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SOUTH ASIAN

Midweek

NEWS WEEKLY



EID
MUBARAK



Tuesday, May 11, 2021

www.southasiandaily.com Vol 21 Issue 19, Phone 647-272-8182, 905-670-3687

INTERVIEW WITH PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU



YUDHVIR JASWAL
Group Editor - Y MEDIA

Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE



PM TRUDEAU APPRECIATES Y MEDIA FOR PROVIDING ACCURATE INFORMATION TO CANADIANS

PM TRUDEAU SAYS, 'HEARTBREAKING & TRAGIC SITUATION' IN INDIA

PM TRUDEAU IS 'VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT CANADA IS GOING TO CONTINUE TO BE TREMENDOUSLY ECONOMICALLY SUCCESSFUL

PM TRUDEAU: 'WE MADE A PROMISE TO HAVE PEOPLE'S BACKS & THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE'VE DONE'



JUSTIN TRUDEAU
Prime Minister of Canada

PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU TALKS ABOUT FEDERAL BUDGET, CANADA-INDIA COVID SUPPORT, ECONOMY & JOBS & HEALTHCARE. | DETAILS ON PAGE 5

CANADA INDIA HEALTHCARE SUMMIT 2021, ORGANIZED BY CANADA INDIA FOUNDATION, TO TAKE PLACE ON MAY 20 & 21

TORONTO/NEW DELHI: The long-awaited Canada India Healthcare Summit 2021 ("CIHS 2021"), organized by Canada India Foundation ("CIF") in partnership with Toronto Rehab Institute – University Health Network ("TRI"), Federation of Indian Chapters of Commerce and Industries ("FICCI") and the Consulate General of India ("CGI"), is now only a week away, taking place on May 20-21, 2021. | **CONTD. ON PAGE 7**



Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE

IMMIGRATION MINISTER MARCO MENDICINO ANNOUNCES NEW PATHWAY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY FOR 90,000 ESSENTIAL WORKERS & INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES



DETAILS ON PAGE 8

CANADA STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIA



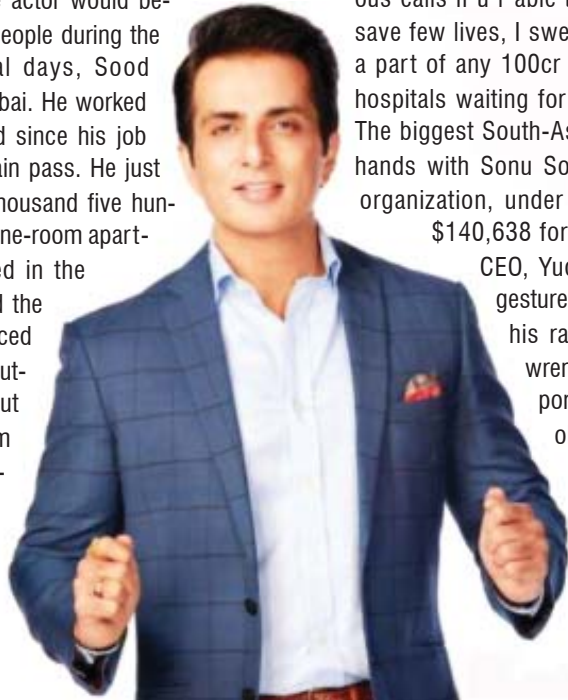
In the act of solidarity, Canada sent essential medical supplies to support India's COVID-19 response. Canadian Armed Forces Operations flights left Canada carrying 350 ventilators, and 25,000 vials of Remdesivir & the \$10M in support pledged through the Red Cross. | **CONTD. ON PAGE 5**

Y MEDIA JOINS SONU SOOD, OVER \$100,000 RAISED TO FIGHT COVID

COMMUNITY SAYS #YES WE SUPPORT

POOJA LUTHRA & CHARU NARULA

Hailing from a non-Bollywood family, Sonu Sood came to Mumbai on an unreserved ticket from Moga with many dreams and determination. But he would have never imagined that the actor would become a protector (messiah) for many people during the coronavirus pandemic. In his initial days, Sood struggled immensely to survive in Mumbai. He worked in a private firm in South Mumbai, and since his job involved fieldwork, he got a monthly train pass. He just earned a meagre amount of Rs. four thousand five hundred rupees per month, and stayed in a one-room apartment with other boys. He participated in the "Grasim Mr. India" contest and reached the top five before becoming an actor. He faced difficulties in bagging projects being an outsider. However, he made a decent debut in Bollywood in 2001 with the film Shaheed-e-Azam where he characterized the role of Bhagat Singh. Sonu Sood has undoubtedly emerged as a real-life hero and saviour during the Covid-19 crisis in India. Since the very beginning of the pandemic, he has worked as a forefront Covid-19 warrior.



Indians have time and again reached out to the actor to help them endure during these times. It takes him 11 hours on average to find a bed in Delhi & 9.5 hours on an average to find a bed in UP. Still, he is optimistic. He tweets, "In the middle of the night after making numerous calls if u r able to get beds for needy, oxygen for some people n save few lives, I swear, it's a million times more satisfying than being a part of any 100cr film. We can't sleep when people are in front of hospitals waiting for a bed."

The biggest South-Asian news organization, Y Media, has also joined hands with Sonu Sood to fight against India's Covid-19 crisis. The organization, under its #YESWESUPPORT initiative, raised around \$140,638 for the pandemic relief. Y Media's Group Editor and CEO, Yudhvir Jaswal, has appreciated this heartwarming gesture of the community supporting the initiative. During his radio shows, he has openly expressed the heartwrenching situation of India and the unconditional support of Sonu Sood. Y Media's Group Editor is highly obliged to the community for pledging during these challenging times. Channel Y host Sandeep Sangha also thanked all the contributors for actively participating in this humanitarian cause during the live show. "Sonu Sood is doing a commendable job, and words fail to express our gratitude," Sangha said

| **CONTD. ON PAGE 6**

28-YEAR-OLD KARMAN GREWAL SHOT DEAD AT VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, SUSPECTS FIRED AT POLICE

VANCOUVER, (IANS) A man was shot dead in a shooting incident at the Vancouver International Airport (YVR) in Canada, according to authorities. Karman Grewal, who was associated with the United Nations gang, was gunned down in an audacious public execution at Vancouver International Airport. The shooting took place at around 3 p.m. on Sunday at the airport's international departure area, CNN quoted Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) Sgt. Frank Jang as saying to reporters. | **CONTD. ON PAGE 8**



Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

- Health Canada authorizes use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in children 12 to 15 years of age.
- Ontario Expects to Administer First Doses to 65% of Adults by End of May.
- All Peel Residents 18+ Are Eligible To Book Covid-19 Vaccine Appointments, Regardless Of Postal Codes.
- Peel region -75% adults to be given at least one dose by end of May.
- 60 pharmacies offering Moderna vaccines to individuals aged 18+ in hotspot areas in Durham, Hamilton, Ottawa, Windsor-Essex & York region.
- Ontario pauses administration of AstraZeneca vaccine due to blood clot risks.
- 49% of Ontarians have received at least one dose of vaccine.

| **CONTD. ON PAGE 3**

FEDERAL GOVT. INVESTS \$12B IN PUBLIC TRANSIT PROJECTS IN GTHA

Federal government announced, after lengthy negotiations, a historic investment of \$12 billion in expanding the transit systems of GTHA. The \$26.8 billion for four shovel-ready public transit projects in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), is prioritized by the province, the City of Toronto and York Region: Scarborough Subway Extension - \$5.5 billion
Eglinton Crosstown West - \$4.7 billion
Ontario Line - \$10.9 billion
Yonge North Subway Extension - \$5.6 billion
The federal government is contributing 40% of each project, up to a total of \$10.4 billion. Federal funding for the Yonge North Extension is conditional on Treasury Board approval. | **CONTD. ON PAGE 8**

WATCH Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS ON CHANNEL Y



AKANKSHA ARORA

“FOR 75 YEARS, THE UN HAS NOT FULFILLED ITS PROMISE TO THE WORLD



SAM PITRODA

“INDIA IS ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD



JASMAN SANGHA

“WITH HARD WORK AND PASSION YOU COULD ACHIEVE ANYTHING

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25-YR-OLD WOMAN ACTIVIST ALLEGES SEXUAL ASSAULT EN ROUTE TO TIKRI PROTEST, LATER DIES IN HOSPITAL

KISAN MORCHA DID NOT KNOW ABOUT ASSAULT, SAYS YOGENDRA YADAV



All the six accused named in an FIR for allegedly sexually assaulting a 25-year-old woman from West Bengal who was associated with the farmers' agitation at the Tikri border would be brought to justice, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij said on Monday. He also described the crime on the pretext of agitation as unfortunate. "Each and every accused would be arrested," Vij told the media in Ambala city. Addressing a press conference on Monday, Yogendra Yadav said that the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the group that is spearheading the farmers' agitation against recent agri laws, was not aware of the assault. "However, since there are reports that two or three leaders knew about it, we are probing the matter," he said. The state police have registered a case against six people on the complaint of the victim's father, who alleged that the accused, who were asso-

ciated with the Kisan Social Army, travelled with her in a train from West Bengal on April 10. In his complaint, he said the woman was sexually harassed while travelling and on reaching the border she was gang raped.

On the night of April 25, as per the police, she was admitted to a private hospital in Bahadurgarh for treatment of coronavirus. She died there on April 30. In his complaint, the victim's father alleged the main accused -- Anil Malik and Anup Singh -- also tried to kidnap her.

The other accused are Ankush Sangwan, Kavita, Jagdish Barar and Yogita. A Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by the DCP (Bahadurgarh), has been formed by the government to conduct a probe into the matter. Demanding justice for the victim, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a group of protesting farmers unions, has said in a statement that it "stands with the struggle for justice for our deceased woman colleague and is committed to taking this fight for justice to its logical conclusion." It said the tents and banners, etc., of the so called Kisan Social Army have been removed. "The accused were barred from participating in the movement and public appeal issued for their social boycott. The SKM has made it clear that the Kisan Social Army was never the authorized social media voice of the SKM and none of its handles have anything to do with the movement. In addition to these steps, from day one the SKM has assured the family of the deceased colleague that it will extend them every possible support in any legal recourse that they prefer," said its statement. "The SKM will extend full cooperation to the police in bringing out the truth of this matter. No one shall be spared," added the statement.

PHYSICIANS AND NURSES DEPLOYED TO OSLER ARRIVE FROM NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



William Osler Health System (Osler) is pleased to welcome health care professionals from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to assist with Osler's capacity needs during this third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of four nurses and three physicians have arrived via a Royal Canadian Air Force plane from Newfoundland and Labrador. Two physicians arrived last week and will be joining the group. These health care professionals are highly skilled and bring extensive experience in Emergency Departments and ICUs, as well as global humanitarian missions. They will be deployed to Osler's ICU, ED and general medicine areas to support patient care. Osler hospitals and the communities we serve to continue to be among the hardest hit since the start of the pandemic and we are grateful for these health care professionals and their willingness to assist Osler staff, physicians and volunteers in providing care for a large number of patients with COVID-19. Osler also recognizes the extensive work and dedication shown by our own staff, physicians and volunteers throughout the pandemic. Osler thanks the Ontario Government, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Royal Canadian Air Force for this needed and appreciated assistance.

The intriguing story of how Sikkim became India's 22nd state

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Sikkim remains an enigma for most, with many misconceptions about its history and its merger with India in 1975. In "Sikkim - A History of Intrigue and Alliance" (HarperCollins), former diplomat Preet Mohan Singh Malik combines insights into the erstwhile kingdoms unique history with the intriguing story of how it became India's 22nd state.

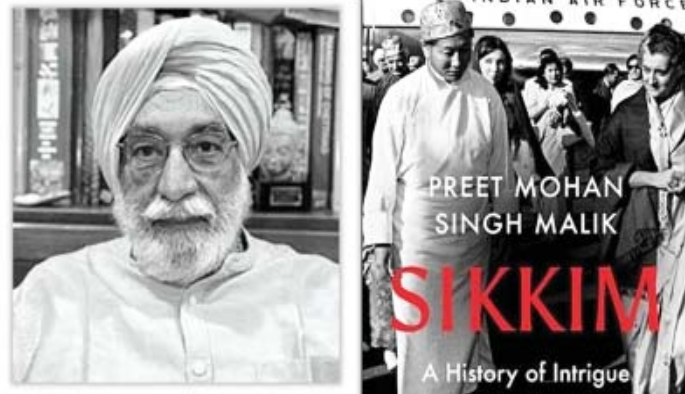
He examines the often-fraught relationship between the Lepchas (Rongpas) -- its original inhabitants -- and the Bhutias -- people of Tibetan origin who established institutions of religion and governance, and founded the Namgyal dynasty that ruled the kingdom until it became a part of the Indian Union.

India's historical relationships with Tibet and China form a part of this narrative covering, in particular, the many facets of British involvement in the Himalayan region during the colonial period, and strategic failures that were compounded by a flawed Tibet policy pursued by independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

For India today, Sikkim remains significant from a strategic point of view, given its proximity to Tibet and the crucial Siliguri Corridor that connects India's north-eastern states with the rest of the country.

