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SOUTH ASIAN

MidWeek

NEWS WEEKLY



Tuesday, July 27, 2021

www.southasiandaily.com Vol 21 Issue 30, Phone 647-272-8182, 905-670-3687



MARY SIMON OFFICIALLY BECOMES CANADA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS & 30TH GOVERNOR-GENERAL. (GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA/ TWITTER).
| DETAILS ON PAGE 7

WITH CAPT AMARINDER ON STAGE, NAVJOT SIDHU TAKES CHARGE AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Extending support to the protesting farmers who have been staging protests at Delhi borders for over 250 days against the three contentious farm laws enacted by the central government, Punjab Congress President Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday said the real issue was theirs.

In his maiden speech after assuming charge here, Sidhu, who shared the stage with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh after a long break, also extended an olive branch to the protesting doctors, nurses, teachers and bus conductors, who have been on roads for their demands. "My fights are not the issue, the farmers sitting in Delhi, the protesting TET qualified teachers, the problems of doctors and nurses and bus conductors are the real issues," Sidhu said.

Reiterating his commitment to providing the electricity to the consumers in the state at the highly subsidized rates, Sidhu, donning his trademark maroon Pathani suit with a scarf, asked his government that why the electricity was being purchased for Rs 12 per unit. He also talked about costly power purchase pacts signed by the previous SAD-BJP government and still continuing in the Congress government. "Choran di chori pakdi jaani chahidi ae (the thieves would be put behind the bars)," he said.

For quite some time, Sidhu has been targeting the Amarinder Singh-led government in the state by saying the state must do more for the domestic and industrial consumers by giving power at Rs 3-5 per unit instead of a surcharge inflated Rs 10-12 per unit, along with 24-hour supply with no power cuts and free power up to 300 units to all. Sidhu said there have been all sorts of speculations about him, but "positions are not the issue".



"Today every Congress worker has become the president, no difference between leader and workers," he said.

Remembering his ties with Sidhu's family, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh in his speech said they would work together for the state. "I was commissioned in the Army, the year Sidhu was born. When my mother asked me to enter politics, his (Sidhu) father helped me. I used to go to his house when he was about six years old," said Amarinder Singh.

Ending speculations of differences between him and Sidhu, Amarinder Singh said, "We (Sidhu and Amarinder Singh) will work together for Punjab. Not just for Punjab, but for India. We share a long border with Pakistan...Pakistan, China and now with America's departure, Taliban in Afghanistan, all of them are going to come and sit at Kashmir's border, Punjab's border," the Chief Minister said.

Before Sidhu assumed the charge as the state President at the party office, Sidhu met the Chief Minister at the Punjab Bhawan here for the tea meeting.

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK WILL INVEST UP TO \$400 MILLION TOWARDS BRAMPTON'S 450 ZERO-EMISSION BUS TRANSITION



The Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) and the City of Brampton (City) are proud to announce their agreement in principle, which would see the CIB loan up to \$400 million, supporting Brampton Transit's purchase of up to 450 zero-emission buses (ZEBs) by 2027.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 7

TALIBAN NOW CONTROL ABOUT HALF OF AFGHAN DISTRICT CENTRES; HAS GAINED STRATEGIC MOMENTUM: TOP US GENERAL

WASHINGTON (IANS) The Taliban now controls a total of 212 or roughly half of Afghanistan's 419 district centres, a top US General said, adding that the insurgents appear to have gained "strategic momentum" since the withdrawal of American troops. "Strategic momentum appears to be sort of with the Taliban," General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a press conference at the Pentagon on Wednesday.



| CONTD. ON PAGE 11

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

- **U.S.- Canada Travel Restrictions At Land Border Extended Until Aug. 21.**
- **Over 80% Canadians Vaccinated With First Dose Of Covid-19 Vaccine, 60% Fully Vaccinated.**
- **93% Peel Residents 18-24 Inoculated With First Dose Of Covid-19 Vaccine, 58% Fully Vaccinated.**
- **71% Peel Youth 12-17 Received First Dose Of Covid-19 Vaccine, 46% Fully Vaccinated.**
- **Starting August 9, Canada Will Allow Entry To Fully Vaccinated American Citizens & Permanent Residents For Non-Essential Travel.**
- **On September 7, Canada's Borders Will Reopen To Any Fully Vaccinated Travellers.**

BENGAL CM MAMATA MEETS MODI, DEMANDS MORE VACCINES & MEDICINES



NEW DELHI, (IANS) West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for what she called a courtesy meeting. This is the first official meeting between Prime Minister and Banerjee in the national capital after she became chief minister of West Bengal for the third time after stunning victory in assembly polls.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 9

IMF CUTS INDIA GROWTH TO 9.5% DUE TO COVID DELTA, BUT IT RETAINS TOP SPOT



UNITED NATIONS, (IANS) The Delta variant-spurred Covid-19 second wave has shaved off 3 per cent from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) previous projection for India's economic growth for fiscal year 2021-22, pegging it now at 9.5 per cent, but the country still remains the world's fastest-growing large economy.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 9

Y MEDIA PRESENTS UP TO DATE OLYMPICS' COVERAGE ON ALL PLATFORMS



TEAM INDIA: MANPREET SINGH & MARY KOM LEAD OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY.



MIRANDA AYIM & NATHAN HIRAYAMA LEAD TEAM CANADA AS FLAG BEARERS FOR TOKYO 2020 OPENING CEREMONY (TEAM CANADA/TWITTER).

FULL COVERAGE ON PAGE 18



POLITICAL SENSEX STATES ELECTIONS INDIA 2022



MEGA COVERAGE ON ALL Y MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Unsung heroes recall immortals of Kargil conflict

NEW DELHI, (IANS) It was not just infantry. It is not just armoured Corps. Indian Army medical corps in Kargil conflict in 1999 played a crucial role to relieve the soldiers' physical sufferings, and heal their wounds. During the conflict, Colonel (then Captain) Vijay Kumar, who was awarded Sena Medal, was posted as the Regimental Medical Officer of an Infantry Battalion at a location along the Srinagar-Leh Highway, when he received a message that his unit was moving to the Dras sector on May 8, 1999 to evict Pakistani intruders.

On the occasion of 22nd Kargil Vijay Diwas on Monday, he recalled that when he was moving towards the Line of Control with the Alpha Company of his battalion on May 27, 1999, they suddenly came under intense fire from the enemy by heavy weaponry and artillery shelling. Many soldiers of Alpha company got injured and sustained multiple splinter injuries including one fatal case. One of the young soldiers lost both his hands and was bleeding profusely. He became unconscious due to the shock when he was attended. Then Captain Vijay Kumar and his unit Battlefield Nursing assistant shifted the patient behind some rocks to cover him from incoming enemy fire, as the engagement was still going on from both the sides. He managed to stop the bleeding by applying compression bandages on both hands and further administered IV fluids to manage the shock. Afterwards, they shifted the injured soldier along with others to the next medical echelon by stretcher-bearer till the roadhead and thereafter by ambulance. He was then airlifted to a Forward Surgical Centre (FSC) and survived because of his strong will to live and timely medical management in the battle area. During the war, he managed casualties in a rugged high altitude area with no cover, especially under heavy enemy fire and artillery shelling under challenging and extreme weather conditions. Colonel (then Captain) Rajesh Adhau, Sena Medal feels nostalgic while remembering the

first day of climb during the battle for point 5140, when he and his then 2IC (Later Commanding Officer) were moving towards Hump area; creeping towards their target inch by inch. While he was completely exhausted and wanted to halt near a big boulder, his 2IC (— Lt. Col YK Joshi -- Now Lt. Gen YK Joshi) told him not to stop and pushed him further ahead. After walking about 50 metres, he saw an artillery shell exploding on the same rock where he had intended to stop. Already horrified, he thanked God and Lt. Col YK Joshi who did not let him stop. Similarly, Colonel Adhau faced many such incidents during the course of the conflict but he fondly remembers one incident in which when he was at Tololing complex and one of his jawans from the mess staff had recently got married. During a chat with him, he asked: "Why are you joining the front line? You should be amongst the administrative party!"

The brave lad replied: "Sir, fighting the enemy is my final Dharma! I have to fight against the enemy!" After two hours, he received an unfur tunate call informing him of his unit's first casualty by gunshot wound in the forehead. It was the same jawan with whom he had spoken a couple of hours back. He was completely shattered after hearing this and later when Captain Vikram Batra made the supreme sacrifice, Captain Adhau himself lifted his mortal remains and was in a state of "extreme sadness". Col Adhau has been an active member of National Service Scheme (NSS) during his college days and NCC in school days which made him inclined towards service for mankind but he had never really thought of joining the Army. "The war scene is dreadful as one is surrounded by casualties, catastrophe, fear of impending death; that is natural but as they say - courage is to hold on a minute longer - and the true gallant, valour and zeal to defeat the enemy which had encroached our land with wrong intentions was far more motivating than the war scene and its after effects," says the Kargil hero Colonel (then Captain) Vishal Vir Sharma, Sena Medal.

