

# THE SUNDAY TIMES



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## Singapore first country in Asia to get new pneumococcal vaccine

**Salma Khalik**  
Senior Health Correspondent

Singapore will be the first country in Asia to get Pfizer's new pneumococcal vaccine, which has a broader range of protection and could replace the two that are now in use here.

The vaccines protect against the more common bacterial strains responsible for pneumococcal disease, which causes a range of infections including pneumonia, meningitis, sinus and middle-ear infection. It can lead to very severe illness and even death.

In fact, pneumonia, or inflammation of the lungs, is the third major cause of death here.

These vaccines do not protect against all causes of pneumonia, since that can be due to a range of bugs including other types of bacteria, virus or even fungi.

But they do provide protection against the more common strains of the *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria, which is why the Govern-

ment encourages and subsidises pneumococcal vaccination for Singaporean children and seniors.

For seniors, the recommendation is to get the pneumococcal conjugate PCV13 vaccine first, followed by the pneumococcal polysaccharide PPSV23 vaccine a year later.

The new vaccine, PCV20, covers seven more bacterial strains than the PCV13, also manufactured by Pfizer. The PPSV23 is by Merck Sharp & Dohme and covers 23 strains of bacteria.

Professor Julio Ramirez, chief research scientist at the Norton Infectious Diseases Institute at Norton Healthcare in the United States, who was the principal investigator in studies of the PCV13 vaccine, was brought in by Pfizer for the launch of the PCV20 here on Saturday.

He said that unlike polysaccharide vaccines, conjugate vaccines, aside from getting the body to produce antibodies that protect against infection, also prime T cells

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## Growing unrest in France over pension reform



Demonstrators rallying against pension reform at the Place de la Concorde in Paris on Friday, with 61 arrested after clashes with riot police. Attempts to force a U-turn on the pension age being raised by two years to 64 continued on Saturday throughout France. The growing unrest, combined with rubbish piling up on the streets of Paris after refuse workers joined in the action, has left President Emmanuel Macron with the gravest challenge to his authority since 2018's Yellow Vest protests.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG  
SEE WORLD • A14

# ICC issues arrest warrant for Putin for war crimes

Russian President accused of illegally deporting at least 100 children from Ukraine

AMSTERDAM – The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant on Friday against Russian President Vladimir Putin, a symbolic step that deepened his isolation and punctured the aura of impunity that has surrounded him since he ordered troops into Ukraine a year ago.

The court accused Mr Putin of the war crime of illegally deporting at least 100 children from Ukraine.

The bold legal move will obligate the court's 123 member states to arrest Mr Putin and transfer him to The Hague for trial if he sets foot on their territory.

Moscow has not concealed a programme under which it has brought thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia, but presents it as a humanitarian campaign to protect orphans and children abandoned in the conflict zone.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the move would lead

to "historic accountability", adding that the deportations constituted a policy of "state evil which starts precisely with the top official of this state".

The ICC's announcement provoked a furious response from Moscow. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia found the very questions raised by the ICC "outrageous and unacceptable", and that any decisions of the court were "null and void" with respect to Russia.

Russia, like the United States and China, is not a member of the ICC. US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Mr Putin has committed war crimes and the ICC's decision to issue an arrest warrant for him was justified.

"Well, I think it's justified. But the question is – it's not recognised internationally by us either. But I think it makes a very strong point," Mr Biden told reporters.

A State Department spokesman said in an e-mailed statement that the US separately has concluded that Russian forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine and supports accountability for perpetrators of war crimes.

The court also issued a warrant for Ms Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights, on the same charges.

Mr Putin, only the third serving president to have been issued an arrest warrant by the ICC, is unlikely to end up in court any time soon.

But the warrant means that he could be arrested and sent to The Hague if he travels to any ICC member states.

"This makes Putin a pariah. If he travels, he risks arrest. This never goes away. Russia cannot gain relief from sanctions without compliance with the warrants," said Mr Stephen Rapp, former US ambassador-at-large for war crimes.

In its first warrant for Ukraine, the ICC called for Mr Putin's arrest on suspicion of unlawful deportation of children and unlawful



The move compels the international court's 123 member states to arrest Mr Vladimir Putin if he sets foot on their territory. PHOTO: REUTERS

transfer of people from the territory of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

"The crimes were allegedly committed in Ukrainian occupied territory at least from Feb 24, 2022. There are reasonable grounds to believe that Mr Putin bears individual criminal responsibility for the aforementioned crimes," it said.

Ukraine's top prosecutor, Mr Andriy Kostin, hailed the ICC move as "a historic decision for Ukraine and the entire international law system".

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said it was just

the start of "holding Russia accountable for its crimes and atrocities in Ukraine".

Some Russians saw the hand of the US in the ICC decision.

"Yankees, hands off Putin!" wrote Parliament Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, a close ally of the President, on Telegram, saying the move was evidence of Western "hysteria".

"We regard any attacks on the President of the Russian Federation as aggression against our country," he added.

Ukraine has said more than 16,000 children have been illegally transferred to Russia or Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine.

A US-backed report by Yale University researchers in February said Russia has held at least 6,000 Ukrainian children at sites in Crimea, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The report identified at least 43 camps and other facilities where Ukrainian children have been held that were part of a "large-scale systematic network" operated by Moscow since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan opened the investigation into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Ukraine a year ago.

He highlighted during four trips to Ukraine that he was looking at alleged crimes against children and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. REUTERS, NYTIMES

SEE THE BIG STORY • A6

ACT OF AGGRESSION

**Yankees, hands off Putin! We regard any attacks on the President of the Russian Federation as aggression against our country.**



RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT SPEAKER VYACHESLAV VOLODIN, a close ally of Mr Vladimir Putin.

MAKING A STRONG POINT

**Well, I think it's justified. But the question is – it's not recognised internationally by us either. But I think it makes a very strong point.**



US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN, on the International Criminal Court's decision.

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