The author draws from extensive sources, including hitherto unknown archival material that he had access to while serving at India's political office to Sikkim and Bhutan in Gangtok in the late 1960s.

Preet Mohan Singh Malik served in the Indian Foreign Service for more than three decades from 1962. He was posted in Gangtok from October 1967 to April 1970 at the Political Office for India to Sikkim and



Bhutan. He has also served as India's Ambassador to Bahrain, Cuba and Myanmar, and as High Commissioner to Tanzania (with concurrent accreditation to the Seychelles), and Malaysia, with concurrent accreditation to Brunei. He has served at the Permanent Mission of India to the European office of the UN in Geneva where he was also a delegate to the Disarmament Conference and on the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization. He was a Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN Mission in New York. He specialized in economic diplomacy, covering both bilateral and multilateral areas. He was a member representing the Ministry of External Affairs, of both the Foreign Investment Promotion Board and the Steering Committee on Economic Reforms chaired by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister (1992-95).

Take care
get vaccinated 

Residents aged 18+
living anywhere in Peel can
now book a COVID-19 vaccine
appointment.

PEEL RESIDENTS AGED 18+ CAN NOW BOOK COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENT (REGION OF PEEL/ TWITTER).



Wish you and your family

Eid

m u b a r a k









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SC NOTICE TO PUNJAB ON PRASHANT KISHOR'S APPOINTMENT AS CM'S ADVISOR

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Supreme Court has sought a response from the Punjab government on an appeal challenging the Punjab & Haryana High Court order, dismissing a petition challenging appointment of Prashant Kishor as Principal Advisor to Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta noted that counsel for the petitioners contended that Prashant Kishor is an expert in organising elections and is assisting parties in different states. Advocate Baltej Singh Sidhu, representing Labh Singh and another petitioner, submitted that the appointment of Kishor as Principal Advisor to the Chief Minister, that too in the rank and status of a Cabinet minister at the cost of public money, is not permissible. Counsel contended before the top court that the government may have any advisor with any particular expertise for governance purposes and questioned the validity of the order by the state government. The petitioners said the decision also smacked of mala fide as

Kishore worked as strategist for the Congress in 2017.

In their plea, Singh, a retired boxing coach and Satinder Singh, an advocate, contended Kishor is an expert in organising elections and is assisting parties in various states.

"Issue notice returnable after the summer recess," said the top court in its order.

Amarinder Singh had appointed Kishor in March this year. The petitioners claimed there was no advertisement or interview conducted for the appointment, which was clear violation of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. Dismissing the petition, the High Court had noted that the Chief Minister, being an elected representative, has manifold constitutional duties to discharge, including good governance towards the citizens, and thus, he is at liberty to choose his advisors. Kishore was the political strategist for Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, where Mamata Banerjee won the Assembly elections with a landslide victory, to become Chief Minister for the third consecutive term.

India's Covid situation nothing short of heartbreaking: Kamala Harris

WASHINGTON, (IANS) In an address to the Indian diaspora in the US, Vice President Kamala Harris lamented over the deteriorating Covid-19 situation in India, saying it was "nothing short of heartbreaking".

"Generations of my family come from India. My mother (Shyamala Gopalan) was born and raised in India. And I have family members who live in India today. The welfare of India is critically important to the US," Harris said in her pre-recorded message played at a diaspora event hosted by the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) on Friday.

"The surge of Covid-19 infections and deaths in India is nothing short of heartbreaking. To those of you who have lost loved ones, I send my deepest condolences. As soon as the dire nature of the situation became apparent, our administration took action.

"On Monday, April 26, President Joe Biden spoke with the Prime Minister

(Narendra Modi) to offer our support. By Friday, April 30, US military members and civilians were delivering relief on the ground.

"Already, we have delivered refillable oxygen cylinders, with more to come. We have delivered oxygen concentrators, with more to come. We have delivered N95 masks, and have more ready to send. We have delivered doses of Remdesivir to treat Covid patients.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, when our hospital beds were stretched, India sent assistance. And today, we are determined to help India in its hour of need. "We do this as friends of India, as members of the Asian Quad, and as part of the global community. I believe that if we continue to work together, across nations and sectors, we will all get through this," the Vice President added. In her address, she also acknowledged diaspora groups like Indiaspora and the American India Foundation that "have built bridges between the US and India".

PAK PM IMRAN, SAUDI CROWN PRINCE SALMAN COMMIT TO TIES



ISLAMABAD/JEDDAH, (IANS) Visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on Saturday have affirmed their commitment to fortify the 'upward trajectory' in bilateral relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Islamabad said. The Prime Minister and the Crown Prince met in Jeddah and held wide-ranging talks on bilateral, regional and international issues, The Express Tribune quoted the Ministry as saying.

"The talks were marked by exceptional cordiality and a commitment to fortify the upward trajectory in the bilateral relationship. "The two leaders reaffirmed the strong and historic bonds between the two countries rooted firmly in shared beliefs, common values, mutual trust and longstanding tradition of mutual support," it added. During the meeting, special emphasis was laid on increasing Saudi investments in Pakistan, collaboration in the field of energy, and increased job opportunities for Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia, according to the MoFA. The two leaders also signed an agreement on the establishment of the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council (SPSCC). Khan also extended an invitation to Crown Prince Salman to visit Pakistan, stated the MoFA.

DELHI TO REMAIN SHUT TILL MAY 17, METRO SERVICES ALSO SUSPENDED



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Amid crisis for medical services and oxygen supply in Delhi's hospitals for over last three weeks, the city will remain under lockdown till next Monday (May 17) as part of measures to break the chain of coronavirus infections. Lockdown was imposed in the national capital on April 20 with some restrictions and the extended lockdown was supposed to end on Monday morning (May 10 a.m.), but the state government decided to extend it for further one more week. Announcing 'lockdown extension' through a digital press conference on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "Delhi had imposed lockdown on April 20 and has been extended again. With the support from people of Delhi cases have started to come down in the last few days and the positivity rate is also down to 23 per cent. However, we are not in a situation to give any relaxation in restrictions. I will request people of Delhi to continue to follow lockdown rules, otherwise, we will lose what we have gained (medical facilities) in the last few days." The Chief Minister said that the fresh round of lockdown will be more stringent than before. "To combat the spread of Covid we have decided to take some more stringent measures including shutting down metro services from Monday morning," he added.

I urge everyone this year to celebrate with only those you live with or bring your celebrations online. COVID-19 is still spreading through Mississauga and Brampton and everyone needs to play their part. Please be responsible as you enjoy your celebrations.

- Bonnie Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga.

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Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE: 'WE'RE SEEING THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL:' PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU

INTERVIEW WITH PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU



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JUSTIN TRUDEAU
Prime Minister of Canada

POOJA LUTHRA & CHARU NARULA

In an exclusive interview with Y Media's Group Editor and CEO, Yudhvir Jaswal, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau discussed the 2021 federal budget, Canada-India support, economy and jobs and healthcare. Read on.

Yudhvir Jaswal: What are the two main centrepieces of the budget 2021? How are we going to balance the deficit amount?

PM Justin Trudeau: We made a promise at the beginning of this pandemic that we would be there to support Canadians, whatever it takes for and how long it takes. That is something that this government does because it is the moral thing to do, and it's the right thing to do. We have seen through the pandemic that it is the economically smart thing to help and support Canadians. We have directly supported small businesses through wage subsidies and provided extra financial support to provinces to improve healthcare for seniors. These are things that let us come back quicker to normal and grow further and faster. The communities and countries that didn't invest in supporting people will be much more penalized for much longer from this. The only responsible thing to do was to do precisely what we did. So, when the Conservatives say we spent too much to support Canadians, they do not understand that the support of Canadians is what is going to guarantee that our kids and generations in the future are going to not be overly penalized by this pandemic. A perfect example of that is some of the investments we made in this budget. For instance, we are making sure that people can afford and find suitable spaces for childcare. It is a better thing over the coming years because we will cut costs half by next year. We're going to make sure that, in fact, within five years, it is \$10 a day for their daycare right across the country, but that does not just help families and individuals. It also allows women to get back into the workforce and creates economic growth. Hence, the business community asks for it. So, everything we've looked at in this budget is about investing for growth, looking for jobs and bringing our economy back quickly and growing it to an even better place.

Yudhvir Jaswal: What steps are taken by the Federal govt. to ensure that we are well prepared in case a pandemic hits us in the future?

PM Justin Trudeau: One of the challenges we faced from the beginning of this pandemic is that we had lost our domestic manufacturing capacity for vaccines. Over the past year, we have made significant investments in Canadian businesses, science and research to ensure that we will produce our top vaccines here in Canada in the future. We knew that we were going to be dependent on international sources for the vaccines. We signed more contracts with different potential vaccine producers around the world. We are now in the top three in the G-20 in terms of delivering vaccines to Canadians. We are going to get through this in the coming months, better than many other countries. That is why we will continue to learn from this process. We have been able to develop significant capacity so that we will be ready for any future pandemics. But our focus right now is really on getting through this pandemic. Therefore, we need to keep hanging in there for these problematic weeks, where there are still restrictions, so that we can drive the cases down. And we all need to get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated is the only way we get back to normal. Therefore, everyone needs to get their vaccine shots before September.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Canada has always had good relations with India. How is Canada extending help in these challenging times for India?

PM Justin Trudeau: This pandemic is a moment in which we understand how connected we are worldwide. We need to be there for each other. We were very pleased when we received vaccines from the Serum Institute of India. As India is facing a very heartbreaking and tragic situation, we are there as

well. We provided \$10 million to the Indian Red Cross and supporting them with medicines and ventilators. We know that this pandemic does not end anywhere until it ends everywhere, and we need to be there to support each other through this.

Yudhvir Jaswal: People are cautioned that the government is now supporting, but the real economic challenges will come out once the support ends. What is your opinion on this?

PM Justin Trudeau: The reason for that economic support was to ensure that things can start up quickly when this pandemic is over. Again, businesses won't have to rebuild from scratch because this pandemic won't have destroyed them. It's been incredibly difficult for companies that have hung on through this difficult time. But as this is over, we are all looking forward to getting back to normal fairly quickly. Getting back out into the community, going back to restaurants, gathering for artists' shows, and all sorts of things are going to come back quickly. And because of the support we have given to communities and businesses and families, we're going to be able to start up again very quickly. I am confident that there will be new ways of doing things. We are doing more things more online, and there are further adjustments. We are going to be thoughtful, but we may be wearing masks for a while.

The kinds of things we are going to do will bring our economy back very quickly. There are going to be some business models that won't work as well. But I know that there are so many new ideas coming forward. Exciting entrepreneurs are looking at the opportunities as we grow our economy even more to create success. I'm very optimistic that Canada is going to continue to be tremendously economically successful. We came into this pandemic with one of the strongest economies in the G7. We're coming out of it in an excellent fiscal position than most of our peers in the G7. We are moving in the right direction. There will be lots of success because I know how strongly people are excited about getting back to normal.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Do you think the provincial government should do more in developing healthcare infrastructure to be better prepared in the future?

PM Justin Trudeau: Unfortunately, we have seen that, particularly in areas like long-term care, the provincial systems have not been good enough. Our elders across the country face far too many tragedies. The federal government has stepped up with help from the very beginning, whether it was sending in the Army or the Red Cross or sending billions of dollars to the provinces to support their systems. We are moving forward to ensure that our seniors deserve better care, regardless of where they are. The federal government is going to make sure that the provinces do better on that. We're also going to fund long-term health care improvements in a meaningful way. People know they can count on the federal government. Eight out of every \$10 of support that has gone to people during this pandemic came from the federal government. We've been there to support people. And we are going to continue to do that because we know how important it.

Justin Trudeau: Is there anything else you would like to add?

PM Justin Trudeau: Canadians know our government and me. We made a promise to have people's backs. And that's precisely what we've done. We will be there to support people; we will be there to get through this. We will be there for a brighter tomorrow, and I'm excited about the work we continue to have to do together. I'm grateful for the leadership of individuals who have been there to help each other out. The work you've done with Y media is outstanding in terms of keeping people connected. I would also thank you, Y Media, for reassuring Canadians and providing them information about this challenging time we're going through. We're all in this together, and we're going to get through this together. We're going to build back better altogether.

CANADA STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIA



CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

"Canada continues to stand in solidarity with the people of India. We must all unite in this hour of need and work together in the global fight against this virus that is devastating lives across the globe," said Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ontario also dispatched 3,000 locally made ventilators to New Delhi. Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Economic Development Victor Fedeli and Consul General Apoorva Srivastava flagged off the shipment to India. The Ontario government will also help coordinate the transportation of approved medical equipment put together for the Indian Red Cross by the Indian diaspora and friends of India in Ontario. This support complements Canada's work with its international partners to respond to needs caused by this pandemic and to help save lives. The government is also providing support through UNICEF's response to the pandemic in India with the urgent provision of 1,450 oxygen concentrators. The funds for these operations come partly from the \$230-million contribution to the therapeutics pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, announced in December 2020.