FARMERS BEGIN 'KISAN SANSAD' AT JANTAR MANTAR; PLAN TO CARRY ON PROTEST TILL AUGUST 13

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Protesting farmer leaders said on Thursday that they intend to continue with the 'Kisan Sansad' at Jantar Mantar in the heart of the national capital till August 13, the day the ongoing Monsoon Session of the Parliament comes to an end. On Wednesday, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal had given permission to the farmers' demonstration at Jantar Mantar against the three Central farm laws on the condition that a maximum of 200 protesters will be allowed till August 9 between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. On Thursday, the agitating farmers reached the Jantar

Mantar with elaborate arrangements. A farmer leader told IANS that over one lakh farmers are ready to reach Jantar Mantar, but the police have allowed only 200 people per day. "We have selected a maximum of three persons from each farmer union. This time we are prepared to avoid any untoward incidents, like what happened on January 26. All the farmers will come to the protest site only in buses, and no personal vehicle is allowed. Moreover, all those attending the Kisan Sansad will have identity cards issued by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM)," said a protesting farmer.

US ASKS PAKISTAN, INDIA TO WORK TOWARDS STABLE RELATIONSHIP

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Just before the all-important visit of Secretary of State Antony Blinken to India and other destinations of South Asia and the Middle East, the US has issued a statement, encouraging arch-rivals India and Pakistan to work for a more stable relationship.

Blinken is scheduled to visit India and other countries between July 26-29 in what is being said is an important tour in reference to the developing situation and increasing Afghan Taliban control in Afghanistan.

As per Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Affairs Dean Thompson, Blinken would be discussing different options for what he called a "negotiated settlement" in Afghanistan. Blinken is going to be landing in New Delhi on July 28 and is scheduled to meet External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As per details, India's role in Afghanistan and relations with Pakistan is going to be on Blinken's agenda during his visit to India. "We strongly believe that India and Pakistan's issues are ones for them to work out between themselves. Washington would continue to encourage better ties between South Asia's two nuclear-armed neighbours," said Thompson.

"We are pleased to see that ceasefire that went into place earlier this year has remained intact, and we certainly always encourage them to continue their efforts to find ways to build a more stable relationship going forward," he added.

The US played an important role in engaging both Pakistan and India to come down to an agreement and abide by the 2003 ceasefire after backdoor meeting between top military leadership of both countries in the Middle East.

On the other hand, the US seems to have keen interest in engaging India in seeing its increased role in Afghanistan, especially after the withdrawal of all foreign forces.

"We expect that all the countries in the region have a shared interest in a stable and secure Afghanistan going forward. We will certainly be talking to our Indian partners about how we can work together to realise that goal, to find ways to bring the partners together, and continue to pursue a negotiated settlement to the longstanding war," said Thompson. Interestingly, Blinken's visit does not include a visit to Islamabad. However, the Biden administration has invited Pakistan's National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf and Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt General Faiz Hameed to Washington during next week for talks with the American counterparts.



UK COURT DECLARES VIJAY MALLYA AS 'BANKRUPT'

LONDON, (IANS) A UK court on Monday declared fugitive Indian businessman Vijay Mallya, the chairman of now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines, as "bankrupt".

The UK court order comes as a massive boost for the consortium of banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) to initiate freezing of assets owned by Mallya's Kingfisher Airlines, both in India and abroad, to repay its debt.

Mallya is wanted in India for Rs 9,000 crore loan default.

"As at 15.42 (UK time), I adjudicate Dr. Mallya bankrupt," Chief Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Michael Briggs said during a virtual hearing of the Chancery Division of the London High Court. The consortium of banks led by SBI had argued for the bankruptcy order to be granted in their favour. The Indian banks were represented by the law firm TLT LLP and barrister Marcia Shekerdemian. Mallya is currently out on bail in the UK while a "confidential" legal matter, believed to be related to an asylum application, is being resolved in connection with the unrelated extradition proceedings.



OPPOSITION SLAMS GOVT OVER IT RAIDS AT MEDIA GROUPS ACROSS INDIA



The Congress on Thursday slammed the government over IT raids on media houses and said that instead of protecting the nation, central agencies have now begun to act as poachers for intimidating the whistleblowers.

Addressing a press conference, senior leader Abhishek Singhvi said, "The IT raid on Dainik Bhaskar highlights the dangerous, dismissive, and draconian nature of the BJP government."

"How should we define whatever happened today? There are many words – totalitarianism, tyranny, dictatorship, fascism, authoritarianism, autocracy, despotism, absolutism, Caesarism, and so on and so forth," he added.

He said that the newspaper was raided as its reportage exposed the grisly sight of bodies of Covid victims floating in the Ganga and washing up on the banks in towns in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, possibly thrown into the river because of the lack of means to cremate them. The reports also revealed bodies buried in shallow graves by the river in UP.

The Income Tax Department has conducted searches at offices of media entity Dainik Bhaskar in several locations across the country over alleged tax evasion.

According to people in the know, raids have been conducted at Bhopal, Indore, Jaipur and Ahmedabad premises of the Dainik Bhaskar group. Search operations also took place at the residences and offices of the promoters of the group and a few other employees. According to sources, I-T department raids follow information of tax evasion and alleged cases of related party transactions and instances of round-tripping of funds.

The department may have also laid its hand on a paper trail of bogus payments made to show expenditure in books of company. Sources said that instances of investment from dubious companies and transaction with shell companies whose names have been mentioned in Paradise papers have also been found. It may be noted that names of some people from Bhaskar group were also mentioned in Panama paper leak.

GOVT OPEN TO TALKS WITH FARMERS ON 3 FARM LAWS, SAYS TOMAR



NEW DELHI, (IANS) The union government has reiterated that it is open to holding talks over the three contentious farm laws with the farmers who have been agitating on the borders of Delhi for nearly eight months.

In response to a starred question in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that so far 11 rounds of talks have been held between the government and farmers' outfits to find a solution. The farmers' organizations never agreed to discussions, but only demanded the repeal of the laws. Tomar in his written reply said, "Many efforts have been made by the government to end the protests. There were 11 rounds of talks between the government and the farmers to end the deadlock. The government also explained point-wise to the farmers through a letter dated December 9, 2020, that their concerns were being taken care of. We also proposed to form a committee. However, the farmers' bodies never agreed to discuss the laws, they want only repeal."

INDIA, CHINA TO SOON HOLD MILITARY TALKS TO RESOLVE BORDER ISSUES



NEW DELHI, (IANS) India and China will soon hold the 12th round of Corps Commander level talks at Chushul to iron out the agreement for the next phase of disengagement in Eastern Ladakh. Sources said that China had expressed their availability for military commander-level talks on July 26, but India has asked for fresh dates as the Indian forces are occupied with Kargil Vijay Diwas events.

Indian military delegates will meet to discuss disengagement at the friction areas such as Hot Springs, Gogra and the 900 sq km Depsang plains.

The build-up in Depsang was not being considered part of the current standoff that started in May last year as escalations here took place in 2013. India has insisted during the recent military commander meetings to resolve all the issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"The initial attempt will be to resolve Gogra and Hot Springs. Finding a solution to Depsang might be tricky and take longer time," said an army officer familiar with the developments.



NAWAZ SHARIF'S MEETING WITH AFGHAN NSA IN LONDON CREATES UPROAR IN PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD, (IANS) Pakistan's mainstream major political party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), leader and ousted Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's recent meeting with Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib in London has evoked a political storm back home.

The uproar started after the Afghan NSC tweeted a picture of the meeting with Nawaz Sharif in London.

"NSC Afghanistan @NSCAfghan NSA @hmohiband State Minister for Peace Sayed Sadat Naderi called on Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in London to discuss matters of mutual interest," the tweet read. The Afghan NSA tweet sparked an angry response from various senior officials of the Prime Minister Imran Khan's dispensation as they criticised Nawaz Sharif for meeting the Afghan NSA, who has been hostile towards Pakistan and has been giving statements that have prompted Islamabad to cut off all contacts, over what it called "unacceptable and controversial remarks".

In May, Pakistan cut off all communication with the Afghan NSA after he compared Pakistan with a brothel.

As per details, the meeting in London was held after the Afghan NSA requested to meet Nawaz Sharif on the directions of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, with an aim to discuss the changing regional situation and the ongoing tense situation in Afghanistan.

Former Pakistan Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the controversial remarks by the NSA were made after the request of meeting with Nawaz Sharif by the Ashraf Ghani government was accepted.

"The choice was between cancelling and going ahead with it. We decided to do the latter and meet them in the national interest, because we wanted to do damage control on the government's failed

foreign policy," he said.

"Obviously we spoke in Pakistan's interest. We do not want Pakistan to go into isolation as a result of foreign policy failures. We do not want to give a message to the international community that we are operating as a hegemony. Why should we not do damage control in Pakistan's interest?" he asked.

In Pakistan, serious criticism was witnessed on Sharif's meeting with Afghan NSA. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry called the Afghan NSA "RAW's biggest ally in Afghanistan".

"Be it Modi, Mohib or Amrullah Saleh, every enemy of Pakistan is a close friend of Nawaz Sharif," he said.

