

### Serum Institute of India reduces price of Covishield from Rs 400 to Rs 300 for states

Serum Institute of India has dropped the price of COVISHIELD vaccine by Rs 100 for the state government. In a tweet, Serum's CEO Adar Poonawala said that, as a philanthropic gesture, serum institute will provide COVISHIELD to states in Rs 300 with immediate effect. This will save thousands of crores of state funds going forward. He said, This will enable more vaccinations and save countless lives.

Serum had priced Covishield at Rs 400 for state government hospitals and Rs 600 for private hospitals.

### PM holds telephonic conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin over COVID-19 situation; Also reviews bilateral cooperation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin this evening. They discussed the evolving COVID-19 situation. President Putin expressed solidarity with the people and Government of India and conveyed that Russia would extend all possible support in this regard. Mr Modi

thanked President Putin for Russia's help and support in India's fight against the pandemic and noted that prompt Russian support to India is a symbol of our enduring partnership.

The two leaders noted the ongoing cooperation between the two countries to fight the global pandemic. Approval for emergency use of Sputnik-V vaccine in India was appreciated by President Putin. The leaders noted that the Russian vaccine will be manufactured in India for use in India, Russia and third countries. In a tweet, Mr Modi said, our cooperation on Sputnik-V vaccine will assist humanity in battling the pandemic.

Both leaders attached importance to further deepening bilateral cooperation in various sectors in the spirit of the special and privileged partnership. They reviewed the diverse bilateral cooperation, especially in the area of space exploration and renewable energy sector, including in the hydrogen economy. Mr Modi conveyed appreciation for the support received from Russia for India's Gaganyaan Program and the completion of the Russian phase of training of the four Gaganyaan astronauts.

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To add further momentum to the strong strategic partnership, President Putin and Mr Modi have agreed to establish a 22

Ministerial Dialogue between the Foreign and Defence Ministers. The two leaders recalled the important decisions taken during their last Summit meeting in Vladivostok in September 2019. Prime Minister Modi conveyed that he looks forward to President Putin's visit to India later this year for the Bilateral Summit which would provide an occasion to continue their personal and trusted conversation. President Putin assured the Prime Minister of Russia's full support for the success of India's Presidency of BRICS during 2021. The two leaders agreed to remain in close touch on bilateral and international issues.

## **Australia announces to spend USD 580 mn to upgrade its 4 northern military bases**

Amidst an increasingly bitter diplomatic and trade spat with China, Australia has announced to spend 580 million dollars to upgrade its four northern military bases.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that Australia must expand its military assets in the Northern Territory to be able respond to unspecified tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. He added that Australia's objective is a free and open Indo-Pacific, to ensure a peaceful region, so that Australia is in a position to protect its interests.

PM Morrison said an airstrip in the Northern Territory will be lengthened to support larger aircraft, firing ranges overhauled and new training facilities set up for defence personnel and US marines. The military upgrades will begin this year and be finished by 2026.

While PM Morrison avoided naming China, Australia's military focus on the Indo-Pacific area comes amid rising competition between the two for influence in the region in recent years. Relations between Australia and China deteriorated even further after Canberra called last year for an international inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus, prompting trade reprisals from Beijing.

## **Secy (E) in MEA Riva Ganguly Das co-chairs 23rd ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Thailand Thani Thongphakdi**

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Riva Ganguly Das today co-chaired the 23rd ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting with Permanent Secretary of Thailand Thani Thongphakdi. Senior Officials from all ten ASEAN Member States and India attended the virtual meeting. During the Meeting, the status of ongoing ASEAN-India cooperation was reviewed under the whole

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spectrum of political-security, economic, socio-cultural and developmental cooperation.

The Meeting also deliberated on the steps to implement the ASEAN-India Plan of Action 2021-2025 and discussed ways to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. Ways and means to strengthen cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic along with important regional and international issues of mutual concern were also covered during the meeting.

Secretary (East) Riva Ganguly Das in her remarks welcomed the strong and supportive role played by Thailand as the Country Coordinator of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations for the last three years and looked forward to working with Singapore as the next Country Coordinator. Underlining the centrality of ASEAN in India's Indo-Pacific vision, she mentioned that India wants to see a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN playing a central role in the Indo-Pacific region contributing to Security and Growth for All. Ms Das also emphasised upon exploring the synergies between India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific to strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.

The ASEAN Senior Officials welcomed India's proposal to celebrate the year 2022 as ASEAN-India Friendship Year as it marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India sectoral partnership, 25th anniversary of dialogue partnership, 20th anniversary of Summit-level partnership and 10 years of Strategic Partnership. They also appreciated India's support to ASEAN and ASEAN-led architecture in the region.

## **UK becomes first country to announce regulation of use of self-driving vehicles at slow speeds on motorways**

The UK has become the first country to announce regulation of the use of self-driving vehicles at slow speeds on motorways.

Britain's transport ministry today said that it was working on specific wording to update the country's highway code for the safe use of self-driving vehicle systems. It added that the ministry will start with Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) - which use sensors and software to keep cars within a lane, allowing them to accelerate and brake without driver input.

According to the government, the use of ALKS would be restricted to motorways, at speeds under 60 km per hour. The UK government wants to be at the forefront of rolling out autonomous driving technology and the transport ministry forecasts by 2035 around 40% of new UK cars could have self-driving capabilities, creating

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up to 38,000 new skilled jobs.



However, the dangers of drivers apparently misunderstanding the limits of technology has been an issue in the United States, where regulators are reviewing about 20 crashes involving Tesla's driver assistance tools, such as its 'Autopilot' system.

## Indian women's recurve team bags Gold medal at Archery World Cup



In the Archery World Cup, Indian women's recurve team including Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari won a gold medal in Guatemala yesterday. Indian trio shot 27 to edge out their Mexican rivals by one point and claim their first World Cup team gold after seven years.

This is Deepika's fifth World Cup stage event team gold medal. In another match, the Indian mixed recurve team of Atanu Das and Ankita Bhakat won the bronze medal after a 6-2 victory over USA.

## World Youth Boxing C'ships: Indian women boxers create history with seven gold medals



In the World Youth Boxing championships, Indian women boxers put up sensational performances as they created history with seven gold medals in Kielce, Poland.

All the women finalists Gitika, Naorem Babyrojisana Chanu, Poonam, Vinka, Arundhati Choudhary, T Sanamacha Chanu and Alfiya Pathan registered their wins and finished on the top of the podium. Apart from the eight finalists, three others won bronze medals at the tournament, a performance which better the 10 medals that India won in its best-ever show not too long back in the 2018 edition in Hungary.

The only Indian man in the final, Sachin (56kg) will be in action today. A 10-day biennial event has witnessed high competition in the presence of 414 boxers from 52 countries.