ONTARIO LAUNCHES MOBILE VACCINE UNITS IN HOT SPOT WORKPLACES; EXPECTS TO ADMINISTER FIRST DOSES TO 65% OF ADULTS BY END OF MAY

TORONTO — With the arrival of increased vaccine deliveries from the federal government starting this week, the Ontario government is further expanding its COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan with the launch of mobile vaccine units for small to medium-sized businesses in hot spot communities. These mobile units will begin offering vaccinations in Toronto, York and Peel at select businesses that have employees who cannot work from home and have a history or risk of outbreaks. Each public health unit will determine the small to medium-sized businesses where mobile units will be deployed. "The new mobile units for at-risk businesses are another step in our efforts to get more people in priority areas vaccinated as conveniently and as quickly as possible," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "These mobile units are designed to be rapidly deployed to a diversity of small to medium-sized workplaces and will help strengthen our capacity to reach areas where the need is greatest." Starting May 7, an initial rollout of up to five mobile units is planned with a possible expansion of up to 15 units once the program is fully established. Each mobile unit will be equipped with the necessary staff, vaccines and resources to immunize all employees at the selected workplaces. In addition to the mobile units, employer-led workplace vaccination clinics organized by large companies such as Maple Lodge Farms, Maple Leaf Foods and Amazon Canada in Peel Region have been completed or are underway. In partnership with Peel Public Health, Loblaw Companies, Walmart Canada, HelloFresh, Magna, Air Canada and Purolator Inc. are also setting up workplace vaccination clinics this month for workers who cannot work from home. A workplace vaccination clinic will also be operationalized at the Ontario Food Terminal, the largest wholesale fruit and produce distribution centre in Canada, starting May 10. "With a stable and reliable of supply of vaccines expected this month, our government is further accelerating our vaccine rollout with a focus on individuals and settings most at risk," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Vaccines remain our best defence against COVID-19, and I strongly encourage all Ontarians to schedule their appointment as soon as it's their turn to help protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities."

Ontario continues to expand eligibility and access at mass vaccinations sites, hospital clinics and pharmacies.

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WHY THE BJP FAILED TO CONSOLIDATE HINDU VOTES IN WEST BENGAL

KOLKATA, (IANS) Though the BJP has increased its tally in the West Bengal Assembly from three in 2016 to 77 in 2021 - a substantial increase of 74 seats, but down from 121, as indicated by the 2019 Lok Sabha election results. The BJP's success in the last Lok Sabha elections was a result of extreme polarisation of Hindu votes under Narendra Modi-Amit Shah banner but in the 2021 Assembly polls, the saffron camp failed to retain the level of Hindu support it had secured then, thus ending up faring way below its own expectations and its performance in the last general election.

According to some major post-poll surveys conducted in the state, the BJP's share of Hindu vote rose from 12 per cent in 2016 to 57 per cent, or nearly three-fifth of the total, in the last Lok Sabha elections, but surprisingly enough when the BJP was fiercely campaigning now to garner Hindu support, this came down to 50 per cent - a substantial erosion of 7 per cent which prevented it from reaching its desired target. Interestingly enough, the Trinamool Congress, on the other hand, which had secured 43 per cent of the Hindu votes in 2016 Assembly polls, suffered a loss of nearly 11 per cent and came down to 32 per cent in 2019 Lok Sabha polls but surprisingly enough, it managed to gain the support of 39 per cent of the Hindu votes, including the chunk that the BJP lost. This 7 per cent had a significant contribution behind the poll mathematics in the Assembly election. Besides the support of the Hindu vote, the Trinamool was successful in garnering the support of nearly 75 per cent of the Muslim and that

gave them this convincing victory in the election. The BJP camp might try to find out the possible reasons behind the shift of loyalty of a portion of Hindu vote but one thing is certain that the NRC and the CAA didn't go down well with the lower Hindu castes of the state.

Though BJP was successful in retaining the allegiance of the upper castes but the lower castes like the Matuas, and the Mahishyas and the tribals have defected from the saffron camp. A little example will be easy enough to drive home the point.

When in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won 69 of the 84 SC/ST seats of the state, in 2021, this number came down to 40 - a loss of 29 Assembly constituencies. Though the BJP maintained its dominance in the Junglamahal and north Bengal but they failed to retain their presence in districts like North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas and Nadia. The Mahishyas and the Matuas are mainly refugees who came to Bengal from Bangladesh long back, and the Trinamool was successful in convincing these people that if the BJP comes to power, then they will implement the NRC and the CAA and this will put their life in jeopardy. The fear of going to the detention camp or to another country compelled these people to concentrate under the Trinamool banner and so the BJP's performance in these three districts was pathetic. According to some senior BJP state leaders, the party's aggressive campaign to polarise the votes on religious lines also didn't pay well. A senior BJP leader who was also part of the election strategy team had also warned the top BJP leadership not to go for an all-out campaign but he was not heeded. "The Left rule in the state for 34 years has some residual effects on the voters and we cannot deny that. The Left Front in their 34 years rule and before has strictly followed a secular and non-religious stance. The Left leaders maintained an equal distance from both Hindu and Muslim religious festivals. We cannot deny the fact a large portion of the educated middle-class Bengalis and large portion of the senior citizens who are above 60 years are product of this Left movement and they certainly chose the Trinamool above BJP," a senior BJP leader said.

Prayers, care help infant beat Covid in Punjab



NEW DELHI, (IANS) He was just 20 days old when he tested positive for Covid-19, and it took infant Sukhdeep Singh 10 more days to defeat the virus, becoming probably one of India's youngest Covid warriors. The prayers of his parents and the selfless service and expertise of the doctors and nursing staff brought Sukhdeep out of the clutches of the deadly virus. Smiles were all around when Sukhdeep was discharged from the Punjab Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Jalandhar on Friday, after passing through all the medical tests, including RT-PCR. "Our happiness of having a baby was short lived. We were shocked to know that our child had tested positive for Covid-19," said Gurdeep Singh, Sukhdeep's father, as both the parents had tested negative. Hailing from Kapurthala and having a humble background, Gurdeep said that it seems that God has heard their prayers as Sukhdeep has recovered due to the care

and medical services provided by the hospital staff. Sukhdeep's mother Sandeep Kaur's happiness knew no bounds as she cradled him back on her lap with a twinkle in her eyes. Grandmother Kulwinder Kaur was also jubilant. "Waheguru di mehar hoi ji merapautattheek ho kegharwapis aa gya. Doctoran ne usda bahut khayal rakheya' (with God's grace my grandson is back home healthy. The doctors also cared a lot)," she said. The nursing staff looking after the infant were also upbeat. "We looked after the child with utmost care. It was hard to see an infant passing through all that pain," said nurse Ruby. She said the child was spoon milked as his mother was not allowed to feed him because of obvious reasons. Jatinder Singh, a pediatric at PIMS under whose supervision the child recovered, said the boy was admitted with high fever and seizures. "His case was very challenging for us.

Y MEDIA JOINS SONU SOOD, OVER \$100,000 RAISED TO FIGHT COVID

COMMUNITY SAYS #YES WE SUPPORT

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Sonu Sood graciously accepted the donation by the Y Media community for such an urgent cause.

The actor has been winning heart with his work since the COVID-19 outbreak in India. He has been at the forefront and helped thousands of migrant workers to return home last year amid the first nationwide lockdown due to the deadly virus.

He has helped several people find jobs, arranging medical facilities for the sick and others. Along with this, he had also taken up full responsibility for providing suitable transportation and food to the migrants last year.

Now, Sonu and his team work relentlessly to help those facing the brunt of the second wave of the pandemic. The actor has opened a Telegram channel, 'India Fights with Covid,' which helps him find hospitals, medicines, oxygen and other COVID-19 resources.

From helping migrant workers to providing oxygen, beds, he is working relentlessly to ensure the survival of the population hardest hit by the pandemic. Sood recently arranged for a critically ill 25-year-old COVID patient to be airlifted from Jhansi to Hyderabad after doctors at the local hospital said that treatment would not be possible in Jhansi. However, the girl succumbed soon after. Sood's efforts are not only limited to this. He has been continuously receiving oxygen requests from people. He is also bringing oxygen plants from France and other nations to be installed at various locations in India. He is also vouching for establishing at least four of the oxygen plants in the worst-hit COVID-19 states of India, including Delhi and Maharashtra. Sonu Sood will also provide food to Dance Deewanes Contestants' village till the lockdown is over.

Sonu Sood has also urged the central and state government to make education free of cost till graduation for the children who have lost their loved ones to Covid-19. He has also made an appeal to the government and concerned authorities to come together and make cremation grounds free of cost, enabling people to cremate their loved ones properly and respectfully.

The actor and his team have left no stone unturned to provide the essential COVID-19 resources like oxygen cylinders, medicines, vaccines and other services to the people.

Sood's philanthropy arm is also reflected in his Sood Charity Foundation, which has received huge donations from Bollywood celebrities. The latest data reveals the foundation has delivered over 4,000,000 meals to about 18,000 families. Meanwhile has transported over 90,000 migrants.

As Covid-19's second wave hit India severely, many countries like the U.S., Canada extended their helping hand to support the overwhelming healthcare system. Canada donated \$10 million to the Indian Red Cross and sent medical supplies. Ontario supplied 3,000 life-saving ventilators to India and will ship 2,000 more ventilators in the coming days.

DOS AND DONT'S IN HOME ISOLATION - THE AIIMS GUIDELINES

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The AIIMS has given guidelines on Covid management in home isolation at a recent training session for 14 experts from tertiary care centres across the country.

In his presentation, Assistant Professor of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Saurabh Mittal, highlighted how home isolation helps free hospital space and contain spread of disease. It was noted that only patients having mild disease, in which there are only upper respiratory tract symptoms and no shortness of breath, are recommended for home isolation, but the decision about whether it is mild will be taken by a doctor. The availability of requisite facility with attached separate bathroom at the residence is necessary for self-isolation.

However, immunocompromised patients like HIV+ people are not recommended for home isolation and can be allowed it only after proper evaluation by a doctor, while elderly patients with comorbidities shall only so allowed after proper evaluation by the treating doctor, and should have a caregiver on 24X7 basis, it was stressed. The caregiver should have link with a hospital for entire duration of home isolation, and the treating physician should be kept updated regarding worsening symptoms. Patients should continue medications for comorbid conditions, and should be hydrated and well rested. Antipyretics should be consumed as per doctor's prescription. Mittal said that monitoring of symptoms is the most important segment in home isolation. Patients should make use of pulse oximeter and should promptly report any deterioration of symptoms. It was also noted that patients must stay in an identified room with attached bathroom which should have cross ventilation.

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CANADA INDIA HEALTHCARE SUMMIT 2021, ORGANIZED BY CANADA INDIA FOUNDATION, TO TAKE PLACE ON MAY 20 & 21

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The ambitious Summit, nearly a year in planning, was conceived originally as a physical event, much like the successful Canada India forums that CIF has organized during the past 12 years. The year-long paralysis of people's mobility, caused by COVID-19, necessitated the Summit to morph into a fully virtual event. Speakers from many parts of Canada, India and even USA will be coming together on a Zoom conferencing platform to address the themes of Pandemic Response and Initiatives, Biotechnology and Artificial Intelligence and their contributions to overcome COVID-19.

This will be the third Canada India Healthcare Summit that CIF will be organizing, coming after its earlier initiatives in 2015 in Toronto and in New Delhi in 2017.

"We are pleased to introduce a first of its kind initiative at the Summit", said Dr. Lakshmanan, the Summit Chair, "The CIF Canada India Healthcare Innovation Awards will recognize young innovative healthcare entrepreneurs working to address an unmet healthcare need". "Five Awards, each with a cash prize of \$5,000 will be presented", he added.

"CIF pioneered the organization of high-level thematic Canada India Forums with a public policy focus.", said Satish Thakkar, Chair of Canada India Foundation, "These forums not only facilitated dialogue among public, industry and academic leaders in the respective fields but also resulted in new business initiatives involving, among others, William Osler Health System, Apollo Hospitals Toronto Rehab and Vee Technologies". "This year's summit will again facilitate B2B meetings and we hope that new areas of business collaborations will be found", he added.

"The Indian Consulate in Toronto has been very supportive of CIF in all its past Forums and hold the organization in high regard for its passion and ability to bring Canada and India together", said Ms. Apoorva Srivastava, Consul General of India in Toronto. "The Consulate is very happy to co-organize CIHS 2021, which will showcase India's accomplishments in healthcare-related emerging technologies", she added.

This will be the second time that Toronto Rehab will be partnering with CIF in organizing the Summit. "TRI co-organized the 2015 Forum with CIF and looks forward to connecting with India's technology leaders in healthcare, exploring ground-breaking ways to benefit patients needing rehabilitation," said Dr. Milos Popovic, Director at TRI. "The partnership with CIF has been very beneficial for TRI and we are particularly excited this year to join hands with CIF again", he added.

A strong delegation of healthcare industry leaders and professionals from India will be participating in CIHS 2021, courtesy of FICCI, India's leading organization of private sector companies. "FICCI is delighted to accept the invitation of the organizers to lead the Indian delegation", said Dr. Alok



DR. KRISHNA ELLA



DR. SRINATH REDDY

Roy, Chair- FICCI Health Services Committee & Chairman, Medica Group of Hospitals "We hope that the forum will result in healthcare solution providers from the two countries to collaborate using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for mutual benefit", he added.