The pouring criticism on social media was responded to by Nawaz Sharif's daughter, Maryam Nawaz Sharif who said that "it was the very essence of diplomacy to talk to everyone, listen to their point of view and convey one's own message across; something this government doesn't comprehend and hence is a complete failure on the international front". "Pakistan's peaceful existence with its neighbours is the very foundation of Nawaz Sharif's ideology for which he has worked tirelessly," she tweeted. Analysts say that the meeting of Nawaz Sharif with the Afghan NSA may have brought discomfort to the Pakistani leadership, but it certainly has established that the main opposition party, PML-N, is still run by Nawaz Sharif, who as per senior leadership of the party, has put Pakistan's strong reaction to the Afghan NSA and has acted as a national leader, even at a time when he is sitting in London and is wanted over corruption charges in Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan relations are in a sensitive phase, especially after Taliban have started taking control over major areas of Afghanistan and have started to impose their version of rule.

BRITISH COLUMBIA DECLARES STATE OF PROVINCIAL EMERGENCY FOR 14 DAYS OWING TO WILDFIRE SITUATION



The B.C. government is declaring a provincial state of emergency to support the provincewide response to the ongoing wildfire situation.

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, made the declaration on July 20, 2021, based upon the recommendation from the BC Wildfire Service and Emergency Management BC. The declaration will be in effect starting July 21, 2021.

The state of emergency is initially in effect for 14 days once issued and may be extended or rescinded as necessary. The state of emergency applies to the whole province and ensures federal, provincial and local resources can be delivered in a coordinated response to protect the public, which remains the provincial government's top priority.

"Public safety is always our first priority, and as wildfire activity is ex-

pected to increase, this is a progressive step in our wildfire response to make sure British Columbia has access to extraordinary powers under the Emergency Program Act," Farnworth said. "In a briefing last night, I received word that we'll be facing a few days of very difficult weather in the Interior. This declaration will address the potential of a mass evacuation scenario and provide our government with the means to secure the accommodation spaces necessary to house our citizens, if necessary." As of July 20, there were 299 wildfires burning in B.C., with 40 evacuation orders affecting approximately 5,724 people (2,862 properties), in addition to 69 evacuation alerts impacting approximately 32,076 people (16,038 properties). The extended weather forecast calls for continued hot and dry conditions, with heightened wind activity in the Interior and south-eastern B.C. More than 3,180 firefighters and resource staff are currently actively engaged in fighting fires in all five regions in the province. This includes 1,080 contractors and 135 out-of-province resources. The federal government has responded to and accepted British Columbia's request for firefighting assistance. In the coming days, federal personnel and resources will be arriving in B.C. to assist with wildfire efforts. The state of emergency gives agencies, such as the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Emergency Management BC, the fire commissioner and the RCMP, the authority to take every action necessary to fight the wildfires and protect people and communities.

Pakistan bans non-vaccinated persons from domestic air travel



ISLAMABAD, (IANS) The Pakistan government has banned people, over the age of 18, who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19 from domestic air travel, the media reported on Sunday.

According to a document issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), available with Dawn, it has been decided that no unvaccinated citizens of 18-year age and above will be allowed to undertake domestic air travel from August 1.

"Restriction is for domestic air travel and people travelling from Pakistan to abroad or from abroad to Pakistan are exempted from restriction. It is also not applicable on link flights if these are within 72 hours of arrival or departure," the document states. However partially vaccinated individuals, foreign nationals, Pakistani nationals having documentary proof of vaccination abroad and patients who are clinically advised against vaccination due to risk of reaction are exempted from restriction. This announcement comes as Pakistan's overall Covid-19 caseload and death toll have increased to 1,004,694 and 23,016, respectively.

'YEARLY FOOD WASTE REACHES 2.5BN TONNES, CONTRIBUTES 10% TO CLIMATE CHANGE': REPORT



LONDON, (IANS) A new report has revealed that a whopping 2.5 billion tonnes of food is wasted each year, contributing to 10 per cent of all greenhouse gases released annually in the atmosphere, including CO2. The report, titled 'Figures of Driven to Waste', was released jointly by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the British retailing giant Tesco on Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported.

The first-of-its-kind report since 2011, indicated that 40 per cent of all food is not consumed and emits twice more greenhouse gases than all cars that are driven in Europe and North America. Among the food wasted each year, 1.2 billion tonnes are lost during farming. "We have known for years that food loss and waste is a huge problem that can be minimized," said Pete Pearson, Global Food Loss and Waste Initiative Lead for the WWF. "This report shows us the problem is likely bigger than we had thought."

Other results proved to be surprising, as the report indicates that industrialized countries – among them those in Europe and North America – contribute 58 per cent of all squandered food. Lilly Da Gama, Waste Programme Manager at WWF-UK and one of the authors of the reports, urged that governments and private actors "must take action to support farmers across the world and commit to halving food waste".

"Current policies are not ambitious enough," she added.

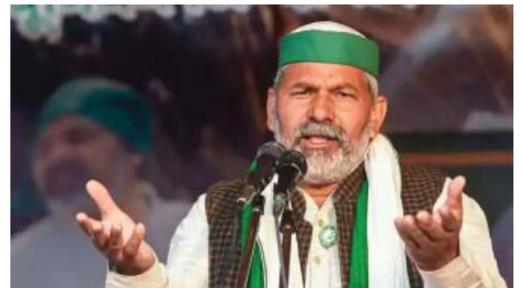
PEGASUS STORY AN ATTEMPT TO MALIGN INDIAN DEMOCRACY: IT MINISTER



NEW DELHI, (IANS) With the Pegasus snoop gate leading to a ruckus in the Parliament, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday that the news story on snooping was an attempt to malign India's democracy and its institutions. Addressing the Rajya Sabha, the minister also indicated that the report was meant to disrupt the Monsoon Session of the Parliament. "A sensational story around Pegasus being published just a day before the Monsoon Session of Parliament cannot be a coincidence," he said. "This press story on Pegasus, done by a web portal on July 18, attempts to malign the Indian democracy and its well-established institutions," Vaishnaw added. He also said that similar claims were made in the past regarding the use of Pegasus on WhatsApp, adding that those reports had "no factual basis" and were categorically denied by all the parties, including in the Supreme Court.

While Vaishnaw was reading the statement on the Pegasus project amid an ongoing row over alleged large-scale snooping involving politicians, Trinamool Congress MPs snatched the report from the minister's hand and tore it into pieces on the floor of the Rajya Sabha. Journalist-turned-BJP MP Swapna Dasgupta said: "Some of the Trinamool MPs took the paper from the hands of the minister and tore it. This is unacceptable."

UP TO BE THE NEXT STOP FOR FARMERS' AGITATION: TIKAIT



LUCKNOW, (IANS) Rakesh Tikait, national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union has said that Uttar Pradesh will be the next major destination for the ongoing farmers' agitation.

"We will turn Lucknow into Delhi and all roads to the state capital will be closed. Our agitation will continue until all three agricultural laws are repealed," he said at a press conference here. He said, "We will go among the farmers. A massive Kisan Panchayat will be organised in Muzaffarnagar on September 5. The fourth estate is being targeted and the entire country is being held captive."

Tikait said, "Uttar Pradesh is a state of agitation. Sugarcane rate has not been increased for 4 years; 12,000 crore rupees are still outstanding as dues of farmers. Electricity is free for farmers in several states but in UP the power tariffs are the highest. In UP, the government is now being run by the police, like in Gujarat."

Meanwhile, activist Yogendra Yadav, who accompanied Rakesh Tikait, said that the ongoing farmers' agitation has brought back the self-respect of the farmers and has increased their unity.

"We are announcing Mission UP/Uttarakhand. Rallies and Maha panchayats will be organised in these states. We are also demanding that toll plazas should be made free for all," he said.

Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT



ALL NINE TORONTO CLINICS WILL OFFER WALK-IN VACCINE APPOINTMENTS FROM 12PM – 7PM.

Starting tomorrow, all nine City of Toronto vaccination clinics will be offering walk-in vaccinations for anyone age 12 and older needing a first or second dose of COVID-19 vaccine. By lowering the barrier to vaccination across Toronto, the City is working to reach the approximately 20 per cent of Toronto adults who have not initiated vaccination and the 125,000 people who can accelerate a second dose scheduled for later in the year.

The City-run Toronto Congress Centre vaccination clinic opened to adult-only walk-ins on July 8. On the first day of accepting walk-ins, more than 300 people attended the clinic, prompting the City to open three additional clinics to build on that success.

Starting tomorrow, Thursday, July 22, all nine City-run vaccination clinics will open to youth and adult walk-ins between noon and 7 p.m. Eligible residents who need a second dose and those who have yet to receive a first dose can be vaccinated immediately. Anyone taking advantage of the walk-in option to accelerate their second dose should cancel any existing second dose appointment, whether at a City-run or partner clinic. Walk-ins should always prepare for a short wait that

may include time lining up outdoors. Getting both doses of vaccine is the best defence against COVID-19, including the Delta variant. All people age 12 and older can also book the first dose or accelerated second dose vaccination appointment through the dark blue "Book a Vaccine" button on toronto.ca/covid-19 or by calling the provincial vaccine booking line at 1-833-943-3900. Toronto Public Health is reporting 38 new cases of COVID-19 in Toronto today. Since the start of the pandemic, there have been a total of 170,398 cases of COVID-19. There are 39 people hospitalized. To date, there have been 3,598 COVID-19 deaths in Toronto. In total, 166,510 people have recovered. Case status data can be found on Toronto Public Health's reporting dashboard. Toronto is now Step Three of the Province of Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen. As the city progresses through the provincial reopening framework, all people are reminded to continue following public health advice, including practising physical distancing and wearing a mask when physical distancing is not possible. All residents should review the City's COVID-19: Reopening Guide for Toronto Residents for what is permitted under provincial regulations and City bylaws.

