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SOUTH ASIAN

MidWeek

NEWS WEEKLY

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

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UNION MINISTER HARDEEP PURI RECEIVES SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB BROUGHT FROM KABUL AFTER INDIA SUCCESSFULLY EVACUATES ITS CITIZENS FROM AFGHANISTAN.

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LIBERALS' LEAD SLIPS NATIONALLY

STILL STRONGER IN GTA

POOJA LUTHRA

As per the recent Nanos poll survey conducted, the gap between the Liberals and the Conservatives is narrowing. The ballot support for the Liberals sits between 33%-36%, while support for the Conservatives lies between 29%- 33%. The NDP has managed to retain support between 17%- 21%. The poll suggests the Green party may come under the range of 5%- 8%, the Bloc Quebecois to have support within 4%- 7% and the People's Party to receive support between 1% - 4% Liberal leader Justin Trudeau remains the preferred choice for Prime Minister among respondents, followed by Conservative leader Erin O'Toole, according to Nanos' survey. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh ranks third as the preferred choice for Prime Minister of Canada.

"It's gone from a double-digit advantage to a single-digit advantage to now a horse race between the Conservatives and the Liberals," Nik Nanos, founder and chief data scientist at Nanos Research, told CTV News Channel.

NANOS' METHODOLOGY - The survey conducted between Wednesday, August 18 and Monday, August 23, interviewed 500 eligible voters. The margin of error for a survey of respondents is ± 2.8 per centage points, 19 times out of 20.

LIBERALS' STRONG IN GTA - Mainstreet Research's recent poll survey reveals 'Liberals have a strong lead in the Greater Toronto Area' The Liberal Party of Canada, led by Justin Trudeau, has a fourteen-point lead over the opposition Conservatives. Those are the findings of a Mainstreet Research study from Mainstreet's Daily Tracker featured in iPolitics.



Y MEDIA EDITOR'S TAKE

In 2019, Federal Elections, Liberals won all 25 Toronto ridings, and in GTA suburbs, Liberals won 23 and Conservatives won 8, NDP failed to open its account in this area. Liberals need to repeat this performance to form the government, and the path to Conservative victory also goes through GTA's 56 ridings."

- Yudhvir Jaswal, Group Editor - Y Media

The results are the findings from the last four days of fielding in the Greater Toronto Area from the Daily Tracker. Five hundred thirty-two adults residing in the GTA were surveyed between the 18th and 21st of August. The sample has a margin of error of $\pm 4.2\%$ and is accurate 19 times out of 20.

Among decided and leaning voters, the Liberals have 43.2% support, while the Conservatives, led by Erin O'Toole, have 28.9%. The New Democratic Party, led by Jagmeet Singh, has 19.5%, while Annamie Paul's Green party has 3.4%.

This is precisely the position the Liberals want to be in at the start of the campaign," said Joseph Angolano, Vice President of Mainstreet Research. "Many commentators rightly see the Greater Toronto Area as key to winning the election, and the Trudeau Liberals are leading – right where they want to be as the campaign enters the second week."

| CONTD. ON PAGE 9

LIBERAL CANDIDATE FOR BRAMPTON SOUTH, SONIA SIDHU, LAUNCHES HER ELECTION CAMPAIGN



| CONTD. ON PAGE 9

ADITYA JHA APPOINTED CHAIR OF ICCC'S ADVISORY BOARD

The Board of Directors of the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC) unanimously decided to appoint Dr. Aditya Jha as the Chair of the Advisory Board of the Chamber for a four-year-term starting August 2021.

A renowned and respected community leader, Dr. Jha will be pivoting the Chamber's thrust into developing strategies that will enable our 44 year old institution to be relevant and highly effective in fulfilling its strategic mandates including:

* ICCC@50 Vision & Action plan as ICCC turns 50 years milestone in 2027.



| CONTD. ON PAGE 8

PEEL POLICE ARREST 3 BRAMPTON MEN IN TRAFFICKING OF MINOR GIRL



REGION OF PEEL – Investigators from the Peel Regional Police Specialized Enforcement Bureau have arrested and charged three Brampton men and are searching for a fourth suspect in relation to a human trafficking investigation involving a youth victim under 18 years-old in the Region of Peel.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 8

ICCC & Y MEDIA GROUP ARE ORGANIZING AN EVENT TO HONOUR CANADIAN & INDIAN OLYMPIC ATHLETES



Y Media Group, in partnership with Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce (ICCC), is organizing an Olympic Appreciation Event-UNITED BY EMOTIONS to celebrate and appreciate the Canadian and Indian Olympic Athletes. The event is scheduled to take place on Saturday, August 28 at Luxe Convention Centre, Hyatt Place, Mississauga. The main idea of the event is to congratulate and honour the athletes and inspire future generations to participate in sports. Y Media will provide detailed coverage of the event on all four platforms namely Midweek newspaper, Channel Y, Radio Y and Southasiandaily.com

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

- **Effective Sept. 7, Ontario makes Covid-19 vaccination policies mandatory for high-risk settings.**
- **Ontario to begin offering third doses of Covid-19 vaccines to most vulnerable populations.**
- **All children turning 12 years old before end of 2021 will be eligible to receive their first dose of Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine in Ontario.**
- **On September 7, Canada's borders to reopen to any fully vaccinated travellers.**
- **U.S. extending travel restrictions at border with Canada till September 21.**
- **Over 83% Ontarians 12+ inoculated with first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, 75% fully vaccinated.**

Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX








FULL COVERAGE OF CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTIONS ON ALL 4 PLATFORMS

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AFGHAN CANADIANS PROTEST AGAINST TALIBAN



WATCH Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE OF AFGHAN CANADIANS PROTEST AGAINST TALIBAN ON CHANNEL Y

Y Media Exclusive: Ontario's Education Minister Says, 'We will do everything humanly possible, and move mountains to keep the kids safe'

The Ontario government announced additional funding of \$25 million to further improve ventilation in schools as students return for in-person learning this fall. This additional funding, which brings the net new investments in school ventilation to \$600 million, will ensure that all occupied classrooms, gyms, libraries and other instructional spaces without mechanical ventilation have standalone high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter units in place when students are back in class, including Junior and Senior Kindergarten classrooms in mechanically ventilated schools to recognize that the youngest learners will not be wearing masks in the classroom.

"With the release of health and safety measures for schools, students have a safe path to return to a more normal, in-person, full-time learning environment, which is critical to their mental and physical health," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education.

Minister Lecce, in an exclusive interview with Y Media, said, "we're building new schools and renovating schools, and we're exploring enhancing and improving air ventilation systems within all schools, according to high standards." "We are following the best expert advice by ensuring all schools have improved air ventilation, including deploying an additional 20,000 HEPA units, in total over 70,000 ventilation devices, to help ensure schools remain as safe as possible. With the work we have done, I am confident we will keep students and staff safe in our schools as we reopen for the 2021-22 school year." Ontario's Science Advisory Table, as part of its science brief on school-based measures, identified the use of standalone HEPA filter units as a strategy for classrooms and spaces with challenges in achieving adequate ventilation. Approximately 20,000 standalone HEPA filter units have been procured through the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and will be deployed to school boards where needed. The remaining funding will be allocated to school boards to procure additional standalone HEPA filter units. To support students, parents and staff in access to information on school



ventilation in their communities, Ontario will also provide school boards with a standardized reporting tool on ventilation improvements. This tool will communicate school-level ventilation measures online to ensure that information is publicly available across the province, including inspection, use of standalone HEPA filter units, use of higher-grade filters and more frequent filter changes. In an exclusive interview with Y Media, Minister Lecce said, "We made a commitment to give parents information and transparently communicate the improvements being made to schools. We require every school to publish the improvements that have been made with the better EPA filters the increase of hit by unions, the improvements to the eight HVAC systems and all of that will be transparently communicated. We've set a standard in the ministry, a template, just to make it easy for the school boards to fill it out, and more importantly, make it easy for parents to receive consistent information. So we have that standard and we are requiring it we're making it transparent."

BIDEN'S RATING DROPS BELOW 50% FOR FIRST TIME IN 'SUMMER OF DISCONTENT'

NEW DELHI, (IANS) After a spike in US Covid-19 cases and bipartisan criticism over the chaos from America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, US President Joe Biden's overall job-approval rating has dipped below 50 per cent among adults for the first time in his early presidency, according to a new NBC News Poll. The poll also finds fewer Americans support Biden's handling of the coronavirus and the economy now than they did last spring, and just a quarter of respondents approve of his handling of Afghanistan.

The survey findings demonstrate the public has grown more pessimistic about the coronavirus since April, the country remains split over whether Covid-19 vaccines should be mandated and an electorate is divided over which political party should control Congress after the 2022 midterms, NBC reported. It all produced a 'summer of discontent' for Biden, said Democratic pollster Jeff Horwitt of Hart Research Associates, who conducted this survey with Republican pollster Bill McInturff of Public Opinion Strategies.

"The promise of April has led to the peril of August," Horwitt said, arguing that Covid -- more than Afghanistan -- has dented Biden's numbers. "It is the domestic storm, Covid's delta wave, that is causing more difficulties at this stage here at home and for President Biden." According to the survey, 49 per cent of adults approve of Biden's overall job performance, while 48 per cent



disapprove. That's down from April's NBC News poll, when 53 per cent of adults approved of Biden's job and 39 per cent disapproved -- with some of the biggest declines for Biden coming from independents, rural residents and white respondents.

Suspects held after Pakistan woman TikTok brutally assaulted by hundreds of men

Lahore police arrested more than 36 suspects after a horrifying video from Pakistan has emerged online in which hordes of men are seen groping, mauling and tearing off the clothes of a woman, who is famed for her videos on TikTok.

Several such horrific videos of the woman being "brutally attacked" in Lahore even as the country celebrated its Independence Day on August 14 have surfaced online and for a while, the incident was among top hashtags on Twitter #minarPakistan and #400 men were among the hashtags being used by outraged netizens who expressed their shock and disgust at the violence against the woman.

The woman has filed a complaint with police in which she alleged that a mob of around 400 people attacked her and her friends while she was filming a video near Minar-e-Pakistan on August 14, according to local media reports.

"I was stripped and my clothes were torn apart," she said alleging that the mob picked her up and started tossing her in the air, the Express Tribune quoted. The woman also alleged that she kept crying for help but to no avail and no one came to her rescue.

Disturbing video clips widely circulated in social media show hundreds of men thrashing the woman, tearing her clothes and hurling it into the air. She also alleged that her gold ornaments were "forcibly taken" by unidentified people in the crowd, while the mobile phone and cash were also "snatched". Maria Amir wrote in Dawn that there can be no more obvious metaphor for how depraved our society really is. It is hard to imagine a more powerful symbolic representation of how we have twisted the very meaning of 'independence' and 'freedom' to cater solely to one gender at the expense of another. There really is no other way to say it, we are in the midst of gender apartheid.

The incident took place at the Greater Iqbal Park area in Lahore according to the First Information Report (FIR) registered at the Lorry Adda police station in the city. The annual report of the State of Human Rights in Pakistan released by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) for the year 2020 amply describes the plight of women in the country.

The HRCP report has once again painted a concerning picture of the women's rights situation in the country. The HRCP has highlighted forms of violence against women, which include sexual assault and domestic violence prevalent across the country. (ANI)

INDO-CANADIANS RAISE CONCERNS OVER CANADA'S BAN ON FLIGHTS FROM INDIA



TORONTO, (IANS) Canada's decision to ban direct flights from India till September 21 while allowing vaccinated family-class passengers and students from all other countries has not gone down well with the Indo-Canadian community. As a result of the ban, Indian students and family-class returnees are taking indirect routes to reach Canada, costing them \$4,000-\$6,000 per person. They are travelling to Canada via Mexico, the Maldives, Doha, Belgrade and Cairo, where they stop for two to 10 nights before taking a Covid test and boarding onward flights. The Canadian government said that passengers coming from India "via an indirect route will continue to be required to obtain a valid Covid-19 pre-departure test report from a third country -- other than India -- before continuing their journey to Canada". The Canadian authorities suspect that travellers from India are using fake documents about Covid vaccination. As direct flights from countries such as Pakistan continue to land here, many in the Indo-Canadian community see the ban as a discriminatory move against India. Indo-Canadian aviation expert Hemant Shah said Canada's decision is guided by political reasons.