"More than 60 speakers of international renown will be addressing the challenges of COVID-19 and initiatives to overcome the virus, during Keynote, Plenary and Breakout sessions for over 8 hours spanning 2 days", Dr. Arun Chockalingam Chair of Technical Committee said. "They include Dr. Krishna Ella, whose company developed COVAXIN, India's first COVID-19 vaccine, Dr. Srinath Reddy, President of the Public Health Foundation of India, Dr. Naresh Trehan, Chairman of the Medanta Group of Hospitals and many others", he added. While the Summit takes place on May 20-21, it has been preceded by 3 webinars during February-April, said, with ideas discussed during the webinars consolidated into 3 white papers to be presented at the Summit.

A report of the Summit, incorporating healthcare policy recommendations, will be presented to both governments as well as other stakeholders. Proceedings of the Summit will also be published in a prestigious healthcare journal. Canada India Foundation is a public policy organization, formed to promote stronger relations between Canada and India by emphasizing common public policy perspectives. University Health Network is Canada's most prominent healthcare network, with the largest research-based hospital program in Canada and including the Toronto Rehab Institute, global leaders in research on physical rehabilitation. FICCI is India's leading organization representing the private sector companies involved in commerce and industries. Registration for the Summit is free of charge and can be done at the Summit website www.canadaindiahealthcaresummit.org. Details about the speakers can be accessed by following the Summit's Facebook and Twitter pages (@CIHS_2021)

Please contact Dr. V.I. Lakshmanan (llakshmanan@processortech.com), Mr. Satish Thakkar (CIF) (satish@efgcanada.ca), Dr. Milos Popovic (TRI) (milos.popovic@uhn.ca) or Ms. Sarita Chandra (sarita.chandra@ficci.com) for more information.

CANADA'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE REACHES 8.1%

OTTAWA, (IANS) The Canadian unemployment rate rose 0.6 percentage point to 8.1 percent in April from March 2021 as public health measures against the Covid-19 pandemic were tightened. In a statement on Friday, Statistics Canada on Friday said that employment decreased by 207,000, down 1.1 per cent in April as full-time work lost 129,000 jobs, down 0.8 per cent and part-time work was reduced by 78,000 jobs, down 2.3 per cent, reports Xinhua news agency.

The number of employed people working less than half their usual hours increased by 288,000, up 27.2 per cent, while the number of Canadians working from home grew by 100,000 to 5.1 million. Total hours worked fell 2.7 per cent in April, driven by declines in educational services, accommodation and food services, as well as retail trade.

The labour under-utilisation rate, which captures the full range of people who are available and want to work, rose 2.3 percentage points to 17 per cent in April.

In April, the number of Canadians unemployed for 27 weeks or more increased to 486,000.

Employment fell in several industries directly impacted by tightened public health restrictions against the pandemic, namely retail trade, accommodation and food services, information, culture and recreation while employment in goods-producing industries was little changed.

The job losses in April nearly wiped out the 303,000 jobs added in March when the economy outpaced expectations.

Statistics Canada said the unemployment rate would have been 10.5 per cent in March, had it included in calculations Canadians who wanted to work but did not search for a job.

Lockdowns and tight restrictions have continued into May and could mean more losses show up when Statistics Canada reveals May's employment report.

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Starting this week, the following groups will be able to book COVID-19 vaccinations:

- Individuals 40+ years old in non-hot spots (May 13)
- Individuals with at-risk health conditions (May 11)
- Group Two of workers who cannot work from home (May 11)



ONTARIO'S COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENT SCHEDULE FOR MAY 10'S WEEK (CHRISTINE ELLIOT/ TWITTER).

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Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE: IMMIGRATION MINISTER MARCO MENDICINO ANNOUNCES NEW PATHWAY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY FOR 90,000 ESSENTIAL WORKERS & INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES

POOJA LUTHRA

Recently, Canada announced an innovative pathway to permanent residency for over 90,000 essential workers & international graduates. Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, openly discusses the announcement and plans to help immigrants in an exclusive interview with Y Media Group Editor and CEO, Yudhvir Jaswal.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Could you please elaborate a little about the announcement you made regarding permanent residency to 90,000 essential workers and international graduates?

Minister Marco Mendicino: Our government believes that we will create jobs and growth, and long-term prosperity by setting ambitious immigration targets. This past year has been challenging, and there's no question about it. We are in the third wave at the moment, but more vaccines are coming in sooner. For everybody to get vaccinated as quickly as possible, the Government of Canada is working very hard to increase the speed of delivery. I'm very excited about this announcement as it represents a faster and broader pathway to permanent residency for essential workers and recent international students who are graduated in Canada. We're talking about people who possess a range of skills in health and people who move our goods and services right across the country. By giving them a pathway to permanent residency, we're guaranteeing and strengthening their job security. We are accelerating our economic recovery and we are driving forward with a path to prosperity for all Canadians.

The programme will open officially at the beginning of May. There will be an allocation of up to 90,000 applicants, representing a large percentage of our overall economic immigration plan for this year, and they will be accepted under it. The pathway falls into three streams. The first 20,000 space is dedicated to the healthcare stream in which we're talking about doctors, nurses, support workers who work to support our hospitals and our long-term care homes. It will also include some caregivers. The second stream will be open to other essential workers who work to keep our economy moving forward, and there will be 30,000 dedicated spaces under this particular stream. In the third stream, we have set aside 40,000 spaces for recent international graduates. These are young, talented and hungry individuals who want to roll up their sleeves and start to build tomorrow's economy. We hope to start processing these applications to welcome them as part of our 2021 immigration plan this year.

Yudhvir Jaswal: I would like to know when can we welcome people from outside Canada to help business organizations grow here are?

Minister Marco Mendicino: One of the things that I want to emphasize is that we're providing corridors of opportunity for newcomers who possess a range of skills through our immigration policies, but we're also open for business. We want companies to come and start their new projects here. One way we're doing that is by having a start-up visa programme, which is designed to allow people with the next big idea to start their business in Canada. That's one corridor that has been very successful in the past. We also have the global skills strategy, which has helped very competitively,

high tech and blue-chip businesses to attract people with high education and high skills to come quickly. Even though the pandemic has caused disruption, we see that the processing times for both pathways come down dramatically. That is because we're investing in additional people. We've hired 62 new IRCC officers in the last number of months and are making these processes digital. We're trying to move online as quickly as possible as part of the overall transformation of our immigration system. I think that is also a strong signal to businesses, both here and abroad, that we want you to invest in Canada, and we want you to hire people in Canada to grow our economy.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Is there a timeline for foreign workers who could come on a work permit after being sponsored by companies in Canada?

Minister Marco Mendicino: We've had to introduce health protocols at the border, and those measures have been very effective at keeping COVID-19 out in terms of international traveller transmission. We have still kept open pathways for temporary workers and international students. I know that healthcare, agricultural, and film sectors are critical areas to the community. We still have open corridors that do allow temporary workers to come in. We're still amid this pandemic; we have a third wave, so we've got to be cautious. When we are ready to revisit those measures, we will be positioned to recover as quickly as possible. Immigration goes hand in glove with the work that we are doing on the economic file. So without question, a temporary worker is an integral part of our strategy.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Are we ready to reopen borders to visitors?

Minister Marco Mendicino: We have kept some visitor pathways open during the pandemic, but primarily for essential workers. We have made some exemptions for families. In some cases where people have to come to take care of somebody who's very ill under compassionate circumstances, we do have some pathways, but they are pretty restricted. We are not yet ready to reopen the border to visitors. But at the same time, we are working with our colleagues in the health ministry and public safety to make sure that Canada is positioned to be ready. The airline and tourism sectors of the economy had been hit hardest by the virus. Visitors are an essential part of the economy. But it is vital that we still take the best advice that we are getting from Health Canada right now.

Yudhvir Jaswal: Any plans you want to indicate this year or the coming years in the Immigration Department?

Minister Marco Mendicino: We've already done a lot, but we're not done yet. I continue to advance an ambitious agenda by introducing this new pathway measure because it will help us fulfil our goals and targets. I believe it is crucial not only for our economy but also it will help us achieve our destiny as a country which is to grow. The only way that we can do that is through our people. I think it's imperative that we protect the promise of providing opportunity and rewarding hard work to Canadians.



FEDERAL GOVT. INVESTS \$12B IN PUBLIC TRANSIT PROJECTS IN GTHA

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This once-in-a-generation public transit investment in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), which represents 20% of Canada's population and growing, has the third highest transit system ridership in North America. When complete, 6 million people across the GTA will have better access to Toronto services, with public transit routes covering 1,200 kilometres. And with light rail vehicles producing near zero emissions, it is critical to reducing emissions in the transportation sector and driving Canada to net zero emissions by 2050. "Public transit is at the heart of a clean, inclusive recovery. Today we are making the largest investment in public transit in the GTA's history - helping to kickstart our economy and create tens of thousands of jobs as part of the Government's plan to create one million jobs. It will help get cars off the road, and the residents of Canada's largest community, especially essential workers, women, immigrants and youth, get around in faster, cleaner and cheaper ways. And it will help drive Canada to a net zero emissions future. This historic investment is good for the city, the region and for Canada," said Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

These investments are a key part of our plan to kickstart our economy and create one million jobs. These projects will also create opportunities for businesses across the GTA and Canada, which is good for the region, the province and for Canada.

Toronto's Mayor John Tory said, "Transit expansion is critical to the future of our city. It ensures that we are supporting economic recovery post-pandemic, will help create a greener future and represents a substantial contribution to equitable access to our city, jobs, education and much more."

The federal government understands that every taxpayer dollar invested in public transit must have multiple benefits including creating good jobs, building more equitable and inclusive communities, and tackling climate change. That is why the federal government's funding is dependent on satisfying conditions including demonstrating how the investments will drive down emissions and build resilience, substantive environmental reviews, ensuring affordable housing along the line, incorporating accessibility, mitigating local concerns, maximizing benefits for communities including through Community Benefit Agreements, and meeting employment thresholds for underrepresented communities including Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and women.

"Extending the Yonge Line from Finch to Langstaff, will connect our communities across York Region—from students and seniors, to workers and businesses. This is good news for all of Markham, Thornhill, and the region, and will unlock opportunities for years to come. Our government is ready to get shovels in the ground, create jobs and generate inclusive, sustainable growth," said Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade and Member of Parliament for Markham—Thornhill.

28-YEAR-OLD KARMAN GREWAL SHOT DEAD AT VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, SUSPECTS FIRED AT POLICE



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"A 28-year-old man was shot, he succumbed to his injuries. This man is known to the police. We believe this shooting is related to this ongoing gang conflict we've seen throughout the region lately," he added. After the shooting, an SUV departed the area with at least two more people inside, Jang told reporters. The vehicle was found about 17 miles from the scene of the shooting. Jung added that the police are still searching for one or more suspects. About an hour later, a statement on the YVR airport's Twitter handle said: "We can confirm the situation has been contained at YVR. The airport is open and safe. Flights are operating. "We will release more info as it becomes available..."



Ontario Pauses Administration of AstraZeneca Vaccine

TORONTO — Today, Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, issued the following statement on the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the province:

"Effective today, Ontario will be pausing the rollout and administration of first doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine at this time. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution due to an observed increase in the rare blood clotting condition, known as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT), linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine. As of May 8, 651,012 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were administered with a rate of VITT of 0.9 per 100,000 doses administered. 202,873 doses of the COVISHIELD vaccine were administered with a rate of VITT of 1 per 100,000 doses administered. However, over the last few days, there have been increased reports of VITT, with a rate of 1.7 per 100,000 doses administered. In collaboration with health experts at Public Health Ontario, the Science Advisory Table and our federal, provincial and territorial partners, we are reviewing the data to consider options for the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for second doses and more broadly moving forward.

Data from the UK points to a much-reduced risk of VITT in second doses of AstraZeneca, and we look forward to providing more guidance in advance of people's needing to receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The decision to pause is also based on the increased and reliable supply of the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines and the downward trend in cases. We are also seeing early promising results of administering two doses of different vaccines and have asked the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to provide direction on the interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines.

Based on the much higher risks of COVID-19 infection recently observed in Ontario including hospitalization, serious illness and death, we maintain that those who received their first dose with the AstraZeneca vaccine did absolutely the right thing to prevent illness, and to protect their families, loved ones and communities. The health and safety of Ontarians remain our top priority. Ontarians are encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible. The right thing to do to protect yourself and those around you is to get vaccinated with the vaccine you were eligible to receive."

**FEDERAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT
GTA TRANSIT EXPANSION**

\$10.7 BILLION

INVESTMENT IN MAJOR TRANSIT LINES HERE IN TORONTO

<p>TRANSIT LINES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● THE ONTARIO LINE ● THE BLOOR-DANFORTH SUBWAY EXTENSION FURTHER INTO SCARBOROUGH ● THE EGLINTON WEST LRT ● THE YONGE NORTH EXTENSION 	<p>THE COMBINED SUBWAY PROJECTS WILL SUPPORT MORE THAN 13,000 JOBS DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD</p> <p>BY 2041, WILL HAVE A TOTAL DAILY RIDERSHIP OF MORE THAN 620,000 WITH ALMOST 400,000 PEOPLE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF A NEW TRANSIT STATION</p>
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CANADA INVESTS \$10.7 BILLION IN GTA TRANSIT EXPANSION (JOHN TORY/ TWITTER)

Vaccine Update

40%

of Canadians have received at least 1 dose

AROUND 40% CANADIANS RECEIVED ONE JAB OF VACCINE (ANITA ANAND/ TWITTER)



PEEL IS ON TRACK TO VACCINATE 75 PER CENT OF THE ELIGIBLE POPULATION WITH A FIRST DOSE.

Peel launches vaccine clinic, Doses After Dark, to administer vaccines for 32-hours straight, day & night, between May 15 & 16

BRAMPTON, ON: For greater convenience in booking for our residents (and to have a little fun!), the Region of Peel will be running a "Doses After Dark" 32-hour marathon clinic at the International Centre in Mississauga this weekend. The clinic will run from 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 15 around the clock to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 16. This will be like no other Peel clinic held so far. We want to celebrate the amazing progress of the vaccine rollout in our region to date by vaccinating more people in a 32-hour period than has been done before. In the span of 32 hours, more than 7,600 doses will be given, including over 5,000 delivered during the overnight hours. This will be the most vaccines administered at a single clinic since the start of our campaign. Peel residents will be able to book appointments starting Tuesday, May 11 for "Doses After Dark" – anyone over 18 can help crush COVID by filling these spots in our community effort to push us closer to our goal of 75% first doses.

SPECIAL GUESTS

We are excited to invite some of the most notable doctors and vaccine administrators in the Peel Region to join us at this clinic. Keep your eyes open for notable greeters and line monitors as well, as we roll

out the red carpet for our overnighters!

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Joining us under the stars? We have some fun surprises and giveaways planned to make sure that everyone coming to the clinic this weekend has a great experience.

SHOT CLOCK

Look out for the 32-hour shot clock that will be running at the clinic so we can keep track of how many vaccines are administered.

Vaccine Progress in Peel

As of May 7, a total of 638,602 vaccine doses have been administered in Peel. We expect to administer an additional 150,000 doses in the coming week alone. Peel has administered the first dose to 261,128 individuals, and 26,474 have been fully vaccinated (two doses). As of May 6, 24% of adults aged 18 and older who live in Peel have received at least one vaccine dose.

I'm calling on all our residents 18+ to help fill these overnight spots at "Doses After Dark!" Let's do everything we can, together, to keep the momentum going in Peel and reach our goal of 75% first dose coverage in our community even sooner than previously anticipated. Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health

NEW COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC OPENS AT CENTURY GARDENS RECREATION CENTRE ON MAY 11



BRAMPTON – William Osler Health System (Osler) is pleased to announce the opening of a new COVID-19 vaccine clinic on Tuesday, May 11 at Century Gardens Recreation Centre (Century Gardens). The new clinic will help support the vaccine rollout in the Brampton community which has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Located at 360 Vodden Street East, the Century Gardens Vaccine Clinic has ample parking and is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., 7 days a week. Eligible Peel residents can book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment at Century Gardens, or at Osler's other vaccine clinics, by phone or online through Osler's website.

ONTARIO'S HIGH-RISK HEALTH CARE WORKERS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SECOND DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINE AT SHORTENED INTERVAL

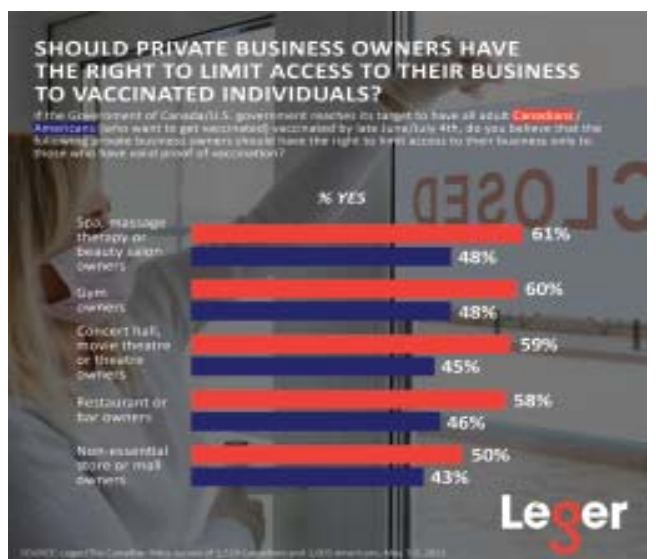
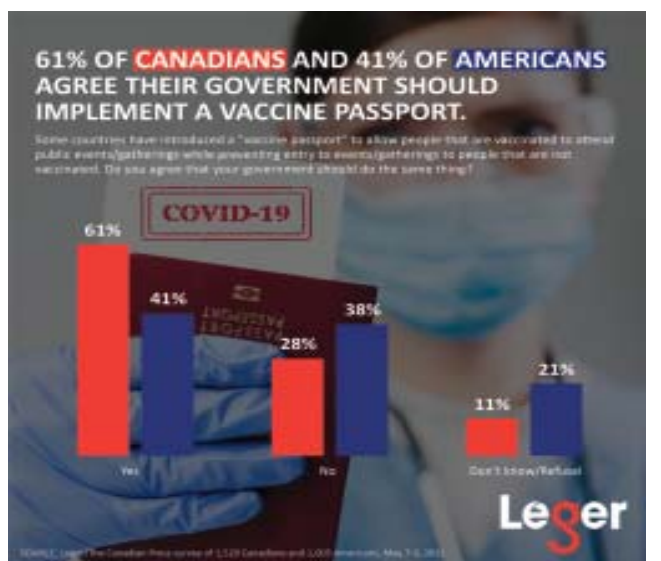
The Ontario government is adding high-risk health care workers to the list of those eligible to receive their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine earlier than the extended four-month interval.

Eligibility for booking will begin by the end of the week of May 10, 2021 and booking details will be provided in the coming days.

High-risk health care workers who will be eligible for the shortened second-dose interval are:

- * All hospital and acute care staff in frontline roles with COVID-19 patients and/or with a high-risk of exposure to COVID-19, including nurses and personal support workers and those performing aerosol-generating procedures:
 - o Critical Care Units
 - o Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Departments
 - o COVID-19 Medical Units
 - o Code Blue Teams, rapid response teams
 - o General internal medicine and other specialists involved in the direct care of COVID-19 positive patients
- " All patient-facing health care workers involved in the COVID-19 response:
 - o COVID-19 Specimen Collection Centers (e.g., Assessment centers, community COVID-19 testing locations)
 - o Teams supporting outbreak response (e.g., IPAC teams supporting outbreak management, inspectors in the patient environment, redeployed health care workers supporting outbreaks or staffing crisis in congregate living settings)
 - o COVID-19 vaccine clinics and mobile immunization teams

61% OF CANADIANS, 41% OF AMERICANS AGREE THEIR GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMPLEMENT VACCINE PASSPORT: LEGER



- * 76% of Canadians and 58% of Americans would like to receive a vaccine passport after they have been vaccinated.
- * 17% of Canadians and 36% of Americans think governments should lift all COVID-19-related restrictions right now.
- * If their governments achieve their vaccination goals, approximately three-in-five or fewer Canadians and fewer than half of Americans think that various private business owners should have the right to limit access to their business to people who have a valid proof of vaccination.
- * This web survey was conducted from May 7, 2021, to May 9, 2021, with 1,529 Canadians and 1,003 Americans, 18 years of age or older, randomly recruited from LEO's online panel.

19-YR-OLD INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HARMANJOT SINGH BHATTAL SHOT DEAD

UNCLE, GAMDUR SINGH BRAR, CHARGED WITH MURDER

TORONTO, (IANS) A 43-year-old man has been charged with shooting dead his 19-year-old nephew and attempted murder of his wife. Gamdur Singh Brar, who shot dead his nephew Harmanjot Singh Bhattal and seriously injured his wife Satvir Kaur Brar in Edmonton at the weekend, has been charged with first-degree murder and attempted murder.

The victim Harmanjot Singh Bhattal came to Canada in December 2018 on a study visa from Bhattal village of Barnala district in Punjab. The only son of his parents, Bhattal was studying at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and was staying with his maternal aunt.

The accused reportedly had a fight with his wife. He consequently opened fire at the vehicle in which his wife was travelling with Bhattal. After injuring Bhattal and Satvir, Gamdur fled from the spot. The incident took place in Sherwood Park area of Edmonton just after 6.30 a.m. on Friday. Soon after, officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reached. Bhattal succumbed to gunshot wounds before paramedics could reach the spot. The woman was rushed to hospital where she remains critical. The accused wanted to kill her, but his 19-year-old nephew became the victim. The police had later arrested the accused and was presented before the court where he was denied bail. The next hearing of the case is scheduled on June 12. Meanwhile, a 'gofundme' campaign has been launched to raise money to send the body of Bhattal to India.



SCARBOROUGH COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC

Punjabi Community Pop-up Clinic

Get your COVID-19 Vaccine:

Saturday, May 15
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Gursikh Sabha Canada
(905 Middlefield Road)

Who's eligible to get vaccinated:
18+ years of age (born in or before 2003) living in Scarborough

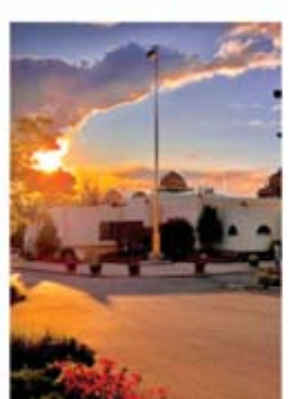
- Must provide proof of residency in Scarborough
- Must provide a form of ID (such as a health card or government-issued ID, if you have one)

Spaces are limited for this pop-up event! HOW TO BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Go to booking site and click "Choose date" for Mobile Clinic B
- Select Saturday, May 15 in the calendar
- Click on "Choose time" and select your preferred appointment slot
- Complete form and confirm your booking

www.tinyurl.com/GursikhSabha

Not able to attend our pop-up clinic? You can book an appointment at our Scarborough COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic locations. Please visit www.ScarbVaccine.ca



RESIDENTS 18+ BOOK COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENT AT PUNJABI COMMUNITY POP-UP CLINIC IN SCARBOROUGH



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NO MORE SMOKE, GREASE OR ODOURS



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Voltage : 120V 60Hz
Horizontal Ducting: 3-1/8" x 10"
Vertical Ducting : 6" Diameter
Revolutions : 1700 RPM
Wind Exhaust : 520-680 CFM
White, Black & Stainless Steel

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- Rear oil collectors Grease-free inner parts Patented twin oil trapping cones with filters Ultra quiet operation (58 dBA)
- Front steam baffle Each blower is controlled independently Smoke and grease baffle Six vents
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R8168M (Micro)



Model: R-8168M
DIMENSION: 29 3/4" x 21" X 6" H
Wind Exhaust: 250-680 CFM
White or Stainless Steel

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- Front steam baffle
- Maximum power with intelligent sensor
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- One year warranty on electronic switch
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- Two mode lighting (R8168M model only)
- ODOR FREE - Twin motor with high CFM

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TWIN MOTOR, HIGH CFM

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- Ducting: 3-1/8" x 10" Vertical Ducting: 6" Diameter
- Revolutions: 1700 RPM Wind Exhaust: 520-680 CFM Weight (lbs): 29.70 - 31.90 Illum.: 60W Max Power

White, Black & Stainless Steel

STANDARD FEATURES

- Twin centrifugal turbo fans
- Teflon-coated non-stick fan blades
- Rear oil collectors
- Grease-free inner parts
- Patented twin oil trapping cones with filters
- Smoke and grease baffle

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Congress defers elections to choose new party chief due to COVID-19 crisis

Owing to the COVID-19 crisis across the country, Congress on Monday decided to temporarily defer organizational elections for electing a new party chief. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), which had a meeting over the results of recent assembly polls, adopted a resolution and said energies of party workers should be channelized towards saving every life and helping every coronavirus-affected person. The discussion was held during the meeting on the election process for the party's new president and senior leaders like Ashok Gehlot, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma said that there was no need for elections at this time due to the situation created by COVID-19. The resolution said CWC considered the election schedule for electing the AICC president as proposed by the Central Election Authority of the party. "In view of the nationwide emergent conditions prevailing on account of unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, the CWC was unanimous that all our energies should be channelized towards saving every life and helping every COVID-affected person. CWC, therefore, unanimously resolved to defer the elections temporarily in the midst of these challenging times," it said. In her opening remarks, Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi said

that the COVID-19 situation has become "even more catastrophic" and "governance failures have become even more stark" in nearly four weeks since the last CWC meeting in April. She alleged that scientific advice "has been willfully ignored" and the country "is paying a horrendous price for the Modi government's neglect of the pandemic, indeed its willful patronage of super-spreader events that were allowed for partisan gains". "A far deadlier second wave has now overwhelmed us. Some scientists have now cautioned about a third wave overtaking us soon. Some states have already announced a complete lockdown. The public health system across the country has all but collapsed. Vaccination coverage is woefully short of need and not expanding at the rate at which it must. The Modi government has abdicated its responsibility. It has obliged the states to bear the cost of vaccinating the hundreds of millions in the 18 to 45 age group," she said. Gandhi said every expert has said that it would have made more sense and it would have been financially more equitable for the Centre to bear the costs of vaccination. "But we know the Modi government has other priorities, pursuing grandiose projects against the force of public opinion and the face of widespread criticism.