New Covid-19 cases, deaths and spread of variants all on the rise: WHO

GENEVA, (IANS) While previous months saw decreasing cases of Covid-19 worldwide, the trend has changed this month and last week saw a 12 per cent increase in the number of cases, while deaths and spread of variants are also on the rise, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on Wednesday.

A total of 3.4 million new cases have been confirmed last week, during which approximately an average of 490,000 cases was identified each day, compared with 400,000 cases the week before. It confirmed that the novel coronavirus is spreading faster in the world, the WHO said in its weekly update.

Last week, Indonesia, the United Kingdom and Brazil were the most affected places with respectively 350,273, 296,447 and 287,610 cases, the WHO said.

The Geneva-based organization also reported that if the virus continues to spread at this rate, the global number of Covid-19 cases could reach 200 million in the next three weeks, the Xinhua news agency reported. Furthermore, new deaths are also increasing, with 57,000 deaths reported last week as the death toll of the coronavirus has reached well over four million people. Variants are continuing their progression, as the Alpha variant was seen in 180 countries, territories or areas, and 13 new countries, territories or areas reported cases of the Delta variant.

While the Alpha variant is still detected more often than its counterpart, the Delta variant is believed by the WHO to be 50 per cent more transmissible and might become the dominant form of the virus in the next few months.

Israel, UK data show mixed signals on Pfizer's potency against Delta strain

JERUSALEM, (IANS) New data from Israel and the UK is showing a contradictory picture on the effectiveness of Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine in fighting off the Delta variant, the media reported.

A new Health Ministry statistics from Israel indicated that, on average, the Pfizer-BioNTech shot is now just 39 per cent effective against infection, while being only 41 per cent effective in preventing symptomatic Covid-19.

Previously, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was well over 90 per cent effective against infection, reports The Times of Israel.

Meanwhile, a new UK study published this week in The New England Journal of Medicine found the same vaccine to be 88 per cent effective in preventing symptomatic Covid-19 -- more than twice the rate found in the Israeli data.

Israel's research agreed, at least, that the shot was highly effective in avoiding serious illness, at 91.4 per cent effectiveness, the report said. Some analysts have warned that the figures on vaccine effectiveness are prone to major inaccuracies because of a range of factors, including questions over whether there is accurate data on infection levels among the non-vaccinated, which is vital for such stats. The Israeli statistics also appeared to paint a picture of protection that gets weaker as months pass after vaccination, due to fading immunity. People vaccinated in January were said to have just 16 per cent



protection against infection now, while in those vaccinated in April, effectiveness was at 75 per cent.

COVID-19 MAY BRING A NEW WAVE OF DIABETES: STUDY

NEW YORK, (IANS) While diabetes is known to be a risk factor for severe Covid outcomes, researchers are now observing a new long-term health concern in patients hospitalised with Covid-19 -- an increase in new-onset hyperglycemia, or high levels of blood sugar lasting months after the infection. Researchers from the Boston Children's Hospital assessed the health of 551 people admitted to the hospital for Covid-19 in Italy from March through May 2020. About half of the patients (46 per cent), with no history of diabetes, were found to have new hyperglycemia. A follow-up showed that while most cases were resolved, about 35 per cent of the newly hyperglycemic patients remained so at least six months after the infection, said lead author of the study, Paolo Fiorina, from the Division of Nephrology at the hospital. Compared to patients with no signs of glucose abnormalities, the hyperglycemic patients also had worse clinical concerns: longer hospitalisation, worse clinical symptoms, a higher need of oxygen, a higher need of ventilation, and increased need of intensive care treatment. The study was published in the journal Nature Metabolism. The team also found that hyperglycemic patients had abnormal hormonal levels. "We discovered they were severely hyperinsulinemic; they produced too much insulin," Fiorina said. They also had abnormal levels of pro-insulin, a precursor of insulin, and markers of impaired islet beta cell function. Islet beta cells make and secrete insulin. "Basically, the hormonal profile suggests that the endocrine pancreatic function is abnormal in those patients with Covid-19 and it persists long after recovery," Fiorina added. Hyperglycemic patients also had severe abnormalities in the amount of inflammatory cytokines, including IL-6 and others. While glucometabolic abnormalities declined over time in some patients -- particularly after Covid-19 infection -- other issues like higher post-prandial (after eating) glucose levels and abnormal pancreatic hormones remained in the post-Covid period. "This study is one of the first to show that Covid-19 has a direct effect on the pancreas," Fiorina said, adding, "It indicates that the pancreas is another target of the virus affecting not only the acute phase during hospitalisation but potentially also the long-term health of these patients." The study pointed to the importance of evaluating pancreatic function in patients hospitalised for Covid-19 -- while in the hospital and over the long term.



PAKISTAN BECOMES 30TH COUNTRY WITH OVER ONE MILLION COVID-19 CASES



ISLAMABAD, (IANS) With the detection of 1,425 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, Pakistan's overall infection tally on Friday crossed the 1 million mark amid the fourth wave of the pandemic, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) said. According to the NCOC, the country's overall caseload since the beginning of the pandemic last year currently stood at 1,000,034, Xinhua news agency reported.

The new daily cases marked the first time that the country reported less than 2,000 new cases in a day after almost one week's time, the NCOC's data showed.

The Centre said that the Sindh province has been the worst hit, with a total of 362,182 confirmed cases, followed by Punjab province with 351,707 infections.

A total of 22,939 people have so far died of the disease nationwide, the NCOC said, adding that 2,525 people are in critical condition. The country currently has 53,623 active cases while 923,472 others have recovered from the disease.

Pakistan is currently facing the challenge of the surging fourth wave with the Delta variant spreading across all provinces. According to a recently conducted survey in Karachi, almost 100 per cent of new Covid-19 cases being detected in the city are of the Delta variant.

PRESIDENT BIDEN BELIEVES KIDS UNDER 12 WILL BE ABLE TO GET COVID JABS SOON



NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON, (IANS) US President Joe Biden said that children under the age of 12 could be eligible to receive a Covid 19 vaccine "soon", predicting that his government could green-light the rollout for young Americans in the next few months.

"Soon, I believe," Biden told CNN on Wednesday when he asked when would children under 12 be able to get the Covid-19 vaccine. "Soon, in the sense that I do not tell any scientists what they should do. I do not interfere. So, they are doing the examinations now, the testing now, and making the decision now," he said, adding that scientists will make a decision "when they are ready" and have "done all the science that needs to be done" to determine the appropriate vaccination for different age groups.

America's top infectious disease expert, Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday it was "very likely" that data about Covid-19 vaccines in children under 12 may be available by early winter.

"Very likely when you do the age de-escalation study, so we've gone from 12 to nine, nine to six, six to two and then six months to two years, likely by late fall, early winter, we'll have enough data," Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said at a Senate hearing.

"But that doesn't mean that then it's all of a sudden going to be allowed to happen. That will be a regulatory decision that the FDA will have to make," he said. Biden also indicated that he expects the Covid-19 vaccines, which currently are approved under emergency use authorization, to get full approval from the US Food and Drug Administration "quickly".

"The expectation, they're not promising me any specific date, but my expectation talking to the group of scientists we put together ... is that sometimes, maybe in the beginning of the school year, at the end of August, beginning of September, October, they'll get a final approval saying the (US Food and Drug Administration) said, 'No, this is it. It's good'."

Know all about Covid-19 variants

Covid-19, which originated in Wuhan, China in 2019 has mutated and formed several variants. Here's a list of the major variants:

The Delta Variant (B.1.617) First detected in Maharashtra, in October, it has spread to about 111 countries. It appears to be about 50% more contagious than the Alpha variant, and more than twice as transmissible as the original strain of Covid. Vaccines: Covaxin, Covishield, Pfizer and Moderna	The Delta Plus Variant Formed as a result of the Delta variant acquiring a mutation called K417N in the spike protein. It has been detected in the UK, Russia, Canada, US, Portugal, Japan, Poland, Switzerland, Germany and Nepal. Vaccines: Not established yet, studies ongoing
The Lambda Variant (C.37) First identified in Peru in August 2020, it has spread rapidly to at least 29 countries. It may be more transmissible than the original version of the virus. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna Johnson & Johnson.	The Beta Variant (B.1.351) Also referred to as 501Y.V2, it was first found in South Africa in early October. It is now present in more than 80 countries and appears to be more transmissible. Vaccines: Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson
The Alpha Variant (B.1.1.7) First found in London and the nearby county of Kent, in September 2020. It appears more transmissible than the more common strain. Vaccines: Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax.	The Gamma Variant (P. 1) First detected in Brazil, mainly in Rio de Janeiro, as early as July 2020. It has been confirmed in more than two dozen countries. The variant has more than a dozen alterations, making the strain more transmissible. Vaccine: Pfizer
The Original Variant (D614G) Known simply as "G", it was discovered in China in January 2020. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.	Source: Media reports

Defence and security come first

BY D.C. PATHAK

In the context of the pandemic affecting the world, India being amongst the worst impacted countries, the fundamentals of State-Citizen relationship in a democratic dispensation have come under the focus in terms of defining where the nation's energies and resources would be devoted first. The health emergency caused by Covid-19 has been with us for more than a year -- and still persistent -- leading to enormous loss of lives, destruction of employment and a sharp rise of poverty posing the unprecedented challenge before the ruling dispensation of reviving a derailed economy.