AFGHANISTAN CRISIS: UNION MINISTER HARDEEP SINGH PURI SAYS WHY CAA WAS NECESSARY



After a special Indian Air Force (IAF) repatriation flight ferrying 168 people from Kabul landed at Ghaziabad Hindon air base on Sunday, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that developments in the volatile neighbourhood are the reason why enactment of Citizenship Amendment Act is necessary. Sharing a news article, Singh tweeted, "Recent developments in our volatile neighbourhood and the way Sikhs and Hindus are going through a harrowing time are precisely why it was necessary to enact the Citizenship Amendment Act." People in Afghanistan have been rushing to leave the country after the Taliban seized control last week. On August 15, the country's government fell soon after President Ashraf Ghani left the country. Countries have been urgently evacuating their citizens from the war-torn nation. The Kabul airport is witnessing nowadays a heavy chaos due to instability in the region.

7 OF 20 'SULKING' MLAS, EX-MLAS EXTEND SUPPORT TO PUNJAB CM



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Seven of the 20-odd Punjab Congress MLAs and ex-MLAs, who were purportedly party to the demand for the removal of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, categorically disassociated themselves from any such move on Tuesday evening. Denying outright being part of what they termed as a conspiracy hatched by a section engaged in trying to drive a wedge within the party, these seven leaders have thrown their weight behind the Chief Minister and reposed their full faith in his leadership. The Punjab Congress leaders who have distanced themselves from the so-called festering revolt in the party are: Kuldeep Vaid, Dalvir Singh Goldie, Santokh Singh, Angad Singh, Raja Warring and Gurkirat Singh Kotli, all MLAs, and Bhalaipur Ajit Singh Mofar, a former MLA. Their denial came within hours of a list of party MLAs or ex-MLAs being made public by a section of the Punjab Congress, which claimed that these leaders wanted the replacement of Amarinder Singh and intended to take up the matter with the party high command.

The seven party leaders have, however, washed their hands off any such decision and declared that they continue to stand firmly with the Chief Minister. All seven of them said the closed door meeting held at Cabinet minister Tripti Rajinder Singh Bajwa's residence, after which their names were fraudulently released along with others, had been convened to discuss party affairs. Some of the participants tried to raise the issue of the Chief Minister's replacement, but contrary to the claims, no unanimous resolution was passed or agreed upon. Taking strong exception to the 'misuse' of their names in this manner, the seven leaders made it clear that they did not subscribe to any such move against Amarinder Singh.

SINGLE MEN SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED IN PUBLIC WITHOUT WOMEN: BAKHTAWAR BHUTTO



ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Former Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's daughter Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari believes single men shouldn't be allowed in public without being "escorted" by their sisters, mothers, wives or daughters, Geo News reported. In a clarification of a previous post on Twitter about banning men from public spaces, Bakhtawar said that with "repeated and increasing incidents" of assault and violence against women, there was "no better option". Bakhtawar said that when men are escorted by women, perhaps then they would "think twice" before assaulting a woman. Earlier, Bakhtawar had demanded a complete ban on men entering public spaces when documentary filmmaker and multimedia journalist, Sabin Agha, in a thread on Twitter, narrated how she experienced a situation similar to that of the Minar-e-Pakistan assault, "a few years ago", at Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi. "Another harrowing experience -- witnessed by police who refused to help despite their ability to call for backup as well as use weapons to disperse the crowd. Trusted to help and instead complicit," wrote Bakhtawar. "Men should be banned from public spaces. We need more women to safeguard women," she had added.



AS OF AUG 24, CANADA HAS SAFELY EVACUATED APPROXIMATELY 2200 PERSONS FROM KABUL AIRPORT IN MATTER OF WEEKS: IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA.



PM Modi talks to Russian President Putin over Afghanistan situation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday discussed the situation in Afghanistan with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The two leaders had a phone conversation for about 45 minutes and discussed the current situation in the country after the Taliban occupation along with a number of bilateral issues.

"Had a detailed and useful exchange of views with my friend President Putin on recent developments in Afghanistan. We also discussed issues on the bilateral agenda, including India-Russia cooperation against COVID-19. We agreed to continue close consultations on important issues," the Prime Minister tweeted.

Earlier on Monday, PM Modi also discussed the security situation in Afghanistan and regional issues with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Both the leaders also stressed on the importance of maintaining peace and security during this period.

According to the statement issued by the PMO, both the leaders agreed that the most important priority is the return of the people trapped in Afghanistan. They also discussed bilateral issues, including cooperation in the coronavirus vaccine, development cooperation with a focus on climate and energy, promoting trade and economic ties.

After this conversation, PM Modi tweeted, "Spoke to Chancellor Merkel



this evening and discussed bilateral, multilateral and regional issues, including recent developments in Afghanistan. Reiterated our commitment to strengthening the India-Germany Strategic Partnership." The Russian President has already shown a tough stance towards refugees from Afghanistan. He made a statement in the past that Russia does not want the infiltration of terrorists inside its country under the guise of refugees. However, he has assured to provide all possible help to Afghanistan in this difficult time.

WHEN IS COVID MOST TRANSMISSIBLE? STUDY OFFERS INSIGHT

NEW YORK, (IANS) Each wave of the pandemic has underscored just how gravely contagious Covid-19 is, but there is less clarity among experts on exactly when -- and to what extent -- infected individuals are most likely to spread the virus.

A new study by Boston University researchers has found that individuals infected with the virus are most contagious two days before, and three days after they develop symptoms.

The study, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, also found that infected individuals were more likely to be asymptomatic if they contracted the virus from a primary case (the first infected person in an outbreak) who was also asymptomatic.

"Our results suggest that the timing of exposure relative to primary-case symptoms is important for transmission, and this understanding provides further evidence that rapid testing and quarantine after someone is feeling sick is a critical step to control the epidemic," said Leonardo Martinez, Assistant Professor of epidemiology at the varsity's School of Public Health.

The team conducted contact tracing and studied Covid-19 transmission among approximately 9,000 close contacts of primary cases in the Zhejiang province of China from January 2020 to August 2020.

"Close" contacts included household contacts (defined as individuals who lived in the same household or who dined together), co-workers, people in hospital settings, and riders in shared vehicles.

Of the individuals identified as primary cases, 89 per cent developed mild or moderate symptoms, and only 11 per cent were asymptom-



atic -- and no one developed severe symptoms. Household members of primary cases, as well as people who were exposed to primary cases multiple times or for longer durations of time, had higher infection rates than other close contacts. But regardless of these risk factors, close contacts were more likely to contract Covid-19 from the primary infected individual if they were exposed shortly before or after the individual developed noticeable symptoms. In comparison to mild and moderate symptomatic individuals, asymptomatic primary individuals were much less likely to transmit Covid to close contacts -- but if they did, the contacts were also less likely to experience noticeable symptoms. "This study further emphasises the need for vaccination, which reduces clinical severity among people that develop Covid," Martinez said.

US FDA GIVES FULL APPROVAL TO PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine has been known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, and will now be marketed as Comirnaty (koe-mir'-na-tee), for the prevention of COVID-19 disease in individuals 16 years of age and older. The vaccine also continues to be available under emergency use authorization (EUA), including for individuals 12 through 15 years of age and for the administration of the third dose in certain immunocompromised individuals.

"The FDA's approval of this vaccine is a milestone as we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. While this and other vaccines have met the FDA's rigorous, scientific standards for emergency use authorization, as the first FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine, the public can be very confident that this vaccine meets the high standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality the FDA requires of an approved product," said Acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock, M.D. "While millions of people have already safely received COVID-19 vaccines, we recognize that for some, the FDA approval of a vaccine may now instill additional confidence to get vaccinated. Today's milestone puts us one step closer to altering the course of this pandemic in the U.S." Since Dec. 11, 2020, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine has been available under EUA in individuals 16 years of age and older, and the authorization was expanded to include those 12 through 15 years of age on May 10, 2021. EUAs can be used by the FDA during public health emergencies to provide access to medical products that may be effective in preventing, diagnosing, or treating a disease, provided that the FDA determines that the known and potential benefits of a product when used to prevent, diagnose, or treat the disease, outweigh the known and potential risks of the product. FDA-approved vaccines undergo the agency's standard process for reviewing the quality, safety and effectiveness of medical products. For all vaccines, the FDA evaluates data and information included in the manufacturer's submission of a biologics license application (BLA). A BLA is a comprehensive document that is submitted to the agency providing very specific requirements.

EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN AFGHANISTAN WAS ANTICIPATED, SAYS GEN RAWAT

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Everything that has happened in Afghanistan was something that had been anticipated but the timeline had changed, India's Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a seminar co-chaired by Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral John C. Aquilino, he noted that from the Indian perspective, "we were anticipating that Taliban would take over the Afghanistan".

"We were concerned about how the terrorist activities from Afghanistan could spill over to India ... our contingency planning has been ongoing and we are prepared for that. The timeline has certainly surprised us," General Rawat said. He, however, pointed out that Taliban is same as it was 20 years ago. "It is the same Taliban with different partners," he said. Taliban took control of Afghanistan on August, making the situation worse with many Afghan nationals fleeing the war-torn country. The conflict is pushing the people of Afghanistan into a humanitarian catastrophe. India has reiterated that said the current situation in Afghanistan is of great concern to it and hopes that the country does not pose a challenge to its neighbours and is not used by terrorist groups such as LeT and JeM. Earlier in the day, General Rawat and Admiral Aquilino held a meeting in New Delhi over the prevailing crisis in Afghanistan. A Defence Ministry statement said that they discussed "issues related to peace and security in the region". They also held talks over bilateral defence cooperation. Admiral Aquilino also held meetings with all three service chiefs and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar.

PUNJAB CM WARNS SIDHU'S ADVISORS ON ASSERTIONS ON PAK, KASHMIR



CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Taking strong exception to recent statements of two of Navjot Sidhu's advisors on issues like Kashmir and Pakistan, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday warned against such "atrocious and ill-conceived comments that were potentially dangerous to the peace and stability of the state and the country".

He urged Sidhu to rein in his advisors "before they end up doing more damage to India's interests" and asked the advisors "not speak on matters of which they clearly had little or no knowledge, and had no understanding of the implications of their comments".

Reacting to reported remarks of Sidhu's advisors Pyare Lal Garg questioning Amarinder Singh's criticism of Pakistan, as well as the earlier controversial statement of Malwinder Singh Mali on Kashmir, he expressed shock at their "extraordinary statements", which he said, were "totally misplaced and antagonistic" to the stated position of India and the Congress on Pakistan and Kashmir.

"Kashmir was and is an inalienable part of India," asserted the Chief Minister, adding that with his proclamation to the contrary, Mali had effectively and inexplicably toed Islamabad's line.

"This is totally anti-national," he said, also slamming Mali for failing to withdraw his statement despite the widespread condemnation it had evoked not only from other parties but also from within the Congress.

Ridiculing Garg's statement that his criticism of Pakistan was not in the interest of Punjab, the Chief Minister said Sidhu's advisor was clearly disconnected from the ground reality. "The fact, which every Punjabi and in fact every Indian knows, is that Pakistan's threat to us is real. Every day they are pushing weapons and drugs into Punjab via drones in a brazen attempt to destabilise our state, and our nation. Punjabi soldiers are dying at the borders at the hands of Pak-backed forces," pointed out the Chief Minister, dubbing Garg's remarks as "irrational and unjustified".

"Garg may have forgotten the thousands of Punjabi lives lost in the fire of Pak-backed terrorism of the 1980s and 1990s, but I have not. Nor have the people of Punjab. And we will continue to do everything in our power to fight off Pakistan's dangerous games," asserted Amarinder Singh, urging Garg not to undermine the sacrifices of Punjabis.

NMP: CENTRE TO MONETISE STATE ASSETS WORTH RS 6 LAKH CRORE OVER NEXT 4 YEARS



The government on Monday launched the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) that includes the Centre's four-year plan to monetise its brownfield infrastructure assets. The NMP targets to raise Rs 6 lakh crore through asset monetisation of central government, over a four-year period, from FY22 to FY25. Only under-utilised brownfield assets will be monetised under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) of the Centre, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. These under-utilised brownfield assets are in sectors such as roads, railways, airports, mines, and power. The ownership of the assets will be retained by the Centre. Besides, no land parcels will be taken up under the NMP, Sitharaman said after unveiling the asset monetisation pipeline of Central ministries and public sector entities. "Asset monetisation, based on the philosophy of creation through monetisation, is aimed at tapping private sector investment for new infrastructure creation," Sitharaman said. "This is necessary for creating employment opportunities, thereby enabling high economic growth and seamlessly integrating the rural and semi-urban areas for overall public welfare," she added.