BJP STRONGMAN HIMANTA BISWA SARMA TAKES CHARGE AS 15TH ASSAM CM.

PAY PANEL RECOMMENDS TWO-FOLD SALARY HIKE FOR PUNJAB EMPLOYEES



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) In a major bonanza for government employees, the Sixth Pay Commission of the Punjab government has recommended an over two-fold increase in the salaries of all employees, with an increase in minimum pay from Rs 6,950 to Rs 18,000 per month, with retrospective effect from January 1, 2016.

The commission has suggested major hikes in salary and other benefits, and also a substantial increase in allowances for government employees.


Salaries are in for a 2.59 times increase over the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations.

The report, which was submitted to Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh recently has been sent to the Finance Department for detailed study and directions for placing it before the Cabinet this month for further action.

The report, as per the government's commitment in the Vidhan Sabha, is to be implemented from July 1 this year.


Incidentally, the report comes at a time when the state's economy is already deeply stressed and the financial situation is precarious amid Covid, with taxes not going up and even GST compensation slated to end from next year.

The Finance Department will examine the various implications before submitting the report to the Cabinet for further action. According to a spokesperson for the CM's office, a significant hike has been proposed in the report in pensions and DA, while fixed medical allowance and death-cum-retirement gratuity are recommended to be doubled under the scheme suggested by the Sixth Pay Commission. While fixed medical allowance has been recommended to be doubled to Rs 1,000 per month for employees as well as pensioners uniformly, the maximum limit of death-cum-retirement gratuity is proposed to be enhanced from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh. Enhancement in ex-gratia grant rates in the case of the death of a government employee, as also in the case of death in harness directly attributable to the duty performed is another key recommendation aimed at benefiting the employees. This is significant in view of the prevailing pandemic crisis, where a large number of government employees are working as frontline workers, with many of them losing their lives in the line of duty. The Commission has also suggested doubling of design allowance to engineering staff and kit maintenance allowance to police personnel, with mobile allowance enhancement varying from Rs 375 to Rs 750. While implementation of the recommendations relating to pay and pension has been recommended from January 1, 2016, those relating to allowances are recommended from the date of notification by the government.





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MUBARAK



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Member Parliament Brampton Centre
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Brampton, On L6W 3E7
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RAMESH SANGHA, M.P.
Brampton Centre



TWO DOZEN BODIES FOUND ON GANGA BANKS IN UP'S GHAZIPUR

PATNA/GHAZIPUR (UP), (IANS) After Bihar's Buxar, around two dozen bodies were found on the banks of the Ganga at adjoining Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday.

A.K. Pandey, the SHO of Gahmar police station in Ghazipur, told IANS that the bodies were found in a decomposed stage on the bank of the Ganga river.

"Preliminary investigation reveals that the dead bodies could be 18 to 20 days old. There were 23 dead bodies recovered from the river and some of the dead bodies were partially cremated and then thrown into the river.

"Officials including SDM-rank officers visited the area to assess the situation. We have recovered the dead bodies and disposed of them under the guidelines," he added.

Pandey said that following the incident, they have intensified river patrolling through boats and also deployed chowkidars (watchmen) in the areas located on the bank of Ganga river to keep an eye on wrongdoings.

"We have also received complaints about several persons partially cremating dead bodies and throwing them into the Ganga. The District Magistrate has deployed chowkidars at cremation ghats of the Ganga," he said.

MORE PUNJAB MINISTERS JOIN CHORUS FOR ACTION AGAINST SIDHU

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Protesting strongly against his "unwarranted beligerence" against Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, more Punjab ministers on Wednesday joined the state Congress leaders seeking strong disciplinary action by the party high command against legislator Navjot Sidhu. Sidhu's "provocative and targeted attacks on Amarinder Singh over the past several days were an invitation for disaster" for the Congress, said ministers Balbir Sidhu, Vijay Inder Singla, Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar, not ruling out "collusion" between Sidhu and state opposition parties, such as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It was quite possible, they claimed, that Sidhu's targeted attacks on the Chief Minister were instigated by the AAP or BJP leaders to create problems in the Punjab Congress to further their electoral agenda in the state. "The manner in which Sidhu had launched the offensive against the state government, particularly Captain Amarinder, suggested a conspiracy against the Chief Minister," they added in a hard-hitting joint statement, two days after three of their colleagues had also launched a counter-offensive against Sidhu.

These four ministers also said his verbal assaults on Amarinder Singh on sacrilege and other issues amounted to "open rebellion" against the party. Terming Sidhu's "blatant defiance" an "act of total indiscipline", the ministers said such anti-party activities cannot be tolerated by any political establishment, and more so in a state headed for elections.

"He should be immediately suspended, if not expelled, as his continued presence in Punjab Congress was creating a mess in the party's state unit and diverting its attention from the more important task of gearing up

for the polls," they added. Citing Sidhu's track record of controversial statements, the ministers said the ex-cricketer evidently seemed, as usual, to be battling for himself, and was totally lacking in team spirit -- a trait that he had exposed in the political arena more than once.

SUSPENDED, MURDER-ACCUSED MUMBAI COP SACHIN VAZE SACKED

MUMBAI, (IANS) The Maharashtra government on Tuesday dismissed controversial suspended Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze - involved in the twin cases of planting a car outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's home and the murder of its owner Mansukh Hiran - from the police force. "Currently in judicial custody, API Vaze, 49, who handled some of the biggest investigations in the city, was attached as the in-charge of the Crime Intelligence Unit of Mumbai Police Crime Branch." "The dismissal orders were issued by Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale later on Tuesday evening sacking Vaze who was transferred and later arrested by the National Investigation Agency in March 13 for the two sensitive cases." "The order was issued today under the provisions of Section 311 (2) (B) of Constitution of India by the Commissioner of Police, Greater Mumbai," a Mumbai Police statement said.



"He is nothing but a trouble-maker whose contribution to the Congress and the state government in Punjab in all these years has been virtually nil," the ministers said, questioning the rationale behind allowing him to continue in the Congress at a time when the party was preparing for the next Assembly elections and the state government was battling an unprecedented Covid crisis. Citing Amarinder Singh's open challenge to Sidhu to contest against him from Patiala instead of raving and ranting against him publicly, the ministers said the MLA should quit the Congress and pit his self-proclaimed might against that of the Chief Minister if he really believed in his own political prowess.

"He is nothing but a trouble-maker whose contribution to the Congress and the state government in Punjab in all these years has been virtually nil," the ministers said, questioning the rationale behind allowing him to continue in the Congress at a time when the party was preparing for the next Assembly elections and the state government was battling an unprecedented Covid crisis. Citing Amarinder Singh's open challenge to Sidhu to contest against him from Patiala instead of raving and ranting against him publicly, the ministers said the MLA should quit the Congress and pit his self-proclaimed might against that of the Chief Minister if he really believed in his own political prowess.

DELHI POLICE LOOKOUT NOTICE FOR OLYMPIC MEDALLIST WRESTLER SUSHIL



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Delhi Police have issued a "lookout notice" for well-known wrestler Sushil Kumar, a double Olympic medallist, connected to the murder of a former junior international wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium in north-west Delhi. According to Delhi Police, Sushil is absconding.

Delhi Police are looking for Sushil, employed with the India Railways, as he is posted as an Officer on Special Duty at Chhatrasal Stadium, with the sports wing of the Delhi Education sports department. "A lookout notice has been issued for Sushil Kumar," Dr. Guripal Singh Sidhu, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West Delhi), told IANS. He said he is currently on leave, and that he cannot say anything more on the issue.

Last week, during a brawl at Chhatrasal Stadium, former international Greco Roman wrestler Sagar Dhankar, 23, died after being beaten by a group of wrestlers. A couple of people sustained injuries and were admitted to a hospital.

Delhi Police have recorded the statements of some people who have made certain allegations against Sushil.

JAILED SACHA SAUDA CHIEF HOSPITALISED IN HARYANA



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Jailed Dera Sacha Sauda sect chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim, who is undergoing an imprisonment in Rohtak jail of Haryana, was admitted to a hospital on Wednesday after he complained of dizziness. "The jailed Dera head, who has been sentenced for the rape of two of his disciples and murder of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati, was taken to the PGIMS here under tight police security." "Doctors told IANS that the sect chief has been suffering from hypertension and diabetes and complaining of dizziness." "Earlier, he was examined by doctors in the prison. Later, he was shifted to the hospital where he was kept under observation.

'HIGH TIME' FOR MRP OF OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS TO STOP BLACK-MARKETING: DELHI HC

NEW DELHI, (IANS) In a bid to stop black-marketing of oxygen concentrators and hoarding other Covid-related medical equipment, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday told the Centre to fix their maximum retail price (MRP) immediately. "A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli noted that it is "high time" that the government fixes MRP of oxygen concentrators and medical equipment required for treatment of Covid-19 patients. The observations were made by the court while issuing contempt notices to all persons named in the FIRs lodged after May 2 in connection with hoarding and black marketing of medicines and equipment." "The bench said the notices would be served to the persons though the SHO of the local police stations and directed the accused to appear before it virtually on May 19. It said the notices would be served to those persons whose names were added in the 40-odd FIRs during investigation." "On May 2, the High Court, in its order, had said individuals, booked for black-marketing and hoarding should be brought before it and the court will take contempt of court action against them. Advocate Sanjeev Sagar submitted before the High Court that in the hearings in connection with these FIRs in the trial court, the prosecutor appeared to be unaware of May 2 order of this bench to book those who are involved in hoarding and black-marketing." "The bench was informed that a trial court had said that offences cannot be "made up" against such individuals.

CHANDIGARH EXTENDS CURFEW BY ANOTHER WEEK



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Amidst the continuous spike in Covid-19 cases in Chandigarh, the Union Territory administration on Monday decided to extend the week-old curfew by another week.

Non-essential shops will continue to be closed. The daily night curfew from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. will be implemented. The only daytime movement will be allowed. However, the residents are advised to avoid non-essential travel. While morning walkers will be allowed from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. in parks, the famed Sukhna Lake will remain closed for the public.

The decisions in this regard were taken at a review meeting chaired by Chandigarh Administrator V.P. Singh Badnore here.

It was decided that the maximum number of guests will be 20 in marriages. For this permission from the Deputy Commissioner is a must. For the funeral, the number will be restricted to 10 with no permission. At present Chandigarh has 8,511 active cases, while nearby Panchkula in Haryana has 2,953 cases and Mohali in Punjab has 10,693 cases. Badnore thanked the Army's Western Command for setting up a 100-bed Covid hospital in the city for civilians. He advised the army authorities to arrange for oxygen concentrators and ventilators.

India beats US, China in fastest Covid inoculation; 17 Cr in 114 days

NEW DELHI, (IANS) India has achieved the landmark of being the fastest country globally to administer 17 crore Covid-19 vaccines in the least number of days, defeating the US and China, the second and third runners-up respectively.

India achieved the goal in 114 days, while the US touched the figure in 115 days and China took 119 days for reaching the same landmark.

A total of 17,01,76,603 vaccine doses have been administered through 24,70,799 sessions, as per the provisional report till 7 a.m. on Monday. These include 95,47,102 Healthcare Workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose and 64,71,385 HCWs who have taken the second dose. A total of 1,39,72,612 Frontline Workers (FLWs) have also received the first dose while 77,55,283 have got the second dose of the vaccine.

A total of 20,31,854 beneficiaries under the 18-45 age group have so far received the first dose of vaccine. The people aged between 45 and 60 years included 5,51,79,217 first dose beneficiaries and 65,61,851 who got their second dose. A total of 5,36,74,082 first dose beneficiaries are in the age group more than 60 years and 1,49,83,217 of them have received the second dose.

A total of 2,46,269 beneficiaries of the age group 18-44 years received their first dose of Covid vaccine on Sunday and cumulatively 20,31,854 across 30 states and UTs during the last 24 hours.

As of Day-114 of the vaccination drive (9th May 2021), 6,89,652 vaccine doses were given. Across 5,685 sessions, 4,05,325 beneficiaries were vaccinated for the first dose and 2,84,327 beneficiaries received their second dose of vaccine.

The information comes at a time when the country registered 3,66,161 new cases in the last 24 hours.