The sovereign state of India has in this period been tested also for its ability to ensure defence of the nation against external dangers and security of its people against internal threats. In the developed West, including the US and UK, no external and internal security risks were encountered and the national governments there could more easily concentrate wholeheartedly on dealing with the pandemic and using their large financial resources towards aiding the population in economic distress. In India, a country with financial limitations, the period saw an escalation of the hostile activities of the two adversaries on the borders -- Pakistan and China -- who had formed a military alliance primarily to damage India's security. The Modi government thus faced issues of defence, internal security, health emergency and economic disruption, all together, and it goes to its credit that a sincere and competent effort was made at the highest levels to deal with this challenge on multiple fronts through these difficult months. Prime Minister Modi's leadership stands out for commitment to nationalism, political will, personal application to solution finding, hard work and quick decision-making on matters across the spectrum.

For a sovereign democratic state, defence of the nation and security of its people will always be on top of its agenda notwithstanding any spells of internal difficulties and socio-economic pressures that the country might have faced at any point. By the time the pandemic hit the country, the Sino-Pak axis had already become active in denouncing India for abrogating Art 370 relating to special status of Jammu and Kashmir. While China started a military build-up on LAC in Ladakh, Pakistan stepped up terror activity in Kashmir using even drones for dropping arms and IEDs from across the LoC in aid of terrorists infiltrated into the Valley.

Prime Minister Modi, in spite of his preoccupation with decisions required to be taken to handle the 'pandemic of the century' and boost up vaccine production on a scale large enough to meet the vast requirement of Indians of advanced age, responded promptly to the aggressiveness shown by PLA in the Ladakh sector and the escalation of trans-border terrorism attempted by Pakistan in Kashmir. He made the bold strategic move of appointing the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen Bipin Rawat, to expedite the process of preparing the defence forces for jointly responding to an external aggression. The

creation of this position had been recommended by the Kargil Review Committee but this was not acted upon all these years.

Following the incident of Galwan Valley in Ladakh on June 15 last year -- in which a large contingent of PLA physically attacked the Indian Army patrol at LAC and caused the death of twenty soldiers including the Lt Col in the field -- the Prime Minister himself visited the Corps headquarter at Nimu outside Ladakh accompanied by CDS to interact with Army personnel of the forward post and support their role in firmly countering any aggressive move of the Chinese. The Prime Minister delivered a message to China that India's determination to deal with any aggression was 'as high as the Himalayas' -- he set an example of leading the country from the front. Modi's leadership has given confidence to the nation that on defence and security India was prepared to do its best.

It is to be understood that defence is against the threat of an external aggression or an 'open attack' of the enemy whereas security is protection against a 'covert' offensive of the latter such as is the case with terrorism unleashed by infiltrated agents and insiders who had been won over by the enemy and secretly trained for carrying out acts of violence. While advance information about any military offensive of the enemy helps the defence preparation, security banks very heavily on Intelligence gathered by external and internal agencies and made available in time for neutralising the plan of violence or domestic disruption hatched by the enemy agents. The world is witnessing an era of 'proxy wars' and India has been for long at the receiving end of the Pak-instigated asymmetric warfare in Kashmir in which Islamic militants and radicals were used by Pakistan as its instruments. China, now in a deep-seated alliance with Pakistan, is known for using 'deception' as a war strategy. India, therefore, has to be fully prepared for coordinated attempts of these two adversaries to fish in our troubled waters and make moves to internally destabilise India.

Internal security has become particularly important in the present scenario and the communal front, regionalism and human rights activism aiming at politics, all need close monitoring. The Modi government is being attacked by the political opponents for allegedly working for 'Hindu majoritarianism' but the latter would be aware somewhere that it is their persistent record of desperately banking on 'Minority' votes that had created a significant backlash and drawn many Hindus to the nationalist-minded BJP regime. Constitutionally, India has 'one man one vote', 'equality' before law and 'freedom of worship' and the ruling dispensation here does not carry a 'denominational stamp'. The paradigms of secularism are thus all met. Mobilisation with communal overtones may have been a familiar feature of electoral politics in India and yet what puts Indian democracy on a sound footing is the astuteness of Indian voters who gave their verdict basically on the performance of a government on the fundamental points of security and economic welfare. People at large see that Prime Minister Modi's intentions to work for both could not be doubted. This is what brought the Modi regime back to power in the 2019 Lok Sabha election with an even larger majority. Blindly criticising all policies of the government has not helped the opposition.

On defence and security, a major test for India is the speed and smoothness with which the CDS would be able to achieve the mission of establishing 'jointness' of the three defence services -- Army, Navy and Air Force -- and bringing about necessary command structures and fund allocation norms for this purpose. CDS is now the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) assuming many basic responsibilities of the erstwhile Defence Secretary and he provides the 'single point advice' to the Defence Minister. In the Indian context, two things would prove helpful -- the experience gained by the country on the coordination among the three Service Chiefs achieved through the successful working of the Chiefs of Staff Committee all these years and the positive outcome of the first Tri Services Theatre Command established in 2001 for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands under Vice Admiral Arun Prakash who went on to become the Navy chief.

The Chiefs of Staff Committee had a rotating chairman based on seniority and the only difference there structurally would be the presence of CDS as the permanent chairman. The character of this forum at the apex would not change and to obtain endorsement by consensus on crucial decisions pertaining to 'jointness' of the defence forces after threadbare discussions, should not be difficult. If 'theatrisation' of commands is the direction of reform according to media reports

PRIME MINISTER MODI'S LEADERSHIP STANDS OUT FOR COMMITMENT TO NATIONALISM, POLITICAL WILL, PERSONAL APPLICATION TO SOLUTION FINDING, HARD WORK AND QUICK DECISION-MAKING ON MATTERS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM. FOR A SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC STATE, DEFENCE OF THE NATION AND SECURITY OF ITS PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS BE ON TOP OF ITS AGENDA NOTWITHSTANDING ANY SPELLS OF INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PRESSURES THAT THE COUNTRY MIGHT HAVE FACED AT ANY POINT. BY THE TIME THE PANDEMIC HIT THE COUNTRY, THE SINO-PAK AXIS HAD ALREADY BECOME ACTIVE IN DENOUNCING INDIA FOR ABROGATING ART 370 RELATING TO SPECIAL STATUS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR. WHILE CHINA STARTED A MILITARY BUILD-UP ON LAC IN LADAKH, PAKISTAN STEPPED UP TERROR ACTIVITY IN KASHMIR USING EVEN DRONES FOR DROPPING ARMS AND IEDS FROM ACROSS THE LOC IN AID OF TERRORISTS INFILTRATED INTO THE VALLEY. PRIME MINISTER MODI, IN SPITE OF HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH DECISIONS REQUIRED TO BE TAKEN TO HANDLE THE PANDEMIC OF THE CENTURY AND BOOST UP VACCINE PRODUCTION ON A SCALE LARGE ENOUGH TO MEET THE VAST REQUIREMENT OF INDIANS OF ADVANCED AGE, RESPONDED PROMPTLY TO THE AGGRESSIVENESS SHOWN BY PLA IN THE LADAKH SECTOR AND THE ESCALATION OF TRANS-BORDER TERRORISM ATTEMPTED BY PAKISTAN IN KASHMIR.

then a combination of geographical factors and threat analysis would surely be a major determinant for that. India's prime defences are on land and sea while the air power as a modern strike instrument, meant to weaken the enemy anywhere, could be used by the national level command in a situation of conflict. That some components of the Air Force would be integrated with theatre commands to strengthen 'joint defence' is an idea that could also be implemented in addition, wherever necessary. It is clear that inter-services operational and rank related adjustments would be sorted out with the passage of time -- facilitated by the past tradition of the three Chiefs at the Chiefs of Staff Committee discussing all matters big or small relating to defence.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that Prime Minister Modi has personally attended to the crucial matters of defence and security amidst pressures of the pandemic and economy related challenges. Internal security is also emerging as a task far more important than before for reasons mentioned earlier and the country, therefore, needs a far closer coordination between the central agencies and the state intelligence as well as a much greater recognition of the role of state police as a first responder to national security threats. All this exists already but has to be perfected so that no impediments arose from the fact of politically different dispensations being in position at the Centre and in the state.

A democratic state has to strive to keep national security issues completely above party politics. The annual conference of DGPs called by Director Intelligence Bureau for sharing a review of national security scenario, is the right forum where the centre-state police rapport -- for prompt handling of any imminent threat to internal security -- would be discussed and some illustrations pointed out for identifying the lessons drawn for the general good. Internal security issues seem to be running into political slugfest too often and this is not healthy, if the Joint Parliamentary Committees concerned with defence and security are adequately briefed on the current scenario and the policy framework of the government to handle it explained to them, the opposition would risk getting exposed before the people if it tried to drag these matters into controversies for political motives. People of India are sensitive and receptive towards national security and are willing to even push their personal issues aside for safeguarding it. The Prime Minister has done well to keep defence and security in his focus even when the pandemic and its economic consequences had become matters of overwhelming concern. This would not go unnoticed by the people of India at large.