'NOTHING WILL BE SOLD OFF', SITHARAMAN COUNTERS RAHUL ON NMP

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Rebutting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the National Monetisation Pipeline, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that the government will not give away ownership of assets under the asset monetisation plan and they will be mandatorily handed back to the government.

Addressing the media in Mumbai on Wednesday, Sitharaman hit out at the opposition citing monetisation processes undertaken under by the Congress-led UPA government.

Citing the example of the New Delhi Railway Station, she took a barb on the Congress and said: "Who called the RFP (request for proposal) on it? Is it owned by 'Jijaji' now!" "We are not selling off, there will be a strict handing back," she said.

A day after the government unveiled the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) worth Rs 6 lakh crore, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of bringing the process of selling the "crown jewel" assets built by his party in last 70 years. He also contended that the Congress is not opposing the privatisation process but "the entire NMP is designed to create a monopoly".

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters along with former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, Gandhi had said: "The Prime Minister and the BJP said that the Congress had done nothing in last 70 years. There is a list here of all the assets that the Congress has helped build using the public money."

AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE



BY ASAD MIRZA

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has once again put a big question mark on its future, but it has also offered a glimmer of hope for the redevelopment of this war-ravaged country utilising its natural resources. The Taliban have once again captured the power in Afghanistan. In one of the swiftest operations the Taliban took control of all major cities including Kabul within a ten-days period. This feat has however, put them in a tight bind on whether to continue with their old traits or try to portray a new picture of the Taliban, which has moved along with the world in the last 20 years and one which is more pragmatic and tolerant and most of all which is politically savvy not violence prone. A widely held belief is that the Taliban would like to be seen as more

TALIBAN SPOKESMAN ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID SAID IN MAY THAT THE GROUP, ONCE IN POWER, WOULD WRITE LAWS TO ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE. HOWEVER, REPORTS FROM KABUL INDICATE THAT THE FORMER PRESIDENT HAMID KARZAI AND FORMER MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ABDULLAH ABDULLAH ARE STILL PRESENT IN THE CITY. THIS LEADS CREDENCE TO THE FACT THAT ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE BASED ON ISLAMIC FOUNDATIONS BUT IT MIGHT BE AN AMALGAMATION OF ISLAMIC AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES. KARZAI AND TALIBAN'S CURRENT SUPREMO HAIBATULLAHAKHUNDZADE ARE RELATIVES AND BELONG TO THE POPALZAI TRIBE, TRACING THEIR LINEAGE TO THE DURRANI CLAN. SO IN A POSSIBLE SCENARIO HAIBATULLAH MIGHT LEAD THE ISLAMIC COUNCIL, WIELDING CONTROL AND POWER, AS IN THE PAST AND KARZAI MIGHT BE NAMED AS THE PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, IN WHICH ABDULLAH ABDULLAH MIGHT ALSO BE INCLUDED. IN ADDITION, NON-TALIBAN LEADERS LIKE HIZB-I-ISLAMI'S GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR AND FORMER DEPUTY PRESIDENT KARIM KHALILI MIGHT ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW SETUP. FURTHER, WE ALSO HAVE TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE RISE OF YOUNG BLOOD AMONGST THE TALIBAN RANKS. FIGURES SUCH AS MULLA YAQOOB, SON OF FORMER TALIBAN SUPREMO MULLA UMAR NOW LEADS ITS MILITARY BRANCH AND IS CREDITED WITH THE SWIFT CAPTURE OF POWER IN THE COUNTRY WITH LESS BLOODSHED. THIS YOUNG GENERATION IS TECH AND MEDIA SAVVY, MANY TALIBAN LEADERS NOW ANNOUNCE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON TWITTER.

pragmatic and inclusive force rather than the one, which brutally ruled Afghanistan earlier. Whatsoever be the case, it would be reckoned by the group's attitudes towards jihadis and other militants present in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious minorities, women and governance. **Future Government** It has been a week since the Taliban captured the national capital but they are yet to announce any government and its structure. This has led to speculations that intense political activities are going on behind the scenes and the world is waiting with bated breath to know the outcome. In the meantime Taliban have tried to calm concerns about their rule by urging women to join a government that has yet to be formed, declaring an amnesty for people employed by the former government or US and other foreign forces. To assuage these feelings, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in May that the group, once in power, would write laws to ensure the participation of women in public life. However, reports from Kabul indicate that the former President Hamid Karzai and former Minister of External Affairs Abdullah Abdullah are still present in the city. This leads credence to the fact that any future government might be based on Islamic foundations but it might be an amalgamation of Islamic and liberal democratic principles. Karzai and Taliban's current supremo Haibatullah Akhundzade are relatives and belong to the Popalzai tribe, tracing their lineage to the Durrani clan. So in a possible scenario Haibatullah might lead the Islamic Council, wielding control and power, as in the past and Karzai might be named as the president or prime minister of the new government, in which Abdullah Abdullah might also be included. In addition, non-Taliban leaders like Hizb-i-Islami's Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and former deputy president Karim Khalili might also be included in the new setup. Further, we also have to take into consideration the rise of young blood amongst the Taliban ranks. Figures such as Mulla Yaqoob, son of former Taliban supremo Mulla Umar now leads its military branch and is credited with the swift capture of power in the country with less bloodshed. This young generation is tech and media savvy, many Taliban leaders now announce the latest developments on Twitter. Coupled with this the Taliban delegation, which took part in the Doha talks, has experienced exposure to the liberal views and they might be more amenable to a not strictly Islamic form of government. As far as the role of Taliban is concerned, they were accepted as an important political force when the former American president invited them to the Doha Talks, lending credence to them as a group, which needs to be engaged with for any feasible solution of the on-going war. **Afghanistan's mineral wealth** The Taliban's resurgence has once again brought renewed focus on Afghanistan's vast untapped mineral wealth and resources that could transform its economic prospects if developed judiciously. Some conspiracy theories circulated earlier, which claimed that behind the on-going military campaign in Afghanistan, the American experts were also exploring the mineral deposits in Afghanistan. Lending credence to these theories, CNN on August 17 carried a story, which said that Afghanistan possesses mineral deposits worth nearly \$1 trillion. Iron, copper and gold deposits are scattered across provinces. There are also rare earth minerals and, perhaps most

importantly, what could be one of the world's biggest deposits of lithium - an essential but scarce component in rechargeable batteries and other technologies vital to tackling the climate crisis. Said Mirzad, former head of the Afghanistan Geological Survey, told Science magazine in 2010 that if Afghanistan has a few years of calm, allowing the development of its mineral resources, it could become one of the richest countries in the region within a decade. Three countries, which have been wooing the Taliban based on this assessment, are Iran, China and India. All of them could provide the expertise, infrastructure and labour force for the further prospecting, mining and processing of these minerals. Iran and China have been early starters in this regard. Iran has been hosting Taliban delegations to Teheran since last year and in late July 2021, before the recent developments, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with a delegation led by the head of the Afghan Taliban political committee Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tianjin. India on its part began engaging with the Taliban leaders in Doha since September 2020 when the intra-Afghan dialogue began even as New Delhi refused to spell out its policy clearly and said it continues to engage with "all stakeholders". **Afghan Psyche** Before commenting on the future of Afghanistan, we have to understand the geographic location, socio-cultural fabric and the internal forces, besides the Afghan psyche, all of which have always managed to play a key role in any political activity in the country. The tribal Pashtun population of Afghanistan, which approximately is 42 per cent has always enjoyed political influence both at the local and national stage. The Pashtun by virtue of being the largest tribe in the south and east has always dominated the national politics of Afghanistan, since the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1722-72). Moreover, the central authority in Kabul has always governed the country through a loosely federal structure. Which means that the central law was more or less observed in major cities and some smaller cities, but at the district and village level the tribal writ was imposed with a heavy hand. Added to this is the overall Afghan psyche, which has always remained fiercely independent and loyal to its tribal and clan ties besides being devout Muslims. To control them through a loose federal system remains the only wise choice, so as to let the tribal and clan ties continue and dominate the rural population but the major decisions are taken by the powers in the big cities. This might be one of the reasons, which is forcing Taliban to evolve a government, which rules with an iron fist from the centre but at the village and district level the local tribes manage their affairs in their own style whilst participating in the development of the rural areas and the country as a whole. (Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, interfaith and current affairs.)

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this article are the personal ideas of the author. The facts and conclusions appearing in the article do not reflect the views of Y Media and Midweek Newspaper, and Y Media does not assume any responsibility or liability for the same.

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MAN WHO VANDALISED MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S STATUE IN LAHORE GRANTED BAIL



LAHORE, (IANS) A magisterial court here on Friday granted post-arrest bail to the individual who reportedly vandalised a statue of Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh at the Lahore Fort earlier this week, Express Tribune reported.

The accused, Rizwan, was presented before the court on Friday. During the proceedings, the investigating officer asked the court if it had no objection against him being sent to judicial remand.

Meanwhile, the accused's counsel informed the court that the police have completed their investigation and have recovered a hammer

from the possession of the accused.

He further implored the court that the sections under which the FIR was registered were bailable and requested the court to grant bail to the accused. The judge of the magisterial court then granted bail to the accused. The accused, an activist of the banned outfit Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, was arrested on Tuesday.

In a video that had gone viral, Rizwan can be seen chanting slogans and breaking the arm of the statue and then dismantling Singh's bust from the horse altogether.

This is the third time that the statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been vandalised since its unveiling in 2019 to commemorate the ruler's 180th death anniversary.

The first act of vandalism took place when two men struck it with wooden rods, due to which one arm of the statue broke while other parts were damaged. The vandals were protesting the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution that granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The second incident was reported in December 2020, when a man broke one arm of the statue. The accused, reportedly an active member of a religious group, had later confessed to his crime. The authorities in Lahore claim to have deployed dozens of guards at the fort.

LIVING WITH RARE DISEASE – ACCEPTANCE BEGINS AT HOME

When Sarbjot Kaur's son Mehtab was two years old, she noticed he wasn't as active as his sibling had been. While he was achieving all growth milestones; he would often lose his balance and fall down while walking, couldn't climb up or down the stairs, and had trouble standing up from a sitting position from the floor. He also had very low energy and was always fatigued. Some friends and family would say Mehtab was just "lazy." But, Sarbjot knew something was wrong.

After waiting a year for proper diagnosis, Kaur was told her son has spinal muscular atrophy type III (SMA) — a rare, genetic, neuromuscular disease that is progressive and is classified into various subtypes depending on the severity — type III is classified as the mild form. If left untreated, SMA causes all skeletal muscles to weaken that are used for crawling, walking, standing and even holding objects. In severe cases, SMA can impact the ability to swallow and breathe leading to severe disability or death. SMA doesn't affect a person's ability to learn, think, or have relationships.

As a progressive disease, it is essential to diagnose and treat SMA as quickly as possible. According to Cure SMA Canada, SMA is a common 'rare disorder' impacting approximately 1 in 6,000 babies born and about 1 in 40 Canadians are genetic carriers of the SMA gene.

"I had never heard of SMA. But, I'm so very thankful we caught it early because, after the initial shock of the diagnosis, we were heartened to learn there are treatment options that can make a real difference in helping Mehtab," says Kaur. Mehtab has significantly improved since starting his treatments at Sick Kids Hospital in conjunction with physical therapy. "The treatment has been night and day. I see a huge difference in his energy levels, his motor skills and he just seems happier. He will be starting school this September."

"We often don't want to admit there is a problem either out of denial or fear that comes with illness," says Kaur. "But diagnosing SMA and getting treatment made all the difference for our family. I know it's scary when addressing a family illness. But, you are not alone and there are likely resources and treatment options available. While an illness may impact a child's development, it does not make them less valuable, less human, or less important. We need to understand that individuals with chronic ailments are equally capable of achieving their full potential if there is equity created through inclusion, awareness and advocacy."

Kaur is passionate about spreading awareness to other families — particularly in the South Asian community. She has become an advocate for better access to treatment for all. Treatment options vary across the country and can be limited according to the age of the patient.