CENTRE TO SUPREME COURT OF INDIA ON VACCINE POLICY: NO JUDICIAL INTERFERENCE NEEDED, TRUST WISDOM OF EXECUTIVE

NEW DELHI, (IANS) In a late-night affidavit submitted in the Supreme Court, the Centre defended its Covid vaccination policy, which has been criticized for differential pricing, shortage of doses, and slow rollout. The Centre added that the price factor will not have any impact on the ultimate beneficiary namely, the eligible person getting the vaccine since all state governments have already declared their policy decision that each state will be administering the vaccine to its residents, free of cost. Urging against judicial interference on its vaccine policy, the Centre's Sunday night affidavit said: "Any overzealous, though well-meaning judicial intervention may lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences, in absence of any expert advice or administrative experience, leaving the doctors, scientists, experts and executive very little room to find innovative solutions on the go." The Centre said it is most respectfully submitted that in the times of such grave and unprecedented crisis which the nation is fighting the disaster of an unprecedented magnitude, the executive functioning of the government needs the discretion to formulate policy in the larger interest. "It is submitted that in view of the unprecedented and peculiar circumstances under which vaccination drive is devised as an executive policy, the wisdom of the executive should be trusted," said the affidavit. The affidavit said with a view to ensuring that there is no disparity between the states inter-se, with active consultation of the Centre with both the manufacturers, the central government has successfully fixed uniform price to be paid by all the State Governments. Defending its vaccine policy, the affidavit said: "The policy is framed as above which is just, equitable, non-discriminatory and based upon an intelligible differentiating factor between the two age groups (45 plus and below)." The affidavit added: "This policy thus, conforms to mandate of Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution of India and is made after several rounds of consultation and discussion with experts, State Government and vaccine manufacturers requiring no interference by this Court as while dealing with a pandemic of this magnitude, the Executive does have a room for free play in the joints, in the larger public interest." The Centre said the policy was framed keeping in mind limited availability of vaccines, the vulnerability of age groups, and the fact that vaccinating the entire country was not possible in one go due to the suddenness of the pandemic, as the prime considerations.



SAUDI ARABIA OFFERS INTERVENTION IN REDUCING INDO-PAK TENSIONS

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia has said that his country could play an important role in reducing tensions between the two nuclear-powered arch-rivals India and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud praised India and Pakistan for re-enforcing the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC), terming the move as an "excellent step in the right direction".

It is pertinent to mention that the UAE Ambassador to Washington, Yousef Al Otaiba, had recently confirmed his country's role in de-escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

"Ceasefire would hopefully lead to restoring diplomats and getting the relationship back to a healthy level," said Otaiba.

As the UAE is a close ally of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh's offer for intervention may prove fruitful in further melting down tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

The statement from the Saudi Foreign Minister comes at a time when Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is visiting Saudi Arabia.

Prince Faisal has termed the visit of the Pakistani Premier as "extremely important one in the history of bilateral relations".

"The visit of Imran Khan is extremely important in the history of brotherly relations. We have an excellent visit of the prime minister and many, many subjects have been covered," he said.

It seems that the backdoor channels, activated by Washington and routed through the Arab countries like the UAE and now Saudi Arabia, have been designated to ensure that matters of concern between India and Pakistan are deliberated and discussed to seek a workable solution. Pakistan and India both have maintained rigid positions officially, with Islamabad putting the Kashmir dispute first with the demand of reversal of the unilateral decision taken by the Narendra Modi government to revoke Articles 370 and 35A, thus changing the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating it in to two Union territories - J&K and Ladakh.

India, on the other hand, has maintained that cross-border terrorism is its prime agenda if any talks are to happen between the two countries through official channels. India has also maintained that its decision on Jammu and Kashmir is its internal matter and has refused to discuss it on any platform.

These are the reasons why backdoor channels are being activated as both countries have serious political complications and obligations, which do not allow them to take any forward movement with an open-minded approach towards each other.

But the prime question pertaining to Indo-Pak relations with reference to deliberations through backdoor channels is how both governments will implement major decisions officially.

FDA ALLOWS EMERGENCY USE OF PFIZER-BIONTECH VAX IN ADOLESCENTS

CHICAGO, (IANS) The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Monday authorized the emergency use of Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 in adolescents aged 12-15 for the prevention of Covid-19 vaccine caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

The FDA has determined that Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine has met the statutory criteria to amend the emergency use authorization (EUA) and that the known and potential benefits of this vaccine in individuals 12 years of age and older outweigh the known and potential risks, FDA said in a news release posted on its website on Monday, Xinhua reported.

According to the available safety data uploaded by FDA, 2,260 participants aged 12 through 15 years old enrolled in an ongoing randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial in the US. Of these, 1,131 adolescent participants received the vaccine and 1,129 received a saline placebo. More than half of the participants were followed for safety for at least two months following the second dose. The most commonly reported side effects in the adolescent clinical trial participants, which typically lasted 1-3 days, were pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, chills, muscle pain, fever and joint pain. With the exception of pain at the injection site, more adolescents reported these side effects after the second dose than after the first dose. The side effects in adolescents were consistent with those reported in clinical trial participants 16 years of age and older. FDA further noted that while some individuals experience side



effects following any vaccination, not every individual's experience will be the same and some people may not experience side effects.

The Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine should not be given to anyone with a known history of a severe allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis to any component of the vaccine, FDA stressed. The EUA amendment for the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine was issued to Pfizer Inc. The issuance of a EUA is not an FDA approval (licensure) of a vaccine. The EUA will be effective until the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of the emergency use of drugs and biologics for prevention and treatment of Covid-19 is terminated and may be revised or revoked if it is determined the EUA no longer meets the statutory criteria for issuance or to protect public health or safety, the news release said.

PAKISTAN RAMPS UP RESTRICTIONS FOR EID AL-FITR



ISLAMABAD, (IANS) In its efforts to curb the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pakistani government has ramped up restrictions across the country for the upcoming Eid al-Fitr festival, urging the public to stay at home to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. In a statement on Saturday, the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) which oversees the country's response to the pandemic, said that all businesses, hotels, parks, recreational spots and shopping malls will remain closed until May 16, covering the Eid al-Fitr holidays from May 10 to 15 in Pakistan, reports Xinhua news agency.

Besides, there will also be a complete ban on inter-provincial and inter-city public transport during the May 8-16 period.

Monitoring teams at federal, provincial, and district levels will make sure the implementation of the restrictions.

However, essential services including petrol stations, bakeries and pharmacies will be exempted from the restrictions, said the NCOC. Pakistan has seen record deaths and the highest number of critical cases in recent days. The country reported 4,109 new cases over the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 854,240. A total of 120 people died during the last 24 hours, raising the death toll to 18,797, according to the NCOC. Considering the grim situation in the country, the government has

announced extended Eid al-Fitr holidays and guidelines to curb the rising Covid-19 cases, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said. "We have seen the destruction of coronavirus in our neighbouring country. In Pakistan, we have recently been witnessing a sharp rise in the number of cases and by following standard operating procedures, we will be able to protect ourselves from the virus," Hussain said in his special message to public recently. "In the past, we used to meet our families, relatives and friends to share the happiness of the festival, but on this Eid, we will be staying at home to save ourselves and families," he said, adding that "Stay Home, Stay Safe" will be the motto on the Eid al-Fitr holidays this time. In order to control a mass mobility of travellers, Pakistan has suspended inbound pedestrian movement through land border crossings with neighbouring Iran and Afghanistan from May 5 to 20. Normally, during Eid al-Fitr, massive return of migrant workers and overseas Pakistanis for celebrations are witnessed. The country also slashed inbound international flights by 80 per cent from May 5 to 20 amid high disease prevalence in various parts of the world and the current disease situation in Pakistan with corresponding extreme stress on the critical care system. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 vaccination campaign has also been expedited recently.

UK LOCKDOWN TO BE FURTHER EASED FROM MAY 17: PM



LONDON, (IANS) UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed that the coronavirus lockdown in England will be further lifted from May 17.

Speaking at a press conference in Downing Street on Monday, Johnson announced that from May 17, pubs, bars and restaurants in England will be permitted to open indoors, Xinhua news agency reported.

He added that indoor entertainment will also resume, including cinemas, museums and children's play areas.

Theatres, concert halls, conference centers and sports stadiums can all reopen, with larger events in these settings being able to resume with capacity limits.

All remaining accommodations including hotels, hostels and B&Bs can also reopen, according to Johnson.

Meanwhile, people in England will be allowed to meet outdoors in groups of up to 30 people, and meet indoors in groups of up to six or as two households. People will now "have the choice on whether to socially distance with close family or friends" or not, said the Prime Minister, urging the public to remain cautious about the risks that come with close personal contact such as hugging, which is a way the virus spreads.

"This does not mean we should throw caution to the wind. I must ask you to continue following social distancing, whenever not with friends or family," he said. "We must remain vigilant."

Joining Johnson for the press briefing, England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said the threats posed by the virus were "significantly reduced". But there are still some "residual issues" that need to be kept a close eye on, he said.

Responding to concerns over the virus variant that first emerged in India, Whitty said: "It has gone up very sharply (in Britain), that's a reason to be very careful about it."

"With all the variants, things can come out of a blue sky... At this point in time, our view is that this is a highly transmissible variant, but it is less likely to be able to escape vaccination, but the data is less properly in there. "We don't know whether this will cause significant problems in the autumn." The UK's overall coronavirus caseload and death toll stood at 4,452,956 and 127,870.

More than 35.4 million people have been given the first jab of the coronavirus vaccine, according to the latest official figures.

INDIAN COVID-19 VARIANT FOUND IN 44 COUNTRIES: WHO



"And WHO has received reports of detections from five additional countries," it said in its weekly epidemiological update on the pandemic.

Outside of India, it said that Britain had reported the largest number of COVID-19 cases caused by the variant.

Earlier this week, the WHO declared B.1.617 — which counts three so-called sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics — as a "variant of concern".

It was therefore added to the list containing three other variants of COVID-19 — those first detected in Britain, Brazil and South Africa.

The variants are seen as more dangerous than the original version of the virus because they are either being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past some vaccine protections.

'RAPID INCREASE'

The WHO explained on Wednesday that B.1.617 was added to the list because it appears to be transmitting more easily than the original virus, pointing to the "rapid increases in prevalence in multiple countries".

WHO also pointed to "preliminary evidence" that the variant was more resistant to treatment with the monoclonal antibody Bamlanivimab, and also highlighted early lab studies indicating "limited reduction in neutralisation by antibodies".

It stressed, though, that "real-world impacts" on the effectiveness of vaccines against the variant for instance "may be limited".

WHO said the spread of B.1.617, alongside other more transmissible variants, appeared to be one of several factors fuelling India's dramatic surge in new cases and deaths.

India — a country of 1.3 billion people — is the world's second-most infected after the United States with nearly 23 million Covid-19 cases, and is currently recording more than 300,000 new cases and close to 4,000 deaths each day.

The new surge in cases has ravaged major cities, including the capital New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai, pushing hospitals to breaking point and leading to severe shortages in oxygen and beds.

"WHO found that resurgence and acceleration of COVID-19 transmission in India had several potential contributing factors, including increase in the proportion of cases of SARS-CoV-2 variants with potentially increased transmissibility," it said.

It also pointed to "several religious and political mass gathering events which increased social mixing; and, under-use of and reduced adherence to public health and social measures".

"The exact contributions of each of these factors on increased transmission in India are not well understood."

WHO stressed that so far, only 0.1% of positive COVID-19 tests in India had been genetically sequenced and uploaded to the GISAID database to identify the variant in question.

By the end of April, B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 accounted for 21% and 7% respectively of all sequenced samples from India, it said.

In addition, other more contagious variants are also spreading in the country, including B.1.1.7, which was first detected in Britain.



Give India resources to make vaccines, says Dr. Fauci

NEW YORK, (IANS) Anthony Fauci, the top US expert on Covid-19, has called on countries to provide India with resources to make its own vaccines or donate vaccines.

"India is the largest vaccine-producing country in the world. They've got to get their resources — not only from within but also from without and that's the reason why other countries need to chip in to be able to get either supplies for the Indians to make their own vaccines or to get vaccines donated," he told a TV interviewer on Sunday.

"One of the ways to do that is to have the big companies that have the capability of making vaccines to really scale up in a great way to get literally hundreds of millions of doses to be able to get to them," he said. He said that the "endgame" in fighting the pandemic is vaccinating everyone.

At the same time, he said that all of India should "shut down", as some states have done.

Vaccines are one of the ways of "breaking the transmission", but others "like shutting down the government" should be undertaken, Fauci said. "I have advised them in the past that you really need to do that. You've got to shut down. I believe several of the Indian states have already done that but you need to break the chain of transmission," he said.

Fauci made the observations in an interview on ABC TV with George Stephanopoulos, who was former President Bill Clinton's spokesperson. Fauci said that a priority for India should be to set up field hospitals as China had done.

"They have really got to get hospital beds and do really what the Chinese

did way back a year or so ago, where you essentially build up with — the equivalent of field hospitals. You've got to get that. You can't have people out in the street not having a hospital bed," he said.

In fact, during the Covid crisis last year, tents were also set up in New York's Central Park to treat those who could not find hospital beds and convention centres and sports venues were also made into emergency medical facilities.

Fauci called the oxygen shortages in India "really tragic".

President Joe Biden has ordered the supply of vaccine manufacturing equipment and ingredients to India along with oxygen and devices for making the gas and medications to treat Covid-19. The total Covid-19 aid package for India is expected to run to \$100 million, according to his Spokesperson Jen Psaki.