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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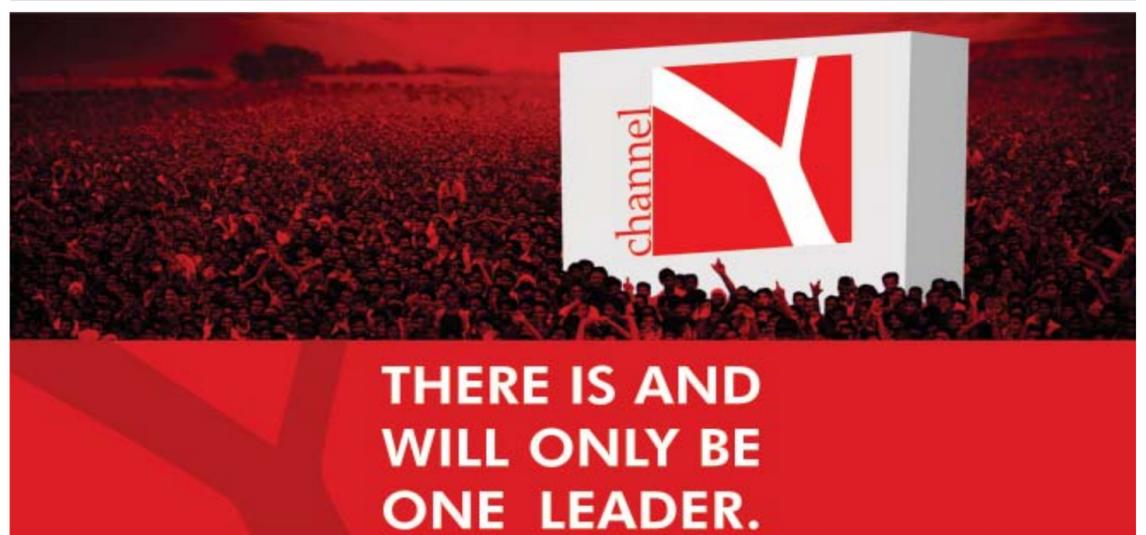
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CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK WILL INVEST UP TO \$400 MILLION TOWARDS BRAMPTON'S 450 ZERO-EMISSION BUS TRANSITION



CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

I am delighted the CIB is making a major investment to support the massive expansion of the City of Brampton's fleet of zero-emission buses. Our partnership will help Brampton become a Green City and provide cleaner public transportation for generations to come. This is a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in modernizing municipal infrastructure. The CIB will continue making investments which improve the quality of life for Canadians and support more sustainable communities," said Ehren Cory, President and CEO, Canada Infrastructure Bank.

The CIB's investment will contribute towards the upfront capital cost of the ZEBs and related charging infrastructure. This is the CIB's third ZEB investment commitment with a municipality and supports one of the largest conversions of public transit vehicles in Canada to date. ZEBs can improve the quality of life for residents who will benefit from cleaner commuting options. Transitioning to a fully electric bus fleet builds on the City's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and building a Green City.

Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities said, Cleaner air, quieter streets, and a planet safe for our kids – that's the

goal. By partnering with the City of Brampton, the Canada Infrastructure Bank will help bring up to 450 new zero-emission buses to the streets of Brampton, towards our commitment of 5,000 more zero-emission buses across the country. It's part of the Government of Canada's plan to improve the quality of life for all Canadians, by creating good jobs and kickstarting the economy, tackling climate change, and building more inclusive communities. The electrification of transit vehicles is a critical milestone in the City's journey to reducing GHGs generated in Brampton by 80 per cent by 2050. Once the 450 buses are deployed, ZEBs are estimated to save approximately 57,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year. The CIB and City of Brampton expect to reach financial close by late 2021.

The CIB has a goal to invest \$1.5 billion in zero-emission buses and associated infrastructure, which works in tandem with programs at Infrastructure Canada. Brampton's Mayor Patrick Brown said, "I am proud to welcome the CIB's multi-million-dollar investment in Brampton Transit. We are revolutionizing transit in Canada with our goal to purchase up to 450 zero-emission buses on Brampton's roads in the next six years. Brampton is a Green City, and together, we can reduce our carbon footprint and become an even more modern and sustainable city."

ONTARIO RELEASES 2021 ONTARIO HIGHWAYS PROGRAM



The Ontario government has released the 2021 Ontario Highways Program, an online resource that provides information on highway investments and projects that are planned and underway. Delivering on its commitments, the province is improving transportation infrastructure and creating thousands of good-paying jobs for Ontarians.

"This valuable information allows people to see highway projects that are being built or planned in their communities and across the province," said Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation. "It also helps the construction industry by providing a multi-year outlook of planned projects to help them better prepare for the future."

Ontario has allocated approximately \$2.6 billion in funding for 2021-22 to expand and repair provincial highways and bridges, which will also spur economic growth. In fact, it is estimated that every \$100 million invested in Ontario's highway infrastructure will create \$70 million of real provincial GDP in addition to direct and indirect economic benefits to highway users in 2021. The Ontario Highways Program includes data on over 580 expansion and rehabilitation projects that have committed construction funding and are either underway or currently planned. All expansion projects with construction funding are identified, while rehabilitation projects are focused on a four-year period (2021-2024). "Our government understands the importance of reliable, accessible transportation for the movement of essential goods and services in our northern communities," said Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. "A strong transportation system makes a strong economy. Today's announcement is great news for the people and businesses who live in the North." The 2021 program is viewable to everyone on the Ontario Highways Program website. Beginning this year, the published program will include more detailed project information, such as the engineering status, value range, and where known, delivery model. The program will also be updated twice per year.

MARY SIMON OFFICIALLY BECOMES CANADA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS & 30TH GOVERNOR-GENERAL

OTTAWA, (IANS) Mary Simon has been sworn in as Canada's 30th Governor General, becoming the first-ever indigenous person to take over the post.

Simon, an Inuk from Quebec, was recommended by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take the role earlier this month, reports Xinhua news agency.

The swearing-in ceremony was held in the Senate on Monday where about 50 dignitaries and guests, including Trudeau and the speakers of the House of Commons and Senate, were in attendance.

In addition to official oaths and signatures overseen by senior federal officials, the event had included several cultural performances.

A prominent Inuk leader and former ambassador, Simon as Governor General will play a crucial role in constitutional matters and within minority governments when it comes to questions of confidence and calling elections.

She also becomes the top commander of the Canadian Armed Forces. Simon's appointment comes amid renewed focus on Canada's efforts towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples, prompted by the continuing discovery of unmarked graves on former residential school grounds across the country.

Canada's indigenous leaders, particularly representatives of the Inuit community, have praised the appointment.

27 Fast and Easy Fix Ups to Get the Best Price for Your GTA Home

TORONTO - Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. And once you have made that decision, you'll want to sell your home for the highest price in the shortest time possible without compromising your sanity. Before you place your home on the market, here's a way to help you to be as prepared as possible.

To assist homesellers, a new industry report has just been released called "27 Valuable Tips That You Should Know to Get Your Home Sold Fast and for Top Dollar." It tackles the important issues you need to know to make your home competitive in today's tough, aggressive marketplace.

Through these 27 tips you will discover how to protect and capitalize on your most important investment, reduce stress, be in control of your situation, and make the best profit possible.

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Province to Supply Additional Ontario-Made Masks As Two Businesses Awarded Major PPE Production Contracts

The Ontario government is continuing to take steps to create a reliable, high-quality supply of locally made surgical masks to help protect workers in the public sector from the risk of COVID-19 and other illnesses. The province recently signed contracts with Viva Healthcare Packaging and Canada Masq to supply 500 million made-in-Ontario level 1 and level 2 surgical/protective masks over the next five years. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade said, "Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, and our skilled workforce and world-class manufacturing sector can make the emergency supplies right here at home while creating good jobs and contributing to our economic recovery. Because of innovative companies like Viva Healthcare and Canada Masq, our province will be well-equipped with a reliable domestic supply of PPE and other critical supplies to get us through this pandemic and ensure our preparedness for any future challenges."

Following a competitive process, the two companies are each producing approximately 50 million masks per year over the next five years:

Viva Healthcare Packaging Canada, operating in Scarborough, used a grant from the Ontario Together Fund to retool their operations to increase their mask-making capacity. Becoming one of Canada's largest manufacturers of medical-grade masks has led to the creation of 115 new jobs in the local community.

Canada Masq, based in Richmond Hill, answered the government's call in the early days of the pandemic for entrepreneurs to create locally-made masks. Early planning of their business started in April

2020, and mass production of masks began in December, adding 58 full-time jobs for the community.

"I'm thrilled that Viva Healthcare Packaging will be providing masks to help protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19, meeting the needs of the healthcare and public sector workers. This initiative is another step in making the province self-sufficient through a reliable, high-quality domestic supply of surgical masks," said Raymond Cho, MPP Scarborough North.

