vowed to regularly convene meetings of the Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation. The leaders also agreed to enhance the role of the Joint Business Council to organize trade exhibitions and business forums on a regular basis and create an investor-friendly environment in the two countries to encourage and facilitate joint investments. Khan apprised the visiting president of the operationalization of the Gwadar port and offered Tajikistan to avail the facility of Pakistani seaports and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The two leaders also agreed to increase bilateral cooperation in the field of defence and security to overcome the common security challenges and also emphasized the need to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism, combating cross-border organized crimes and human and drug trafficking. Both leaders expressed serious concern over Covid-19 and emphasized the importance of international solidarity and cooperation as well as joint efforts for affordable and equitable supply and distribution of vaccines to all countries to combat the pandemic effectively.

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