Biden's administration has also agreed to a request made by India and South Africa to the World Trade Organisation to waive the intellectual property rights. However, it faces opposition from other countries, including Germany and Switzerland, blocking WTO approval.

Fauci dismissed suggestions that dropping the patent rights to allow others to make the vaccines would hamper the manufacture by companies now making them.

"I don't think that's the case," he said. "They can scale up. You know, they've done an extraordinary amount. You've got to give them credit. They've really just really done something that is really quite impressive in the way they've gotten their vaccine supply up and out for the rest of the world." Waiving patents won't interfere with that now, he said.

Israel, Hamas exchange attacks amid surging tensions

JERUSALEM, (IANS) Israel launched new airstrikes against the Gaza Strip, and the Islamic Hamas movement, which controls the coastal enclave, unleashed fresh rocket attacks against the Jewish state overnight and on Tuesday, in one of the worst escalations between the two sides in recent years.

At least 24 people, including nine children, have been killed in the Gaza

Strip since late Monday in this latest round of violence, Xinhua news agency quoted the Hamas-run Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said in a statement. The violence was triggered by spiralling tensions in East Jerusalem over flashpoint holy site the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

According to Israel's emergency health services, at least six civilians were injured by rocket fire in the southern city of Ashkelon.

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said the shelling of Ashkelon was retaliation for the Israeli army attacking a residential building in the western part of the Gaza Strip.

Israel has fired around 130 rockets at targets in the Gaza Strip so far, and an estimated 15 members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group have been killed, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson said. The IDF tweeted that groups in Gaza had been firing rockets "non-stop" for 10 hours.

The sharp escalation began at 6 p.m. on Monday after Hamas set an ultimatum for Israel to withdraw its forces from the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where hundreds of Palestinians were injured in clashes earlier that day. Following the deadline, Hamas fired some 200 rockets towards Israel, dozens of which were intercepted by Israel's anti-rocket Iron Dome system, the military said. Meanwhile, Israeli war jets, attack helicopters and aircraft struck 130 targets belonging to Hamas, and targeted several other sites overnight, such as weapons manufacturing facilities; a military intelligence building; and two offensive tunnels, it said.

The military added that schools have been shut in communities located within 40 km of the Gaza Strip. The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound also witnessed fresh clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians overnight.

Furthermore, Arab protesters burned tires and threw stones and fireworks at police forces in northern Israel, and at least 46 people were arrested, according to the Israeli police. In Lod, a city southeast of Tel Aviv, a 25-year-old Arab man was shot and killed during the riots, and a 34-year-old was later arrested, police said on Tuesday. The suspect is a Jewish resident of the city, according to media reports.

WHO LAUDS US' DECISION TO LIFT PATENT PROTECTIONS ON COVID JABS



GENEVA, (IANS) The World Health Organization (WHO) has lauded the commitment by the US to temporarily lift intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines, an advance that may help produce more vaccines globally. US Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced the decision on Wednesday saying that President Joe Biden's "administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines".

"This is a monumental moment in the fight against Covid-19. The commitment by the President of the United States Joe Biden and Ambassador Katherine Tai, the US Trade Representative, to support the waiver of IP protections on vaccines is a powerful example of American leadership to address global health challenges," said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in a statement, on Wednesday.

"I commend the United States on its historic decision for vaccine equity and prioritizing the well-being of all people everywhere at a critical time. Now let's all move together swiftly, in solidarity, building on the ingenuity and commitment of scientists who produced life-saving Covid-19 vaccines," Tedros said.

Kai added that the US would participate in World Trade Organization negotiations to support the temporary waiving of protections, and work with the private sector and other partners to expand vaccine manufacturing and distribution.

"The White House's support for the temporary waiving of intellectual property on Covid-19 vaccines reflects the wisdom and moral leadership of the United States to work to end this pandemic," Tedros said.

Earlier Tedros, and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines.

"If we're going to vaccinate the majority of the adults to bring herd immunity, then the amount of vaccine we need will be significantly more than what we have now," Xinhua news agency quoted Tedros as saying during a WHO press conference on Monday.

NEPAL PRIME MINISTER KP SHARMA OLI LOSES VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENT



Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli lost a confidence vote in parliament on Monday (May 10), the speaker said, pitching the country into political turmoil at a time when it is battling a major second wave of coronavirus infections. Oli's moderate communist party split from former Maoist rebels in March after differences cropped up over its power-sharing deal, wiping out their governing majority. Political parties will now try to cobble together a new ruling coalition. Parliament Speaker Agni Sapkota said that of 232 lawmakers present, 93 voted in favour of Oli while 124 were against him and 15 did not vote. "The confidence vote sought by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has been rejected," Sapkota said at the end of the counting of ballots. The head of the main Maoist group, who goes by his nom de guerre of Prachanda, accused the 69-year-old premier of sidelining party leaders, ignoring collective decision-making and undermining the role of parliament. "He has created instability and is behind the crisis the country is facing now," Prachanda said. "He does not have the confidence of parliament any more." Oli has been criticized by opponents and on social media for playing down the risk of the pandemic and asking citizens to "wash the virus down" the throat by drinking a solution of hot water, guava leaves and turmeric power.

CHINA GIVES BANGLADESH 500K VACCINE DOSES



China delivered 500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine as a gift to Bangladesh on Wednesday to help it cope with a shortage.

Bangladesh, a nation of 160 million people, is in desperate need after India banned exports of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India because of its own devastating surge in infections. Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming formally handed over the Sinopharm vaccines in Dhaka on Wednesday. Bangladesh has already approved the Chinese vaccines after the World Health Organization has recently listed the Sinopharm for emergency use globally.

Bangladesh received about 7 million doses from the Indian institute, but its deal had called for 30 million doses to be delivered by June.

Bangladesh already suspended administering the first dose of vaccines. Some few hundreds of thousands of people are due their second dose but would be left out if new doses do not arrive soon.

Bangladesh has attempted to diversify its vaccine sources, asking the United States for 4 million doses from its stock and signing a deal with Russia to produce Sputnik-V vaccines locally in Bangladesh.

Eid Mubarak!

My very best wishes to all my many friends and residents in Mississauga's Ward 10 who are celebrating Eid al-Fitr!

— Sue McFadden

Councillor
Sue McFadden
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WHO REVIEWS SEYCHELLES COVID-19 DATA AFTER FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE TEST POSITIVE

The World Health Organisation said on Tuesday that it was reviewing coronavirus data from Seychelles after the health ministry said more than a third of people who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past week had been fully vaccinated.

Both the ministry and the WHO stressed that the majority of those who tested positive had not been vaccinated or had only received one dose, that no one who had died had been fully vaccinated and that nearly all of those needing treatment for severe or critical cases were unvaccinated. But the WHO said it was closely following the situation in the Indian Ocean nation, which has a population of less than 1,00,000 and daily cases numbers in the low hundreds.

"Our teams continue to review the data, assess progress and understand the trends," a spokeswoman said by email.

The seven day rolling average of positive cases increased from 120 on April 30 to 314 on May 8, the ministry said in a statement late on Monday, with almost two thirds of the positive cases being close contacts of another person testing positive.

Some 37% of those testing positive had received both doses of a vaccine, it said. To date, 57% of those who have been fully vaccinated have re-

ceived the vaccine from China's state-owned drugmaker Sinopharm, while 43% have received AstraZeneca shots, it said. Nearly 60% of the population have had two doses, the WHO said.

The ministry said 80% of those needing hospital treatment had not been vaccinated and tended to be people with co-morbidities. The ministry could not immediately be reached for further comment.

The WHO has said a large Phase III trial of Sinopharm has shown that two doses, administered at an interval of 21 days, have an efficacy of 79% against symptomatic infection, 14 or more days after the second dose. AstraZeneca said in March its COVID-19 vaccine was 76% effective.

The WHO approved the Sinopharm vaccine for emergency use on Friday. The decision also clears the way for the vaccine to be included in COVAX, a global programme to provide vaccines mainly for poor countries.

The total number of confirmed cases in Seychelles since the pandemic began is less than 8,200. Cases dropped slightly from May 7 to May 8, the ministry statement said, but "the rate of transmission remains high and is of concern". The WHO said vaccination alone would not stop transmission entirely, and preventive health measures such as social distancing, mask-wearing and hand washing must continue.

CHINA'S SINOVAC COVID-19 VACCINE SEEN HIGHLY EFFECTIVE IN REAL WORLD STUDY

Sinovac Biotech Ltd.'s vaccine is wiping out Covid-19 among health workers in Indonesia, an encouraging sign for the dozens of developing countries reliant on the controversial Chinese shot, which performed far worse than western vaccines in clinical trials. Indonesia tracked 128,290 health workers in capital city Jakarta from January to March and found that the vaccine protected 98% of them from death and 96% from hospitalization as soon as seven days after the second dose, Pandji Dhewantara, a Health Ministry official who oversaw the study, said in a Wednesday press conference. Dhewantara also said that 94% of the workers had been protected against symptomatic infection — an extraordinary result that goes beyond what was measured in the shot's numerous clinical trials. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin earlier revealed a smaller version of the study involving 25,374 people in a Tuesday interview with Bloomberg that had the same effectiveness data for hospitalization and infection. Protection against death was 100% in the smaller group. "We see a very, very drastic drop," in hospitalizations and deaths among medical workers, Sadikin said. It's not known what strain of the coronavirus Sinovac's shot worked against in Indonesia, but the country has not flagged any major outbreaks driven by variants of concern.

SRI LANKA IMPOSES NIGHT TRAVEL BAN TO CHECK SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES



Sri Lanka on Wednesday intensified travel restrictions across the country, restricting movement of traffic at night to combat the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic that has claimed over 800 lives in the island nation. The ban, from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. daily, will come into place from tonight until May 31, Army chief Gen Shavendra Silva, who heads the COVID combat operations, told the media.

However, essential services and transportation of food items will be allowed during this period. The move comes after inter-provincial travel restrictions were put into place across the country until May 30.

Additionally, there would be a blanket travel ban from 11 p.m. on Thursday until 4 a.m. on Monday in view of the long weekend and festival of Eid on Friday. Mr. Silva said people were noticed breaking COVID preventive guidelines in the night as large numbers were seen on the roads and attending private functions. The Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) had warned of a possible breakdown in the healthcare system in the island if the current surge was left unchecked.

The SLMA officials met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Monday to stress on the need for a strict action.

They warned that the number of people requiring oxygen and those waiting for intensive care treatment was rapidly rising.

PENTAGON RECONSIDERING HUGE JEDI CLOUD-COMPUTING CONTRACT



The Pentagon is reconsidering how to make a massive shift to cloud computing, officials said Monday, suggesting it could scrap the so-called JEDI contract potentially worth \$10 billion that was awarded to Microsoft Corp. but is mired in legal challenges. "We are going to have to assess where we are in regards to the ongoing litigation and determine what the best path forward is for the department," deputy Pentagon press secretary Jamal Brown said, citing remarks by Deputy Defence Secretary Kathleen Hicks at a public forum late last month. Hicks said then that she could not comment on the legal case or say what course of action the Pentagon will take. But she said a move to cloud computing is essential for a number of reasons, including cybersecurity. "So for all of those reasons, moving to a cloud architecture is going to be vital to how we innovate in this department and we're going to have to assess where we are with regard to the ongoing litigation around JEDI and determine what the best path forward is for the department," Hicks said April 30.

Covid-19 infection is transmitted via air, says US CDC

WASHINGTON, (IANS) Exposure to respiratory fluids - very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles - present in air and which carry viruses are the main reason for contracting Covid-19 infection, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said. People release respiratory fluids during exhalation -- quiet breathing, speaking, singing, exercise, coughing, sneezing in the form of droplets. While large droplets settle out of the air within seconds to minutes, very fine droplets can remain suspended in the air for minutes to hours. These droplets carry viruses and transmit infection, said the agency's latest science brief as part of its public guidelines on Covid-19. Exposure to these droplets occurs in three principal ways: inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles, deposition of respiratory droplets on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by direct splashes and sprays, and touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled either directly by virus-containing respiratory fluids or indirectly by touching surfaces with virus on them.

Further, "the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection varies according to the amount of virus to which a person is exposed," the CDC said.

Infections through inhalation at distances greater than six feet from an infectious source are less likely than at closer distances. But, when an infectious person exhales virus indoors for an extended time (more than 15 minutes and in some cases hours), it can lead to virus concentrations in the air space. It can be sufficient to transmit infections to people more than 6 feet away, and in some cases to people who have passed through that space soon after the infectious person left. The risk in this case is more in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation, the agency said. While there remains many knowledge gaps about Covid, the available evidence continues to demonstrate that existing recommendations to prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission remain effective. This includes physical distancing, community use of well-fitting masks (e.g., barrier face coverings, procedure/surgical masks), adequate ventilation, and avoidance of crowded indoor spaces.

EID MUBARAK

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Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Eid!

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**Your turn
is coming
soon.**



Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine plan is helping to stop the spread and save lives. Thousands of people across the province are getting vaccinated every day.

As vaccinations continue, we need to stay the course to protect those we love. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Keep your distance.

Find out when, where and how to get vaccinated at ontario.ca/covidvaccineplan or call 1-888-999-6488 for assistance in more than 300 languages.