"Ontario manufacturers have a central role to play in our self-sufficiency as a province, not only as we continue to fight COVID-19, but over the years that follow," said Ross Romano, Minister of Government and Consumer Services. "By bringing more Ontario suppliers on board and centralizing procurement, we will ensure healthcare workers always have a steady supply of PPE and that we will never need to rely on another jurisdiction again to keep Ontarians safe." Daisy Wai, MPP for Richmond Hill said, "Our government wants to ensure that health care professionals and frontline workers have the PPE they need to stay safe while doing their critical work. This is an Ontario-made solution that will make sure that we are no longer dependant on unreliable global supply chains while creating good jobs and protecting people across the province."

The government's contracts with Viva Healthcare and Canada Masq are in addition to those previously announced with 3M Canada and PRIMED. These contracts and more will be overseen centrally by Supply Ontario in the future as the agency continues to be stood up.

ONTARIO PROVIDES ADDITIONAL \$16.9 MILLION FUNDING FOR HOSPITAL CARE IN OTTAWA



The Ontario government is taking further action to end hallway health care and address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing The Ottawa Hospital with \$16.9 million in additional operating funding beginning in 2021/22. This is the third straight year of increased hospital investments across the province.

This investment represents a 2.2 per cent increase to the base and one-time funding of over \$766 million that The Ottawa Hospital received in 2020/21.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario's hospitals have gone above and beyond to provide exceptional patient care," said Premier Ford. "Having added thousands of new beds to our hospitals across Ontario, including right here in Ottawa, this investment is part of our government's continued support to ensure that everyone who needs care can get it."

Over the last three years, the Ontario government has made significant investments in Ontario's hospitals as part of its plan to end hallway health care. This includes overall sector increases of 2 per cent in 2019-20, 3 per cent in 2020-2021 and most recently, 3.4 per cent in 2021-22. The 2021 Budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting

People's Health and Our Economy, outlined a total of \$1.8 billion in additional investments for hospitals in 2021-22. This includes an increase of \$778 million in funding to meet current and future demands for services, and ensures all publicly funded hospitals will receive a minimum 1 per cent increase to help them keep pace with patient needs and to increase access to high-quality care for patients and families across Ontario. "I want to thank Premier Ford and his Ontario Government team not only for the funding being provided today but for their support and leadership throughout the pandemic. This funding will go a long way to allowing health care workers to manage the challenges that COVID-19 has presented and proceed forward with the recovery plan over the coming year," said Cameron Love, President and CEO of The Ottawa Hospital.

The Ontario government remains committed to supporting hospitals so that they can continue to provide the care Ontarians need and deserve, today and in the future. Additional support for Ontario's hospitals as part of Ontario's Action Plan includes \$760 million to help hospitals continue to respond to COVID-19 and an additional \$300 million to address wait times for surgeries and procedures.



TECHNOLOGY MADE ELDERLY FEEL MORE LONELY DURING PANDEMIC: STUDY

LONDON, (IANS) Staying in touch with friends and family via technology made many older people feel more lonelier and more depressed than no contact at all, researchers have research.

The study, led by researchers from the UK's Lancaster University, showed that many older people experienced a greater increase in loneliness and long-term mental health disorders as a result of the switch to online socialising than those who spent the pandemic on their own, the Guardian reported.

"We were surprised by the finding that an older person who had only virtual contact during lockdown experienced greater loneliness and negative mental health impacts than an older person who had no contact with other people at all," said Dr Yang Hu of Lancaster University. "We were expecting that a virtual contact was better than total isolation but that doesn't seem to have been the case for older people," he added. The findings were published in the journal *Frontiers in Sociology*.

The problem was that older people unfamiliar with technology found it stressful to learn how to use it. But even those who were familiar with technology often found the extensive use of the medium over lockdown so stressful that it was more damaging to their mental health than simply coping with isolation and loneliness, the report quoted Yang as saying.

"Extensive exposure to digital means of communication can also cause burnout. The results are very consistent," he said.

The team collected data from 5,148 people aged 60 or over in the UK and 1,391 in the US -- both before and during the pandemic.

"It's not only loneliness that was made worse by virtual contact, but general mental health: these people were more depressed, more isolated and felt more unhappy as a direct result of their use of virtual contact," he said.

Yang said more emphasis needed to be placed on safe ways to have face-to-face contact in future emergencies. There must also, he added, be a drive to bolster the digital capacity of the older age groups. The findings outlined the limitations of a digital-only future and the promise of a digitally enhanced future in response to population ageing in the longer term, he noted.



CDC MAY BACK WEARING MASKS AGAINST COVID, EVEN FOR VACCINATED: DR. FAUCI



WASHINGTON, (IANS) The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is weighing revising its Covid-19 guidelines to recommend that even fully vaccinated people wear masks in public, said Anthony Fauci, White House chief medical advisor, on Sunday. Fauci told CNN that he has taken part in conversations about altering the guidelines, something he described as being "under active consideration", Xinhua news agency reported. He noted that some local areas where infection rates are surging are already urging individuals to wear masks in public regardless of their vaccination status. Covid-19 cases, deaths and hospitalizations continue to increase among the unvaccinated across the United States. Health experts have blamed the recent surges on the low vaccination rates and the accelerating Delta variant transmission.

CANADA, GERMANY TO LEAD ROADMAP IN MOBILISING CLIMATE FINANCE



NEW DELHI, (IANS) Climate ministers have taken a step forward towards a successful UN climate summit named COP26, as a constructive meeting in London concluded with countries, including India, coming closer on key issues such as actions to keep the 1.5-degree Celsius goal alive, adaptation finance and concluding the Paris rulebook.

At the two-day ministerial, convened by COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma to discuss critical negotiating issues and climate actions ahead of COP26, ministers from around the world sketched the outline of the Glasgow summit outcome and agreed on collaborative ways forward to reach it.

Ministers from Singapore and Norway agreed to continue consulting informally with the ministers on Article 6, which relates to carbon markets, while Rwanda and Switzerland's ministers agreed to consult on common time frames for emissions reduction commitments, or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

In a boost for the COP Presidency's goal of getting finance flowing for climate action, Germany and Canada have agreed to take forward a delivery plan for mobilizing \$100 billion a year from developed countries, which is critically needed to help others in their fight against climate change.

The countries were clear that COP26 needs to deliver actions, not just words. Many highlighted the importance of ending coal power, coal financing and fossil fuel subsidies.

The ministers looked forward to Italy's G20 leaders' summit on October 30-31 as a pivotal moment for action.

Ahead of the meeting, there was a recent show of leadership from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including the Solomon Islands, Bhutan and Ethiopia, as well as more ambitious NDCs from Paraguay, Morocco and Canada, which will help keep the critical goal of limiting global warming to 1.5-degree Celsius insight.

The ministers participating in the meeting called for all countries to deliver ambitious NDCs and long-term strategies towards net-zero before COP26. Sharma welcomed the progress, but stressed that significant further work is needed, particularly on finance, adaptation and other crucial issues, with less than 100 days to go before the countries come together in November for the COP26 in Glasgow. Following the meeting, Sharma said: "The steps we have taken over the past two days bring us closer to securing an outcome at Glasgow that people and our planet are crying out for. "However, fault lines remain on some critical issues, and there is more work to do. We have asked the ministers to lead conversations in order to bridge the divide and get us in the best possible position for COP26. Each country must now give its all to this process; lives and livelihoods depend on it, and we have no time to waste." Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said: "There can be no neutral position when it comes to climate action."

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ONLY 5.35% FULLY VACCINATED IN PUNJAB

CHANDIGARH, (IANS) Just 5.35 per cent people in Punjab have got both doses of the coronavirus vaccine, state Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said on Monday.

He said the state has been able to vaccinate 94,79,351 people, out of which 77,16,433 have received the first dose and 17,62,918 completed their vaccination with both doses.

Sidhu said Punjab has been receiving less supply of vaccine and he has been urging the central government to expedite the vaccine supply so that the state can safeguard its population by vaccinating them with both doses of the vaccine.

To avoid a third wave of Covid-19 apart from health infrastructure, vaccine supply needs to be ramped up by the Union government so that entire population can be covered, the minister said in a statement. Amid fear of the third wave, the state government has been

gearing up to tackle an anticipated load of patients, he said.

The Health Department has strengthened the health infrastructure with the enhanced bed capacity, 9,000 oxygen concentrators, 75 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants have been added in a short span of time. Commenting on the fourth sero survey conducted by the ICMR in four districts of Punjab, the Health Minister said 63.15 per cent of population had Covid antibodies and amongst the healthcare workers 83.25 per cent had antibodies. Out of these four districts, Ludhiana had the maximum positivity of 71 per cent among the general population. Sidhu said as per the survey the state has much higher number of cases than the number reported. Considering the high prevalence of Covid among the population, he appealed all to follow appropriate behaviour till the entire population is completely vaccinated with both doses.

'NO DECISION IS BEST DECISION' IS CONGRESS' PHILOSOPHY: NADDA

NEW DELHI, (IANS) BJP chief J.P. Nadda said on Monday that Congress has a philosophy of 'no decision is best decision'.