"Can you imagine an effective treatment being available and not being able to get it? It's unthinkable," says Kaur. "Age or which province you live in shouldn't affect anyone's ability to get better and manage this very serious condition."

Living with a rare disease can be isolating. It can be difficult for families to interact with others who have shared their experiences and understand what they are managing. A new online resource called SMAshingbarriers.ca has been developed by the SMA community, for the SMA community across Canada. on Facebook and Instagram that allows Canadians within the SMA community to connect, share questions, comments and needs surrounding their SMA journey.

"The journey can be scary and isolating," says Kaur. I want people to know they can get help and they don't have to do it alone. Acceptance begins at home. With support and understanding, I believe we can overcome the greatest life challenges."

For more information on SMA, please visit Curesma.ca and SMAshingbarriers.ca



COVID-19 EXPOSURES: PATRONS WHO ATTENDED &COMPANY RESTO BAR IN MISSISSAUGA ON AUGUST 6-8 OR AUGUST 13-15

BRAMPTON, ON - Peel Public Health is advising everyone who attended &Company Resto Bar at 295 Enfield Place, Mississauga on August 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 or 15 to seek immediate COVID-19 testing because of a possible exposure to COVID-19. This applies to all patrons and staff, including those who are fully vaccinated.

For details on testing options, please visit Getting tested for COVID-19.

Individuals who live outside Peel should contact their local public health unit for details on testing close to home. If symptoms develop, individuals should self-isolate away from others. Peel Public Health has advised the premise to remain closed until further notice.

SIKHS STUCK AT AFGHANISTAN GURDWARA ARE SAFE, SAYS DELHI SIKH BODY

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee has denied that Sikhs living in Afghanistan have been kidnapped by the Taliban even as the security situation in the war-torn country has further deteriorated. Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee chairman Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, "All our families are safe inside the Gurdwara, although there was some movement yesterday. Around 300 people are absolutely safe." "Nothing happened to anyone. About 150 Sikhs are not in the Gurdwara premises, they are at different places. The people who have stayed inside and around the Gurdwara are absolutely safe. I am in constant touch with them," he said.

After the Taliban occupied Afghanistan, minority communities living there are very fearful and are pleading for help. Hundreds of people are waiting at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul to leave the country. The pictures coming from Afghanistan are very disturbing and have left people across the country deeply worried. Afghan citizens living in Delhi are also constantly seeking help from the Government of India.



1BN KIDS LIVE IN EXTREMELY HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES OF CLIMATE IMPACTS: UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS, (IANS) About 1 billion children, nearly half the world's 2.2 billion kids, live in 33 countries classified as "extremely high-risk" of the impacts of climate change, according to a report by the Unicef.

These children face a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks with a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services, such as water and sanitation, health care, and education, Xinhua news agency quoted the report released on Friday as saying. Children living in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau are the most at risk, threatening their health, education, and protection, and exposing them to deadly diseases, it says. Launched in collaboration with Fridays for Future, also known as School Strike for Climate, the report is the first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child's perspective. It ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks, such as cyclones and heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services. "For the first time, we have a complete picture of where and how children are vulnerable to climate change, and that picture is almost unimaginably dire. Climate and environmental shocks are undermining the complete spectrum of children's rights, from access to clean air, food, and safe water; to education, housing, freedom from exploitation, and even their right to survive. Virtually no child's life will be unaffected," said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF executive director.

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Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION (TTC) POP-UP
COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINICS AT VICTORIA PARK
AND MAIN STREET STATIONS FROM AUGUST 24 TO 26

COVID-19

TTC Pop-Up
Vaccination Clinic



ttc.ca/COVID-19

The TTC has partnered with East Toronto Health Partners to provide vaccination clinics conveniently located at two of our subway stations on Line 2. The clinics are open to anyone born in 2009 or earlier for both first and second doses. Customers who leave the station to access the clinic will be permitted free re-entry by showing their vaccine sticker or receipt.

Where:
Stanley Grizzle Park (326 Main Street, across from Main Street Station) and
Victoria Park Station (777 Victoria Park Avenue, mezzanine area of the station)
When:
August 24, 25 and 26

8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
No appointment is required. Moderna and Pfizer (first and second doses) will be available while supplies last each day. Getting your second dose
Health officials have advised that vaccines can be safely mixed for a first and second dose.
If your first dose was:
AstraZeneca: you can get Moderna or Pfizer for your second dose when you are eligible, at least 8 weeks after your first dose with informed consent.
Moderna or Pfizer: you can get either Moderna or Pfizer, at least 28 days after your first dose. You can switch between Moderna and Pfizer safely.

ONTARIO'S UPDATED COVID-19 VACCINATION ELIGIBILITY

Ontario is updating eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine to protect individuals most at risk of serious illness from the virus, as well as children and youth to minimize disruptions from COVID-19 heading into the fall.
A complete two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series provides strong protection against COVID-19 infection and severe outcomes, including against the Delta variant, in the general population. However, for some populations, a third dose may be required to provide sufficient protection based on a suboptimal or waning immune response to vaccines and increased risk of COVID-19 infection.
Based on the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts, the province will begin offering third doses of a COVID-19 vaccine to select vulnerable populations:
* Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplant and hematopoietic stem cell transplants)
* Patients with hematological cancers (examples include lymphoma, myeloma, leukemia) on active treatment (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy) for malignant hematologic disorders
* Recipients of an anti-CD20 agent (e.g. rituximab, ocrelizumab, ofatumumab)
* Residents of high-risk congregate settings including long-term care homes, higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations elder care lodges

Transplant recipients, patients with hematological cancers on active treatments, and recipients of an anti-CD20 agent have a decreased immune response after COVID-19 vaccines compared to the general population, potentially increasing the risk of breakthrough cases for those who have already received two doses. A third dose will help to provide individuals in these groups with an improved immune response. Individuals in these groups can receive their third dose at a minimum of eight weeks following their second dose and will be contacted by their health care provider such as their primary care provider, specialist, or their hospital specialty program. Evidence shows that several months after receiving two COVID-19 vaccine doses, the immune response in residents who live in long-term care homes wanes significantly compared to the general population. Administering a third dose to residents of high-risk congregate settings including long-term care homes, higher-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations elder care lodges, can help boost their immune response for improved protection against COVID-19. Third doses will be offered to these individuals in their residence (either within the home or through a mobile clinic) and can be administered at a minimum of five months following their second dose. Locations and timing for third doses may vary by public health unit based on local considerations, with some beginning as early as this week where opportunities exist.

ADITYA JHA APPOINTED CHAIR OF ICCC’S ADVISORY BOARD

CONTD. FROM PAGE 3
* Strengthening ICCC Brand in Canada & India As a premier Canada-India trade and investment promotion organization.
* Business outreach Guide ICCC with action plan to connect with the leaders of Indo-Canadian, Canadian and Indian business leaders in the Canada India trade corridor.
* Stakeholder outreach Help establish deeper relationship with the political leaders, Bureaucrats and Think Tank as well as Canadian trade bodies.
* Paradigm shift Help in developing evaluation/attraction parameters that would enable attracting and retaining sponsors in Canada & India.
Dr. Aditya Jha is a Life member of the ICCC, former ICCC Board member and has the rare distinction as recipient of the ICCC’s Technology Award (2004) and Lifetime Achievement Award (2014). He has been honoured with the Order of Canada (2012), Honorary Doctorate (2009) by Ryerson University’s Ted Rogers School of Business Management, vested in the Hall of Fame as Champions of Public Education in Canada by the Learning partners and has received many more awards and accolades.
His philanthropic giving includes nurturing entrepreneurship with Canada’s Indigenous community. His private charitable foundation (www.poafoundation.org) has fourteen endowments (for scholarships) and five grants (for entrepreneurship) at five Canadian universities/colleges besides his philanthropic activities in India and Nepal. He has served on various federal/provincial and education boards over the last 15 years. Dr. Jha is serial entrepreneur and has had rich international professional experience in Asia, North America and Europe and at present he is the Chairman & Founder of dgMarket International Inc., USA with offices in nine countries including India (Mumbai & Delhi).
He obtained degrees leading to Post graduate studies in Computer Science and is an alumnus of Delhi University, Kurukshetra University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Ryerson University. He last served as General Manager at Bell Canada before launching his entrepreneurial venture.

PEEL POLICE ARREST 3 BRAMPTON MEN IN
TRAFFICKING OF MINOR GIRL

CONTD. FROM PAGE 3
On Saturday, August 21, 2021, officers commenced an investigation into allegations that a female under 18-years-old had been held against her will, violently assaulted numerous times and was being trafficked within the sex trade. The victim was transported to a local hospital with serious, non-life threatening injuries.
On the same day, police attended a residence in the area of Bovaird Drive West and Creditview Road in the City of Brampton and arrested and charged three men:
Amritpal Singh, a 23-year-old man, and Harkuwar Singh, a 22-year-old man, both from Brampton, were each charged with:
1) Procuring Persons Under 18 Years
2) Trafficking in Persons Under the Age of 18
3) Receiving Benefit Resulting from Trafficking in Persons
4) Exercise Control
5) Material Benefit from Sexual Services provided by Persons Under 18 years
6) Advertising Sexual Services
7) Forcible Confinement
8) Aggravated Assault
Sukhmanpreet Singh, a 23-year-old man from Brampton, was charged with:
1) Forcible Confinement
2) Aggravated Assault
All three men were held for a bail hearing and appeared before the Ontario Court of Justice on Sunday, August 22, 2021.
A fourth male suspect is being sought in relation to this investigation and his identity remains unknown at this time. He is described as South Asian, 6 feet, 200lbs, short dark hair with a black beard. Investigators from the Specialized Enforcement Bureau believe there may be more human trafficking victims and/or witnesses to this investigation and are urging anyone with information in relation to this investigation or the unknown suspect to contact them at 905 453-2121, extension 3555. Information may also be left anonymously by calling Peel Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), or by visiting www.peelcrimestoppers.ca.

EFFECTIVE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, BRITISH
COLUMBIA MANDATES MASK TO REDUCE
TRANSMISSION, PROTECT PEOPLE IN PUBLIC SPACES



As of Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021, masks must be worn in all indoor public spaces throughout B.C. to help slow the transmission of COVID-19 as B.C. prepares for the fall and respiratory illness season.
A new order from the provincial health officer will require people 12 and older to wear masks in indoor public settings, regardless of vaccination status. These settings include: malls, shopping centres, coffee shops and retail and grocery stores; liquor and drug stores; airports, city halls, libraries, community and recreation centres; restaurants, pubs and bars (unless seated); on public transportation, in a taxi or ride-sharing vehicle; areas of office buildings where services to the public are provided; common areas of sport and fitness centres when not engaged in physical activity; common areas of post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations; and inside schools for all K-12 staff, visitors and students in grades 4-12. This temporary order will be reassessed as the B.C. vaccine card requirement is fully implemented in certain social and recreational settings, as announced on Aug. 23. "As the transmission of COVID-19 increases in B.C., primarily among unvaccinated people and in part due to the Delta variant, it's important to take this extra temporary step to make indoor public spaces safer for everyone," said Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer. "We need to continue doing the things that protect us, including wearing masks in indoor, public areas, practising hand hygiene regularly, staying away if we are sick and keeping a respectful distance from people. And most important of all, every person should get vaccinated to protect themselves, their loved ones and their community." For the purposes of this order, a mask or face covering is defined as a medical or non-medical mask that covers the nose and mouth. Face shields are not a substitute for a mask, as there is an opening below the mouth. "As unvaccinated people continue to get sick and hospitalized with COVID-19, we're taking another step to ensure we overcome COVID-19 together, and that we move forward together," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. "Our pandemic has always been about making good choices with the information we have and making the best choices to keep people safe. Now more than ever, we need to follow the advice and orders of the provincial health officer." People who cannot wear a mask or who cannot put on or remove a mask without the assistance of others are exempt. A person may not be able to wear a mask for a psychological, behavioural or health condition, or due to a physical, cognitive or mental impairment.

VACCINE STOCKPILING BY NATIONS MAY BRING
NEW COVID VARIANTS: RESEARCHERS

TORONTO, (IANS) Vaccine nationalism may strongly impact global trajectories of Covid-19 case numbers and increase the potential emergence of novel variants, warn researchers.
A team of researchers from the US and Canada projected forward the incidence of Covid-19 cases under a range of vaccine dosing regimes, vaccination rates, and assumptions related to immune responses. They did so in two model regions: One with high access to vaccines (HAR) and a low-access region (LAR). The models also allowed for the regions to be coupled either through case importation, or the evolution of a novel variant in one of the regions. The study is published in the journal Science.
"Certain countries such as Peru and South Africa that have had severe Covid-19 outbreaks have received few vaccines, while many doses have gone to countries experiencing comparatively milder pandemic impacts, either in terms of mortality or economic dislocation," said Caroline Wagner, Assistant professor of bioengineering at McGill University. Overall, the study found that increased vaccine-sharing resulted in reduced case numbers in LARs. "Because it appears that vaccines are highly effective at reducing the clinical severity of infections, the public health implications of these reductions are very significant," said Michael Mina, Assistant Professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. On the other hand, the models predicted that sustained elevated case numbers in LARs with limited vaccine availability will result in a high potential for viral evolution, underlying the importance of rapid, equitable global vaccine distribution.



THE VAX VAN WILL BE MAKING ROUNDS ACROSS PEEL. FIRST STOP: WESTWOOD SQUARE ON AUG. 26 (2 - 6 P.M.) &AUG. 27 (10 A.M. - 2 P.M.) ANYONE 12+ OR TURNING 12 THIS YEAR CAN WALK IN AND GET THEIR 1ST OR 2ND DOSE (REGION OF PEEL/ TWITTER)

Vaccines **reduce** your risk of hospitalization and death

ONTARIO COVID-19 VACCINATION DATA
Between December 14, 2020 and August 7, 2021

COVID-19 CASES

99.4%

partially or unvaccinated

HOSPITALIZATIONS


99.2%


partially or unvaccinated

DEATHS

98.8%


partially or unvaccinated





Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health has issued a "call for arms!"

It's not too late to get vaccinated against COVID-19.



ONTARIO'S HEALTH OFFICIALS SAY, 'VACCINES ARE YOUR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST COVID19 AND DELTA VARIANT' (CHRISTINE ELLIOT/ TWITTER)

ONTARIO INVESTING \$169M TO EXTEND WAGE INCREASE FOR ELIGIBLE PERSONAL & DIRECT SUPPORT WORKERS UNTIL OCTOBER 31

The Ontario government is investing an additional \$169 million to extend the temporary wage increase for personal support workers and direct support workers for the third time since its initial investment last year. This increase will continue until October 31, 2021 and will help stabilize staffing levels and support our frontline health care workers to ensure the province is prepared to respond to any scenario as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve.

“Since the outset of the pandemic, personal support workers and direct support workers have been critical in supporting some of our most vulnerable patients,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “As we head into the fall, ensuring Ontario’s personal support workers are supported will ensure patients continue to receive the high-quality care they need.” The government is extending the wage enhancement for over 158,000 workers who deliver publicly funded personal support services or direct support services in hospitals, long-term care, home and community care and social services until October 31, 2021. This includes:

- \$3 per hour for approximately 38,000 eligible workers in home and community care;
- \$3 per hour for approximately 50,000 eligible workers in long-term care;
- \$2 per hour for approximately 10,000 eligible workers in public hospitals; and
- \$3 per hour for approximately 60,000 eligible workers in children, community and social services providing personal direct support services for the activities of daily living.

This latest temporary wage increase builds on the government’s previous wage enhancement extension on June 11, 2021, which was set to expire on August 23, 2021. Since October 2020, Ontario has invested \$841 million and, with this additional \$169 million, will have invested over \$1 billion for personal support workers and direct support workers. The province will continue to review the wage increase to inform its next steps to ensure this important investment will bring the greatest stability and support for Ontario’s personal support workers and direct support workers.

Constance Clerici, Executive Chair, Closing the Gap Healthcare, and Leighton McDonald, President and CEO, Closing the Gap Healthcare, said, “We are appreciative of this announcement as we fully understand how much this wage enhancement has meant to our PSWs. This


is well deserved as everyone has worked so hard to support their families during the pandemic. It also demonstrates respect for the valuable social impact that this dedicated workforce makes to the lives of so many.”


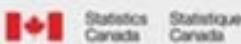
“This wage enhancement extension recognizes the vital work and significant sacrifices that personal support workers and direct support workers continue to make to keep Ontarians, including our most vulnerable, safe and healthy,” said Prabmeet Sarkaria, President of the Treasury Board. “We will continue to make historic investments to improve home and community care, long-term care, public hospitals and the social services sector throughout the province as part of our fight against COVID-19.”

“Our government is committed to rebuilding and repairing long-term care in Ontario,” said Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care. “Further extending the wage increase will help us continue to attract and retain personal support workers who provide residents with the care they need and deserve every day.” To protect vulnerable patients and staff in settings where the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 and the Delta variant is higher, on August 17th the Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a directive mandating hospitals and home and community care service providers to have a COVID-19 vaccination policy for employees, staff, contractors, students and volunteers, including personal support workers. This is similar to the vaccination policy requirements currently in place for long-term care homes. Vaccination policies will also be implemented in other higher-risk settings where personal support workers and direct support workers provide care, including licensed retirement homes, congregate group homes and day programs for adults with developmental disabilities, children’s treatment centres and other services for children with special needs, and licensed children’s residential settings.

“We remain grateful for support workers who, throughout the pandemic, have continued to provide vital services to individuals with developmental disabilities and complex needs,” said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. “Personal and direct support workers across the province have been instrumental to ensuring our loved ones receive the quality care they need, and the temporary wage increase is meant to recognize and celebrate their important work.”

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic 92.6% of Canadians have been washing their hands more frequently.





STATISTICSCANADA REVEALS THAT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19PANDEMIC, 92.6% OF CANADIANS HAVE BEEN WASHING THEIR HANDS MORE FREQUENTLY. FREQUENT HANDWASHING IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS (STATSCAN/ TWITTER)

LIBERALS' LEAD SLIPS NATIONALLY

CONTD. FROM PAGE 3

The Liberals are bolstered by solid leads in Toronto (50%-24%), York Region (49%-34%), and Peel region (42%-35%). They also find themselves in the lead in the Hamilton-Niagara corridor by eight points over the NDP. The Conservatives, however, can claim a one-point lead in the Durham region and an eighteen-point lead over the Liberals in Dufferin and Simcoe counties.

"The Liberals have relied on strong support in the Greater Toronto Area to win in 2015 and 2019, and will need more of the same if they want success in 2021", added Angolano. "So far, they are off to a good start."

FEDERAL LEADERS' DEBATES IS ALL SET FOR SEPTEMBER 8, 9

Debates Commissioner David Johnston has invited the leaders of five political parties, namely Bloc Québécois, Conservative, Green Party, Liberal and New Democratic Party (NDP), to participate in the upcoming leaders' debates taking place at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Québec on Wednesday, September 8 at 8 p.m. EDT (French) and September 9 at 9 p.m. EDT (English).

People's Party of Canada (PPC) leader Maxime Bernier will not participate in the debate.

Y Media will broadcast full coverage of the National debates on Channel Y. It will be followed by a panel discussion led by Group Editor Yudhvir Jaswal. The panel members will present a complete and in-depth analysis of the ongoing federal government election.

STATISTICS CANADA SAYS, ' CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI) ROSE 3.7% ON A YEAR-OVER-YEAR BASIS IN JULY'

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 3.7% on a year-over-year basis in July, up from a 3.1% gain in June. Excluding gasoline, the CPI increased 2.8% year over year. On a monthly basis, the CPI rose 0.6% in July, the fastest pace since January 2021. On a seasonally adjusted monthly basis, the CPI was up 0.5%.

Highlights

Prices rose at a faster pace year over year in six of the eight major components in July, with shelter prices contributing the most to the all-items increase. Conversely, prices for clothing and footwear as well as alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and recreational cannabis slowed on a year-over-year basis in July compared with June.

Gasoline prices rise at a slower pace

Year over year, prices for gasoline rose less in July (+30.9%) than in June (+32.0%). A base-year effect continued to impact the gasoline index, as prices in July 2020 increased 4.4% on a month-over-month basis when many businesses and services reopened.

In July 2021, gasoline prices increased 3.5% month over month, as oil production by OPEC+ (countries from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus) remained below pre-pandemic levels though global demand increased.

Homeowners' replacement cost index rises at its fastest rate since 1987

The homeowners' replacement cost index, which is related to the price of new homes, continued to trend upward, rising 13.8% year over year in July, the largest yearly increase since October 1987. Similarly, the other owned accommodation expenses index, which includes commission fees on the sale of real estate, was up 13.4% year over year in July.

Prices for durable goods increase at a faster pace

Year-over-year price growth for goods rose at a faster pace in July (+5.0%) than in June (+4.5%), with durable goods (+5.0%) accelerating the most. The purchase of passenger vehicles index contributed the most to the increase, rising 5.5% year over year in July. The gain was partially attributable to the global shortage of semiconductor chips. Prices for upholstered furniture rose 13.4% year over year in July, largely as a result of lower supply and higher input costs. The introduction of tariffs on upholstered furniture, first implemented in early May 2021, may also have contributed to the increase. The video equipment index was up 4.8% year over year, mainly driven by higher prices for televisions.

ONTARIO INVESTING \$5.2 MILLION TO BRING CARDIOVASCULAR SURGERY SERVICES TO NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

THUNDER BAY — As part of its comprehensive plan to end hallway health care, the Ontario government is investing over \$5.2 million to support the planning and design of a cardiovascular surgery program at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. For the first time, cardiac surgery will be regularly performed in Northwestern Ontario, helping to address surgical wait times and improving access to life-saving care closer to home. “With investments like this, our government is cutting wait times and strengthening health care services for people all across the province,” said Premier Doug Ford. “This incredible program will ensure the people of northwestern Ontario can get the critical heart care they need faster and closer to home.” Cardiovascular surgery is currently not offered in Northwestern Ontario, meaning that patients who require cardiovascular surgery must travel to other parts of the province or country to receive care. In 2020/21, 206 patients travelled outside of Northwestern Ontario for cardiovascular surgeries and post-operative care, most often travelling over 10 hours to Toronto. The development of a Cardiovascular Surgery Program at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre will make more urgent cardiac and vascular services available, so patients can receive timely, high-quality care.

“Investing in key health services and expanding hospital capacity is essential to supporting Ontario’s surgical recovery and building a connected health care system for all Ontarians, no matter where they live,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “After years of waiting, patients in Northwestern Ontario can finally receive lifesaving cardiovascular treatment closer to home.”

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PAKISTAN, INDIA ISSUE DIPLOMATIC VISAS TO EACH OTHER AFTER 28-MONTH GAP

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Islamabad and New Delhi have issued assignment visas to each other's diplomats after a gap of around 28 months as both sides are seeking to normalise ties that have been on ice since 2019. Pakistan and India have issued a large number of assignment visas to each other's diplomatic staff in recent weeks, the Express Tribune reported.

Both countries have issued visas on all applications submitted by March 15 this year.

Pakistan issued visas to 33 Indian officials, while seven Pakistani diplomats received assignment visas from India.

Sources said there was a possibility of an agreement between Pakistan and India to issue visas on assignment applications by June 15. The two countries are likely to issue more visas to each other's diplomats after that.

All countries issue assignment visas to diplomats and embassy staff from other countries. In January this year, top intelligence officers from the two countries held secret talks in Dubai, reopening a back

channel of diplomacy aimed at a modest roadmap to normalising ties over the next several months, the report said.

Later in February, the two countries' militaries announced an unexpected joint ceasefire.

The UAE's envoy to Washington confirmed in April that the Gulf state was mediating between India and Pakistan to help the nuclear-armed rivals reach a "healthy and functional" relationship.

Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba said in a virtual discussion with Stanford University's Hoover Institution that the UAE had played a role "in bringing Kashmir escalation down and created a ceasefire, hopefully ultimately leading to restoring diplomats and getting the relationship back to a healthy level".

"They might not sort of become best friends but at least we want to get it to a level where it's functional, where it's operational, where they are speaking to each other," he added. In March this year, Chief of Amy Staff Gen Qamar JavedBajwa called on India and Pakistan to "bury the past" and move towards cooperation.

LUCKNOW LABS INCLUDED IN COVID SURVEILLANCE GRID

LUCKNOW, (IANS) The virology labs at Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) and National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) in Lucknow have been included in Indian Sars Cov-2 Genomic Surveillance Consortium (INSACOG) -- a conglomerate of 28 laboratories across the country.

The consortium was set up by the Union health ministry, department of biotechnology with Council for Scientific Research and Indian Council of Medical Research to monitor genomic variations in Sars Cov-2.

It also works to correlate whole genomics sequencing (WGS) data with clinical/epidemiological data for advance preparedness for public health interventions and better understanding of disease transmission, clinical severity, re-infections/immune escape, vaccine efficacy and available diagnostics tests.

An official order issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has listed the two labs as a satellite centre that will work in coordination with Delhi-based Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology.

The order stated, "Over the past few months, many variants have been detected through whole genome sequencing activity undertaken by INSACOG. The information obtained has been regularly shared with states and union territories to strengthen public health response to the pandemic. For the exercise to become meaningful, it is necessary that timely clinical data and adequate number of RT-PCR positive samples for genome sequencing and surveillance work is done by states too."

Experts say genome sequencing is crucial to countering the pandemic amid reports of an anticipated third wave and extent of damage will depend on the new strain.

Indications are that if no new variant surfaces, the third wave may not be lethal. But if the virus mutates again, the third wave may cause more harm. Officials at the National Diseases Surveillance Programme unit of Uttar Pradesh said, samples will now be sent for genome sequencing to these labs as well. Earlier, a section of Covid-19 samples was being sent to the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences and King George's Medical University.

121 CASES PENDING AGAINST MPS/MLAS IN CBI COURTS, 58 PUNISHABLE WITH LIFE IMPRISONMENT, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA TOLD

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Supreme Court has been informed that a total of 121 cases are pending trial against sitting and former MPs/MLAs in special CBI courts across the country, and as many as 58 of them are punishable with life imprisonment. However, in over a third of the cases, the trial is moving at snail's pace - charges have not been framed, though offences were committed several years back.

Senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, appointed amicus curiae in a 2016 petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking direction to fast-tracking of criminal trials against sitting and former MPs/MLAs, has filed the report in the top court. He has been assisted by advocate Sneha Kalita in the matter.

Earlier, it was reported that that there were a total of 151 cases, but that was caused by a typo in the report, which was subsequently corrected. The fourteenth report, in the matter, said: "It may be noted that out of 121 cases pending trial before the Special Courts, CBI, as many as 58 cases are punishable with life imprisonment. In 45 cases, even the charges have not been framed, though the offences alleged to have been committed several years back."

The CBI has furnished a status report dated August 19, to the amicus mentioning the details of the cases pending trial before different CBI courts and those under investigation. The CBI cases pending investigation against MPs/MLAs are 37.

The oldest pending case is in Patna, where the accused was charge-sheeted on June 12, 2000. The report highlighted inordinate delay in several cases pending trial before CBI courts in different parts of the country. As per details of the cases pending trial before different CBI courts, total number of MPs involved is 56, of which sitting MPs are 14, former MPs are 37, and expired MPs are five. Total number of MLAs involved in 121, including 34 sitting, 78 former 78, and nine expired. According to the Enforcement Directorate's status report, a total number of 51 Members of Parliament, both sitting and former, are accused in cases arising out of offences under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002. However, the report does not show as to how many MPs/MLAs are sitting and/or former legislators. The report suggested that courts before whom the trials are pending may be directed to expedite the trial of all pending cases on day-to-day basis in terms of Section 309 of the CrPC.

"All the High Courts may be directed to issue administrative instructions to the effect that the concerned courts dealing with cases investigated by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate shall deal with the cases pending before MPs/MLAs on priority basis and other cases shall be dealt only after the trial in these cases are over," said the



report. The amicus suggested in case, additional courts are required, the high courts and the appropriate government shall constitute additional special courts.

The report further suggested that cases where investigations are pending before the ED and the CBI, a monitoring committee may be constituted comprising of the following: former judge of the top court or the former Chief Justice of a high court, the Director, ED (or his nominee not below the rank of Additional Director), the Director, CBI (or his nominee not below the rank of Additional Director), the Union Home Secretary (or his nominee not below the rank of Joint Secretary), and a judicial officer not below the rank of district judge to be nominated by the top court.

Amicus suggested the committee may be constituted within a period of two weeks of the order and it should furnish its status report regarding each particular case in a sealed cover to the top court within two months of its first sitting.

On August 10, the top court gave last opportunity to the Centre to submit a detailed status report regarding details of pendency and stage of trial of cases involving sitting and former lawmakers registered with the central agencies, CBI, and others.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Surya Kant had told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta: "We are reading these reports in newspapers. They don't send us anything. We get everything in the evening; we don't know anything". The CJI said in September last year, the court had granted time to Centre to file a detailed status report, then in October, again time was sought, and today, the situation is the same.

This does not work, he noted. "What else can we say to express our displeasure, we were told Centre is concerned about pending cases against MPs/MLAs", he had added.

INDIAN UNION MINISTER HARDEEP PURI RECEIVES SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB BROUGHT FROM KABUL

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday received and carried one of the three 'swaroops' of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib that were brought from Kabul amid chaos in Afghanistan. As India is continuously engaged in evacuation from a war-torn country, a group of 77 persons including Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, three copies of Guru Granth Sahib landed at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport on Tuesday.

Union ministers Hardeep Singh Puri and V. Muraleedharan received copies of Guru Granth Sahib and 44 Afghan Sikhs who reached India from Kabul on a special Air India flight.

"Blessed to receive & pay obeisance to three holy Swaroop of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji from Kabul to Delhi a short while ago," Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted along with a video showing him carrying a copy of the holy book.

The Union Minister thanked Prime Minister Modi for carrying out rescue operations from Afghanistan and said the government is in touch with those in the country. The minister also said all the copies of Guru Granth Sahib have undergone the Covid-19 test.

The three copies of Guru Granth Sahib will be taken to Guru Arjan Dev Ji Gurdwara in the Capital's New Mahavir Nagar. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader R.P. Singh and president of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management committee Manjinder Singh Sirsa were also present at the airport. Sirsa later tweeted, "I request PM & HM to amend CAA and extend the cut-off date from 2014 to 2021 so that people coming from Afghanistan get benefited & lead a safe life here and their children are able to study here".



CM ARVIND KEJRIWAL'S BIG ANNOUNCEMENT ON REOPENING OF SCHOOLS IN DELHI



After an expert committee has submitted a report to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal regarding the reopening of schools in the national capital, the Delhi government will take the decision to reopen schools in the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) meeting. There has been a significant decline in the COVID-19 caseload in the capital and the expert committee has suggested the necessary steps should be taken while reopening the schools.

CM Kejriwal said, "Mixed experience has come from other states. We are still monitoring the situation. We don't want to take any risks with children. We'll tell you whenever there's a decision about the reopening of schools. We will also explain the decision taken on the report given by the expert committee."

According to reports, some suggestions have come forward, which includes reopening of schools in a phased manner and the committee has also suggested that the senior classes should be resumed first.

AFGHANISTAN: 150 INDIAN CITIZENS RELEASED AFTER PASSPORT CHECK, ON THEIR WAY BACK TO KABUL AIRPORT

Several Afghan media outlets had reported that 150 Indians were missing after their coordinator was allegedly kidnapped by the Taliban. However, Ahmadullah Waseq, a Taliban spokesman has denied this report. The latest update is that the 150 Indian citizens were released after their passports were checked and they are on their way back to Kabul airport. Earlier, an Indian Air Force (IAF) transport aircraft on Saturday departed from the Kabul airport with some eminent Afghan leaders, including public representatives from the Hindu and Sikh communities, as well as 85 Indians on board, sources here said.

The sources said that the IAF's C-130J transport plane landed in Tajikistan for refuelling and is likely to arrive at the Hindon Air Force Station in Ghaziabad on Saturday evening, they added.

Fearing that the Taliban militia may prevent the Afghan public representatives from boarding the IAF flight, the entire plan was kept secret till the aircraft took off from Afghanistan, the sources further said. The IAF aircraft was waiting for the clearance at Kabul airport due to the huge rush as many countries have sent their military planes to evacuate its citizens. "The US authorities have taken full control of the airport and they are managing the air operation from the war torn country. In this huge rush, charting out a slot for an aircraft and also a safe air route for the evacuation flight have become major challenges for the US authority," an informed official said.

PAK OBJECTION TO INDIA'S HYDROPOWER DAM IN J&K MAY BE DISCUSSED AT NEXT IWT MEET

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Pakistan's objection to the design of the 624 MW power project over Chenab river in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir may be the topic of the next meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission as part of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT). Pakistan's Indus Commissioner Syed Muhammad Meher Ali Shah had raised objection to the design of the run-of-the-river Kiru project last week, a charge that has been denied by India's Indus Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Saxena, who said it is fully compliant as per the provisions of the IWT. The concrete gravity Kiru project is located in Kishtwar district of J&K. The Rs 4,287.59 crore (at 2018 level) project by Chenab Valley Power Projects Limited is a joint venture between the NHPC Ltd and Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation (JKSPDC). Under the 1960 vintage IWT, India and Pakistan share the waters of six rivers that flow through India towards Pakistan. Of these, India has complete rights over three eastern rivers - Sutlej, Beas and Ravi, while Pakistan has rights over the western rivers - Chenab, Jhelum and Indus. India can, however, build run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers. Pakistan gets almost 80 per cent share of the Indus basin water (approx 135 MAF) against India's 33 MAF. "The next meeting (of the Permanent Indus Commission) is scheduled to be held in Pakistan. This topic will surely feature in that meet-



ing. However, no date or month is fixed yet for the meeting and it depends on mutual convenience," Saxena said. Article VIII (5) of the IWT says, "The Commission shall meet regularly at least once a year, alternately in India and Pakistan." The most recent meeting was held in March 2021 in India.

BJP to deploy one senior leader in each UP Assembly seat

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Bhartiya Janata Party will be deploying one senior leader in each assembly constituency of Uttar Pradesh to oversee the party's poll affairs. The UP Assembly polls will be held early next year. These leaders will oversee, coordinate and execute party strategy on the ground at assembly level. Sources said that Uttar Pradesh will witness heavy deployment of senior leaders, which include BJP MPs and senior leaders in coming months, who will oversee the organisational activities at assembly level. "The BJP has large numbers of senior leaders having experience of contesting polls or who had successfully guided workers in polls. Experience of these senior leaders will be used in the next year's Uttar Pradesh assembly polls," sources said. Another saffron party leader pointed out that the BJP has leaders with experience of contesting elections at national and state level or managing polls and there is nothing wrong in using their experience. "One senior leader is likely to be assigned one assembly segment. Leaders from other states will be also sent to Uttar Pradesh for the purpose and they will coordinate and oversee party work at their respective assembly seat," sources said. A party insider said these leaders include union ministers, Parliamentarians from Uttar Pradesh and ministers from BJP ruled states, senior leaders having organisational experience will be assigned the responsibility to oversee the party activities at ground level. It is learnt that one leader will be given responsibility of one assembly constituency and other senior leaders will be overseeing the clus-



ter of four or five assembly segments. During the recent West Bengal Assembly polls, UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya was given responsibility of overseeing polls in a few Lok Sabha seats along with several union ministers, ministers from party ruled states and senior leaders. BJP Uttar Pradesh general secretary (organization) Sunil Bansal was also given the responsibility of overseeing poll activities during West Bengal polls in one of the five zones. A senior functionary said that role and responsibilities of senior leaders will be decided in coming days. "These senior leaders will be more focused on organisational work and they manage backroom activities in their respective area or constituency," he said.

Equity, climate justice should be touchstone of global climate response: India

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Equity and climate justice should be the touchstone of any global climate response, and only then can it be held that strategies that are just and "in reverence to Mother Earth" have been formulated, India's Environment, Forests and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav Minister said on Tuesday. "There is a need for sustainable lifestyle as matters of consumerism are grave threats to the environment. Habit and attitude are much a part of the solution. Equity and climate justice should be touchstone of any global climate response. Only then we can say that we have formulated strategies that are just and in reverence for Mother Earth, our only planet. There is no planet B," he said at the 20th Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture on the occasion of Seth's 100th birth anniversary organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). In the event held virtually, Yadav spoke about the multi-dimensional approach to all pillars of sustainable development. "We are on track to achieve and even exceed our targets (Nationally Determined Contributions) under the Paris Agreement to combat climate change," he said. Listing out how India leads in climate actions, the Minister highlighted the need for a more responsive multilateral approach in which all countries take their fair share of the burden in responding to the global threat of climate change. "Science is very clear. The recent IPCC (Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change) report has sounded code red. The findings reaffirm

(that) the historical emissions are a source of current climate crisis. The equitable carbon and development space to achieve sustainable development requires new consideration of principles of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability and polluters' pay," he said. Warning the rich nations, he said: "Climate change mitigation is necessary but not sufficient. Even if world stops CNG emissions, hypothetically, still the accumulated greenhouse gases will lead the climate impact requiring new considerations of climate change adaptation measures." Developing countries are highly vulnerable to climate change impact due to the dependence of large population on climate sensitive sector for livelihood, he said, adding, "Long term strategies need to be guided by not only mitigation but also by climate adaptation with a clear roadmap for provision of finance and technology." Tata Power Managing Director and CEO Praveer Sinha spoke on the 'Energy Transition and Way Forward for India', and Trustee, Tata Trusts, R.K. Krishna Kumar and Excel Industries Chairman Emeritus, G. Narayana also spoke on the occasion. Seth was the builder of Tata Chemicals Ltd, and the TERI website describes him as someone who believed in and practiced the efficient use of energy and the promotion of renewable sources for the production and supply of energy. He established the Tata Energy Research Institute in 1974, which later became TERI.



ONLY UNDER-UTILIZED BROWNFIELD ASSETS WILL BE MONETIZED UNDER THE NATIONAL MONETISATION PIPELINE (NMP) OF THE CENTRE WORTH RS 6 LAKH CRORE: INDIA'S FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN.

PUNJAB CM MEETS SIDHU, SETS UP PANEL FOR COORDINATION AHEAD OF POLLS

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Projecting a united face just months ahead of the Assembly polls in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and once his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday met at the former's residence near here in a cordial atmosphere and later shared their photos of 'close proximity'. To ensure better coordination between the ruling party and the state government, and to further expedite the implementation of the government programmes and reform initiatives, the Chief Minister and state Congress president Sidhu on Friday agreed to set up a 10-member 'Strategic Policy Group', a spokesperson for the Chief Minister told IANS. To be headed by the Chief Minister, the group will have Local Government Minister Brahm Mohindra, Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal and Social Security Minister Aruna Chaudhary as members, along with Sidhu, the four party working presidents -- Kuljit Singh Nagra, Sukhwinder Singh Danny, Sangat Singh Gilzian and Pawan Goel, besides Pargat Singh. He said the decision was taken this morning when Sidhu, along with Nagra and Pargat, called on the Chief Minister to discuss Punjab related issues and steps to strengthen party-government coordination. The group will hold weekly meetings, in consultation with other ministers, experts, etc., as may be required. It will discuss and review the progress of the various state government initiatives already under implementation, and will also suggest measures to expedite the same. In another decision, Amarinder Singh has also assigned his Cabinet colleagues the task of being available in Punjab Congress Bhawan every day, by rotation, for meetings with MLAs and other party functionaries to discuss issues relating to their constituencies and areas and address any grievances. One minister each will be available at the Congress Bhawan from Monday for three hours (11 a.m. to 2 p.m.), and in any case the minister deputed for a particular day is unable to make it for some reason, he/she shall arrange for a substitute in consultation with any other minister. The arrangement will be in place five days in a week, from Monday to Friday, said the Chief Minister, adding that this will help in better coordination between his government and party functionaries in the run-up to the 2022 Assembly elections.

ED FILES FIRST CHARGE SHEET IN ANIL DESHMUKH CASE



MUMBAI, (IANS) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed first charge sheet in connection with the former Maharashtra Home Minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh bribery case. An ED official related to probe told IANS, "A charge sheet has been filed in the case and Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde have been named in it." According to ED officials, the 4,500 page charge sheet was filed before a Special PMLA court here. The ED had arrested Palande and Shinde after carrying out searches against them and the NCP leader in Mumbai and Nagpur. Deshmukh and his son Hrishikesh Deshmukh had skipped the ED's summons on several occasions. The ED registered a case of money laundering on the basis of the FIR registered by the CBI. Deshmukh has been accused of extortion from a bunch of Mumbai orchestra bars and of money laundering. It has been alleged that Rs 4.7 crore was collected as "extortion" from the orchestra bars by the now-dismissed Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze allegedly on Deshmukh's instructions. Later, this amount was transferred to Deshmukh's Nagpur-based educational trust by his son, Hrishikesh. According to the allegation, the transaction was routed via two hawala operators and was showed as a "donation". The 71-year-old NCP leader is the president of the trust and his two sons, Salil and Hrishikesh, are trustees. On May 11, a case was registered against the former minister and on June 25, the ED raided Deshmukh's residences in Nagpur, Mumbai and three other places. In April, the CBI had conducted raids at four premises of Deshmukh after registering an FIR against him in connection with the case. Param Bir Singh, former Commissioner of Mumbai Police, in his letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, had alleged that Deshmukh had indulged in "malpractices" and asked Waze to collect Rs 100 crore every month.

MANDATORY QUARANTINE IN INDIA FOR EVACUEES FROM AFGHANISTAN LEAVES RELATIVES IN DISMAY

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The relatives of Afghan Sikhs and Indian nationals had to wait for long hours at the IGI airport to receive them before the Union Health Ministry announced that all the evacuees will have to undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days at the ITBP camp in Chhawla in Najafgarh. Many Sikh families were waiting since morning at the airport for their relatives, who returned from Afghanistan on a special Air India flight on Tuesday. However, they couldn't meet their near and dear ones as they were shunted for the mandatory 14-day quarantine at the ITBP facility. With the government making efforts to airlift Indian as well as Afghan nationals from the war-torn Afghanistan, a 14-day quarantine has been made mandatory for all the evacuees landing at the IGI Airport here. The decision turned the hopes and excitement of the relatives into sorrow and disappointment. Charanjeet Singh, an Afghan national who was waiting since morning for his relatives coming from Afghanistan, said, "We came here to receive my sister-in-law who is a widow and lives in Jalalabad with her child. Though we couldn't meet her, we are at least hopeful that she will be safe in the ITBP quarantine centre." He also expressed his dismay as their long waiting period proved to be useless. Another evacuee, Kapil, who hails from Ghaziabad and works for a private company in Kabul, thanked the Indian government for the safe evacuation from Afghanistan. "I will meet my family members after completing the quarantine period," he said. All the evacuees from Afghanistan will have to go for quarantine irrespective of their Covid reports. RT-PCR tests were conducted on 78 Indian and Afghan nationals returning from Afghanistan on Tuesday. None of the reports have returned positive so far. Yet, all will need to undergo the 14-day mandatory quarantine period.





SAP RAISED TO RS 360 IN PUNJAB; SUGARCANE FARMERS CALL OFF STIR

CHANDIGARH: With an eye on the upcoming Vidhan Sabha elections, the Congress government today announced a hike in state advised price (SAP) of sugarcane by Rs 50 per quintal over the last year's price, fixing it at Rs 360 per quintal. Welcoming the decision, the protesting farmers lifted the blockade on the Jalandhar-Phagwara highway and rail tracks. The decision to increase the SAP was taken after a meeting between Samyukt Kisan Morcha leaders and Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh here. The CM told the farmer leaders the state's financial situation had held back the government from raising the SAP for the past few years. Last week, the government had proposed raising the SAP to Rs 325 per quintal, leading to the blockade by farmers. The intervention by Cooperatives Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, too, failed to break the ice between farmers and government, and rail and road traffic in the state remained disrupted. Sources in the government

said during today's talks, the CM initially proposed Rs 340 per quintal, with an assurance that it would be raised by another Rs 15 per quintal in the next cane crushing season. After the offer, farmer leaders, including Balbir Singh Rajewal and Manjit Singh Rai, insisted the SAP be raised in one go, and should be higher than that of neighbouring Haryana. It was then agreed that the SAP be fixed at Rs 360 per quintal, Rs 2 per quintal more than the SAP of Haryana. Interestingly, former minister Rana Gurjit Singh, whose family owns a prominent sugar mill, supported farmers' demand and played a key role in resolving the crisis. Rai later told The Tribune the decision would help alleviate the suffering of debt-ridden farmers. The SAP of sugarcane has been increased from Rs 295-Rs 310 per quintal (based on the variety) after a gap of four years. Last February, an expert committee headed by scientists from Punjab Agricultural University had recommended the SAP be fixed at Rs 342 per quintal after calculating the input costs.

India activates foreign missions around Afghanistan for evacuation



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The government has activated foreign missions near Afghanistan to speed up evacuation of stranded Indian citizens and Afghan nationals, including Hindus and Sikhs, from the war torn country, the government officials said here on Monday. They also said that Indian authorities have been coordinating with the Indian embassies in Tajikistan and Qatar to facilitate the evacuations of Indian and Afghan nationals from there and asked them to provide all support such as transport, stay and other necessary assistance. The Indian authorities have also been facing a major challenge that many of Indian workers have been located in different parts of Afghanistan and to take them to nearby Indian embassies such as Doha by land routes has also posed a threat of an attack on the convoy by the Taliban militia. Meanwhile, the 'Afghanistan Cell' set up at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) here in Delhi has been working round the clock to quickly respond to the queries from those who have requested the MEA to come to India. So far, a total 1,650 Indians have put their request to this cell, and they have responded to over 2,000 calls, 600 WhatsApp messages and 1200 e-mails, the official added.

They also confirmed that till Sunday evening, a total of 526 persons arrived Delhi, apart from the 168 who arrived by the Indian Air Force transport aircraft C17 globemaster at the Hindan air base on Sunday morning including two Afghan Members of Parliament Anarkali Kaur and Narendra Singh Khalsa and also a few Afghan political leaders. Apprehending that the Taliban militia may prevent the Afghan public representatives from taking the IAF flight, the entire plan was kept secret till the flight took off from Afghanistan, the sources said. "The US authorities have taken full control of the airport and they are managing the air operation from the war torn country. In this huge rush, charting out a slot for an aircraft and also a safe air route for the evacuation flight, have become major challenges for US authority," an official explained over the delay of the military aircraft from Kabul airport. The Kabul airport has been closed for commercial flights and only military aircrafts are allowed to land and take off from there. The first air rescue operation was made on August 17, when an IAF C-17 aircraft brought back 120 Indians to Jamnagar, including Indian Ambassador Rudrendra Tandon, the last batch of the Indian embassy staff, ITBP personnel from the Kabul airport amidst the critical situation in Afghanistan.

INDIA'S MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TO BRIEF POLITICAL PARTIES ON AFGHANISTAN SITUATION ON THURSDAY, AUG 26



NEW DELHI, (IANS) In view of the fast changing situation in war torn Afghanistan, the government has decided to brief the "Floor Leaders" of the political parties by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The government's move came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi instructed the MEA to brief the political leaders and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi will be intimating the further details to the leaders of the political parties. "In view of developments in Afghanistan, PM @narendra Modi has instructed that MEA to brief Floor leaders of the political parties. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs @Joshi Pralhad will be initiating further details," the External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar said in a tweet message on Monday. The MEA is likely to share the details of the ongoing rescue operation and other arrangements made by the government to those arriving from Afghanistan and India's concerns and challenges in the war torn country. India has been executing many developmental projects in Afghanistan, both by the government and private agencies and the fate of these projects has been hanging since the Taliban took over the country on August 15. The government will also share the details of the rescue operations made so far to the leaders of the political parties and reply to their queries on the rescue operations. The first air rescue operation was made on August 17, when an IAF C-17 aircraft brought back 120 Indians to Jamnagar, including Indian Ambassador Rudrendra Tandon, the last batch of the Indian embassy staff, ITBP personnel from the Kabul airport amidst the critical situation in Afghanistan. However, the government has been making all efforts to bring back Indians and leaders of Afghan Sikh and Hindu communities who fear Taliban's persecution there. They also confirmed that till Sunday evening, a total of 526 persons have arrived in Delhi apart from the 168 who arrived by the Indian Air Force transport aircraft C-17 globemaster at the Hindan air base on Sunday morning including two Afghan Members of Parliament -- Anarkali Kaur and Narendra Singh Khalsa and also a few Afghan political leaders. The government has also introduced a new category of visa, 'Emergency X-Misc Visa' under which all Afghan nationals can apply to visit India which will be valid for six months.

KARNATAKA BECOMES FIRST STATE IN INDIA TO IMPLEMENT NEP



BENGALURU, (IANS) Karnataka has become the first state in the country to implement the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) with Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan virtually launching the policy on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, Pradhan said that Karnataka has set an ideal example for the other states of the country pertaining to the implementation of NEP-2020. Karnataka has taken a lead role in the implementation of NEP, the minister said, adding that India has a large student population which is increasing every year and the real challenge lies in taking the benefits of NEP to all these students. Speaking during the launch ceremony, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai announced that Tablet PCs will be given to those joining first year degree courses this year. Minister of Higher Education in the Karnataka government, C.N. Ashwath Narayan, said, "The policy (NEP) which has been introduced under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been drafted after wide consultations and considering more than three lakh suggestions. The vice-chancellors of the universities will have to play a crucial role in its effective implementation." B.C. Nagesh, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, also spoke on the occasion. K. Kasturirangan, who was the chairperson of the NEP drafting committee, M.K. Sridhar and T.V. Kattimani, who were members of the committee, and AnuragaBehar, member of the implementation committee, were felicitated on the occasion.

WEAK MONSOON CONDITIONS LIKELY OVER NORTHWEST, CENTRAL INDIA: IMD

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy to very heavy falls are very likely to continue over northeast India, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim till August 27 and reduce thereafter with isolated heavy rainfall over the region, the IMD said. Isolated extremely heavy falls also likely over Assam and Meghalaya on Wednesday, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a release here. Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls are very likely to continue over Bihar, east Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand till August 27. Scattered to fairly widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls over Tamil Nadu during next 5 days and over Kerala and Mahe on August 26 and 28. Thunderstorms, accompanied with lightning, are likely over east India during next three days, the IMD said, while subdued rainfall activity is likely to continue over northwest and central India and west coast during next 5 days.

COVAXIN, COVISHIELD TRIAL PARTICIPANTS TO GET VAX CERTIFICATE

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The clinical trial participants of Covishield and Covaxin will be issued vaccination certificate through Co-WIN app, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced on Monday. "In a welcome initiative, digital #COVID19 vaccination certificates will now be issued to the clinical trial participants of COVISHIELD & COVAXIN through Co-WIN. The nation thanks them for their incredible commitment & contribution to COVID-19 vaccine research & treatment," he said in a tweet. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in partnership with the Serum Institute of India (SII), had conducted Phase 2/3 bridging studies of Covishield from August 2020. The Phase 3 efficacy clinical trials for Covaxin were also conducted by Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL) from November 2020. The Health Minister said that the participants can download their individual certificates through the Co-WIN portal, AarogyaSetu, Digilocker or the UMANG application.

APURVA CHANDRA ASSUMES CHARGE AS SECRETARY IN I&B MINISTRY

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Apurva Chandra on Monday took over as the Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Chandra, a 1988 batch IAS from Maharashtra cadre, was serving as the Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Employment since October 1, 2020 with the mandate to implement the Labour Codes passed by the Parliament in September, 2020 expeditiously. Under his guidance, the rules have been framed for all four Labour Codes after extensive consultations with all the stakeholders. Accordingly, the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana' has been launched to provide employment opportunities to 78.5 lakh workers in the formal sector with a budget of Rs 23,000 crore. He has also worked as the Director General (Acquisition) in the Ministry of Defence from December 1, 2017 with the mandate of strengthening the Indian armed forces by expediting the acquisition process. Several major contracts like S-400 missile system, multi-role helicopters, assault rifles, naval ships, T-90 tanks etc. were signed during his tenure. He also chaired the committee to draft the new Defence Acquisition Procedure. A bachelor's degree holder in civil engineering and masters in structural engineering from IIT Delhi, the incumbent officer has also served as the Principal Secretary (Industries) in the Government of Maharashtra for four years from 2013 to 2017.



UPTICK IN VIOLENCE IN BALOCHISTAN AS PAK ARMY CAPTAIN KILLED IN IED BLAST

QUETTA, (IANS) A Pakistan Army captain was killed and two soldiers were injured after their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by terrorists in Balochistan's Gichik area, the military's media affairs wing said on Sunday.

The injured soldiers were shifted to a medical facility in Khuzdar, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement, the Dawn reported.

There has been an uptick in violence in the restive Balochistan, with several incidents of terrorism reported this year, targeting both civilians as well as security forces.

Earlier this week, two children were killed and four others, including a Chinese national, were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up targeting a vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in Gwadar.

Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Majeed Brigade, had claimed re-

sponsibility for the attack.

On August 8, two policemen were martyred and 12 others injured in an explosion near Quetta's Serena Hotel. Six civilians were also wounded in the blast.

The improvised explosive device (IED) used in the attack was fitted into a motorcycle.

Last month, four people were injured and a Frontier Corps (FC) vehicle was damaged in an IED blast in the province's Hazar Ganji locality. On July 1, at least six security personnel were injured, two of them seriously, in a motorcycle bomb explosion that targeted an army convoy on Quetta's Airport Road.

Inspector General of Balochistan Mohammad Tahir Rai had said that an IED had been planted on the motorcycle, which was detonated by a remote control.

UK OFFERS COVID ANTIBODY TESTS TO FIND IMMUNE RESPONSES OF VARIANTS

LONDON, (IANS) The UK has launched antibody tests to find out more about how much natural protection people have after getting infected with Covid-19, the media reported on Sunday.

The finger-prick tests are part of a government scheme rolled out for the first time and will offer tests to thousands of adults each day, the BBC reported. It would help the UK gain "vital insight" into the impact of the vaccination programme and immune responses to different variants. From August 24, people above the age of 18 will be able to opt for the antibody tests while taking a PCR test. Among people who test positive, up to 8,000 will be sent two home antibody tests. The first test must be taken immediately after testing positive for Covid-19, before the body generates a detectable antibody response to the infection. The second test must be taken after 28 days to measure antibodies generated in response to the infection, the report said. It would be quick and easy to take part, Health Secretary Sajid Javid was quoted as saying. The tests will be built on the "massive wall of defence" that was the vaccination programme and getting involved would help "strengthen our understanding of Covid-19 as we cautiously return to a more normal life," Javid added. According to the Department of Health, besides helping it improve understanding about antibody protection, the scheme will also give information about any groups of people who did not develop an immune response after getting coronavirus, the report said.

'AUS CANNOT HOLD BACK FROM REOPENING WHEN MAJORITY OF ADULTS FULLY VACCINATED': PM



CANBERRA, (IANS) Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Monday that the country "cannot hold back" from reopening when a majority of adults are fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

He warned the state and territory leaders that they cannot be afraid of coronavirus case numbers rising after 70 per cent of adults have received two vaccine doses, reports Xinhua news agency.

The National Cabinet, which is made up of the Prime Minister and state and territory leaders, in July, signed off on a four-phase pathway out of the pandemic that will see lockdowns used more sparingly when 70 per cent of adults are inoculated.

"Once you get to 70 per cent of your country that is eligible for the vaccine and 80 percent, the plan sets out that we have to move forward, we cannot hold back," he told reporters in Canberra.

"We must adjust our mindset. Cases will not be the issue... Dealing with serious illness, hospitalisation, ICU capabilities, our ability to respond in those circumstances, that will be our goal."

He also said that the lockdowns "are taking an extremely heavy toll", in both the aspects of the mental and physical health of Australians and on the economic success.

US IS EXPANDING COVID VAX MANUFACTURING TO DONATE DOSES: FAUCI

WASHINGTON, (IANS) The US is expanding its manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines to help countries with low access to the lifesaving shots, the nations' top infectious disease expert has said.

"We are now working on greatly expanding the capacity to allow us to donate hundreds and hundreds of millions of doses to the low- and middle-income countries," Dr. Anthony Fauci, medical advisor to President Joe Biden, was quoted as saying to CNBC.

The COVAX programme, the international vaccine-sharing initiative - coordinated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the World Health organization (WHO) -- aims to provide two billion doses worldwide by the end of 2021. The US has given more than 120 million doses to 80 countries and has donated \$4 billion in resources to the COVAX, Fauci said.

"We are doing both," Fauci said of distributing booster shots and helping other countries. "We're very sensitive to the needs of the developing world who need vaccine doses, but we believe we can do both."

Meanwhile, the US is seeing a surge in Covid infections and deaths due to the Delta variant. It continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 3,77,08,064 and 6,28,499, respectively, according to the latest update by Johns Hopkins University on Monday morning.



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NEW GOVT TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON, SAYS TALIBAN



KABUL, (IANS) Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid announced that talks on the formation of a new government with Afghan political leaders were underway and that a new government will be announced soon. "Our political officials met with leaders here in Kabul, their views are important, discussions are moving, there is hope for an announcement on the government soon," TOLO News quoted Mujahid as saying on Sunday. Meanwhile, members of the Taliban's political office on Saturday met in Kabul with a number of politicians including former President Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, the head of High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), and discussions focused on the overall political situation including the formation of an inclusive government. The members of the Taliban's political office who arrived in Kabul on Saturday include Shahabuddin Delawar, Abdul Salam Hanafi, Mullah KhairullahKhairkhow and Abdul RahmandFida. Abdullah in a Facebook post confirmed the meeting with the Taliban leaders, saying that discussions were focused on the political process and the formation of an inclusive government. Some Afghan political leaders, however, criticised the way the talks are taking place, saying that the political process should be inclusive. "I don't see this game as a good one because it looks like a game of individuals, everyone tries to promote himself and does not show respect for the Afghans," said Sayed EshaqGailani, the head of the Nahzat-e-Hambastagi Afghanistan party. In the meantime, Atta Mohammad Noor, the former governor of Balkh, said that the next government will not be acceptable if it is not inclusive. "The war has not ended, we have a long way to go, we will test them (the Taliban), we will emerge again either to resolve it through an inclusive government or war."

'PANDEMIC PUSHED 75-80 MN MORE PEOPLE IN ASIA-PACIFIC INTO EXTREME POVERTY': ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) REPORT

MANILA, (IANS) The Covid-19 pandemic pushed an estimated 75 million to 80 million more people in developing Asia and the Pacific into extreme poverty in 2020, according to a new report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) released on Tuesday. The ADB warned that the pandemic is threatening Asia and the Pacific's progress toward critical targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reports Xinhua news agency. The report titled 'Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2021', said that the pandemic, which ravaged the world early last year, "has magnified long-standing social and economic inequities experienced by millions living below or near the poverty line." As the socioeconomic impacts continue to unfold, the report said, "people already struggling to make ends meet are at risk of tipping over into a life of poverty." Assuming that the pandemic has increased inequality, the report warned that the relative rise in extreme poverty may be even greater. According to the report, about 203 million people, or 5.2 percent of developing Asia's population, lived in extreme poverty as of 2017. Without Covid-19, that number would have declined to an estimated 2.6 percent in 2020. To achieve the SDGs by 2030, decision-makers "need to harness high-quality and timely data as a guide for actions to ensure that the recovery leaves no one behind -- especially the poor and vulnerable," ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada said in a statement.

SITUATION DIRE AS TALIBAN STOPS FOOD AND FUEL SUPPLY INTO ANDARAB VALLEY: AMRULLAH SALEH



More than 10 days have passed that the Taliban has taken over Afghanistan and their atrocities have already started on the innocent Afghans. In the latest, acting President of Afghanistan Amrullah Saleh has said that there is a dire 'humanitarian situation' in the Andarab valley of the northern Baghlan province. The former Vice-President has accused the Taliban of committing human rights violations in the region. The Andarab valley is the new war zone in Afghanistan. In a bid to capture the last bastion, clashes between the Taliban and resistance forces from the Panjshir valley broke out. The resistance is led by Ahmad Massoud, son of renowned anti-Taliban fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud also known as 'Sher of Panjshir'. "Talibs aren't allowing food and fuel to get into Andarab valley. The humanitarian situation is dire. Thousands of women and children have fled to the mountains. Since the last two days Talibs abduct children and elderly and use them as shields to move around or do house search," Saleh tweeted. A day earlier, Saleh had warned the Taliban to avoid entering Panjshir. Panjshir Valley also called 'Panjsheer' means 'Valley of five lions' and is the bastion of the Northern Alliance. Located 150 km north of Kabul, the Panjshir Valley has never been under the Taliban control. During the 70s and 80s, even the Soviets tried but could not cross Panjshir Valley.

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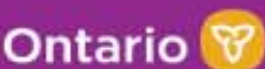
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