Nadda was speaking at a function organised at the party headquarters here to commemorate Kargil Vijay Diwas.

Hitting out at the main opposition party for not taking any decision against terrorist attacks, Nadda said, "Congress has the philosophy of 'no decision is the best decision' and whenever there is a deal in the interest of the country, its philosophy remains 'no mission but commission'. Nationalism is a synonym of Bharatiya Janata Party. It is our responsibility to preserve this."

Talking about the surgical strike and the Balakot air strike, Nadda said, "By conducting surgical strike and air strike in Balakot under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has shown that it only means business."

Emphasising that forces have been given a free hand to take decisions, Nadda said, "Since the BJP government came to power under the leadership of Modi, the defence forces have been given a free hand to take decisions after accessing the situation. This is the impact of changed leadership." He also pointed out that terrorists are punished at the earliest by the Modi government.

"Earlier, a terrorist used to come to India and create disturbance for 2.5 years. The army is the same, but if the leadership is not right, the terrorist can create havoc for 2.5 years. If the leadership is right, they can be neutralised in 2.5 weeks," Nadda said.

Referring to the defence acquisitions by India under the Modi government, the BJP chief said, "After the arrival of Prime Minister Modi, a fleet of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft is available in India. We have 28



Apache helicopters, 15 Chinook choppers, 145 ultra-light Howitzers, and 100 Vajra artillery guns. Today, India is exporting bullet-proof jackets." "We need to understand which party or leader gives importance to national security. And whose arrival and departure makes a difference," Nadda said. Talking about the Kargil Vijay Diwas celebrations, Nadda said, "We celebrate it as the day of bravery. Kargil is a symbol of bravery of our soldiers. The enemy was hiding above and our brave soldiers were standing thousands of feet below. The tricolor was hoisted by attacking the enemy under adverse conditions."

CHIEF MINISTER CANNOT BREAK PROMISE MADE IN PRESS CONFERENCE, RULES DELHI HC

NEW DELHI, (IANS) In a significant judgment, the Delhi High Court on Thursday ruled that good governance requires that promises made to citizens by those who govern are not broken, as it held that the assurance/promise given by the Chief Minister is enforceable, both on the basis of the doctrines of promissory estoppel and legitimate expectation.

A bench of Justice Pratibha M. Singh directed the Delhi government to decide, within six weeks, on an assurance given by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on March 29, 2020, to pay the rent of migrant workers in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. He had said if any tenant is unable to pay the rent due to poverty, the government would pay his/her rent on their behalf.

The court made it clear that the assurance is not a political promise, as is sought to be canvassed before it, and it was also not made as a part of an election rally and is rather a statement made by the Delhi Chief Minister. It added that there is a reasonable expectation on behalf of the citizens that the Chief Minister knows the background, and the number of people who would be affected by the same as also the financial implications of such a promise/assurance, in the context in which it was made.

"A statement given in a consciously held press conference, against the background of the lockdown announced due to the pandemic and the mass exodus of migrant labourers, cannot be simply overlooked. Proper governance requires the Government to take a decision on the assurance given by the Chief Minister, and inaction on the same cannot be the answer," said Justice Singh, in an 89-page judgment. The court said it is of the opinion that the promise was given by the Chief Minister clearly amounts to an enforceable promise, the implementation of which ought to be considered by the government. "Good governance requires that promises made to citizens, by those who govern, are not broken, without valid and justifiable reasons," it added. The court said surely there must have been a large number of tenants and landlords, who would have believed the Chief Minister's assurance, and that the expectation of the citizens could be that government would implement the promise. However, when it is examining this promise and the expectation which comes with it, the question is whether there is any reason as to why the government did not even make a decision in this regard, it said. "To that extent, insofar as the indecision is concerned, the GNCTD needed to answer the question, which it has failed to answer," the court observed.

ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER ROW TURNS VIOLENT, CMS SEEK CENTRE'S INTERVENTION

SILCHAR (ASSAM)/AIZAWL, (IANS) The Assam-Mizoram border trouble flared up on Monday with at least 20 officials and civilians injured and vehicles damaged in clashes as both Chief Ministers sought Union Home Minister Amit Shah's urgent intervention.

Officials of both states, including Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli, and Superintendent of Police Nimbalkar Vaibhav Chandrakant, are camping at trouble-torn Lailapur area in Assam's Cachar district, which borders Mizoram's Kolasib, as they try to calm down the situation. Assam officials claimed that a large number of people from Mizoram attacked them, injuring 16, six km inside the state, while Mizoram officials claimed that people from Assam damaged a vehicle in which a Mizo couple was travelling to the state. There were reports that there was some firing too but officials did not confirm it. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga, in a series of tweets, sought to blame each other's officials for the situation, while calling on Amit Shah to urgently intervene to control the situation.

The Mizoram CM, in his tweets where he tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Shah, said: "Dear Himantaji, after cordial meeting of CMs by Hon'ble Shri Amit Shah ji, surprisingly two companies of Assam Police with civilians lathicharged & tear gassed civilians at Vairengte Auto Rickshaw stand inside Mizoram today (Monday). They even overran CRPF personnel and Mizoram Police. "Hon'ble Himanta Biswa Sarma ji, as discussed I kindly urge that Assam Police be instructed to withdraw from Vairengte for the safety of civilians." Tagging videos of the border clashes, Zoramthang said: "Shri Amit Shah ji. kindly look into the matter. This needs to be stopped right now. In another tweet, he said: "Innocent couple on their way back to Mizoram via Cachar manhandled and ransacked by thugs and goons. How are you going to justify these violent acts?" Sarma, in his tweets, said: "I have just spoken to Hon'ble Chief Minister Zoramthanga ji. I have reiterated that Assam will maintain status quo and peace between the borders of our state. I have expressed my willingness to visit Aizawl and discuss these issues if need be." "Hon'ble Zoramthanga ji, Kolasib SP is asking us to withdraw from our post until then their civilians won't listen nor stop violence. How can we run government in such circumstances? Hope you will intervene at earliest." The inter-state border troubles issues were discussed when the Union Home Minister met the Chief Ministers of eight northeastern states in Shillong on Saturday.

BENGAL CM MAMATA MEETS MODI, DEMANDS MORE VACCINES & MEDICINES

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The meeting, held at Prime Minister's residence, lasted for around 45 minutes. It is learnt that during the meeting, Banerjee discussed Covid situation in the state and demanded more vaccines and medicines for the state. After meeting with the Prime Minister, Banerjee said, "It was a courtesy meeting. I told the Prime Minister about need of more vaccines and medicines in the West Bengal. I also raised the pending issue of change of the name of the state on which the Prime Minister said he will see." In July, 2018, West Bengal assembly passed a resolution to change the name of the state to Bangla.

Banerjee also discussed several different projects of the state and tax issues. On issue of her meeting with the opposition leaders, Banerjee said, "Many parties and their leaders are old friends. I am meeting them." Banerjee also said that she will be meeting Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday.

"On Wednesday, I am meeting Sonia Gandhi. She has invited me for tea," she said. On her plan to bringing all opposition parties on one platform, she said, "Though the Lok Sabha polls are far away, we must have to start planning in advance. Assembly elections will be held in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Tripura. Our people were arrested in Tripura."

Earlier she met Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath.

Banerjee's meeting with opposition leaders is being seen as an attempt to bring all the opposition parties together before 2024 Lok Sabha polls. She is also likely to meet NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Wednesday. Mamata Banerjee is in Delhi on a five-day visit.

IMF CUTS INDIA GROWTH TO 9.5% DUE TO COVID DELTA, BUT IT RETAINS TOP SPOT

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The IMF's World Economic Outlook Update (WEOU) on Tuesday made the cuts to the projection of 12.5 per cent made in April, and the January projection of 11 per cent.

"Growth prospects in India have been downgraded following the severe second Covid wave during March-May and expected slow recovery in confidence from that setback," said the update released in Washington. The IMF stressed the importance of vaccinations in the economic recovery from the pandemic and noted that countries like India that lagged in the rate of vaccinations would suffer if more infectious variants developed. Despite the cut, India is projected to remain the fastest-growing large economy, followed by China with a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8.1 per cent - 0.3 per cent less than the projection made in April. The US and the UK come next with growth projections of 7 per cent each - an increase of 0.6 per cent since April for the US and 1.7 per cent for the UK. India's growth rate is expected by the IMF to moderate next year to 8.5 per cent, an increase of 1.6 per cent from the April projection, and continue to be the fastest growing economy.

The 9.5 per cent growth rate for India would be one of the highest recorded by the country, behind the 10.3 per cent in 2010, 9.8 per cent in 2007 and 9.6 per cent in 1988, according to IMF data.

But this fiscal year's high growth rate reflects a bounce back from the economy shrinking by 7.3 per cent during the last fiscal year, which in that context would seem less impressive.

The IMF kept the growth forecasts for the global economy at 6 per cent this year and 4.9 per cent next year that were made in April.

GANESH GODIYAL NAMED CONGRESS' UTTARAKHAND CHIEF

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Congress interim President Sonia Gandhi on Thursday appointed Ganesh Godiyal as the new Uttarakhand unit chief, replacing Pritam Singh who has been named the legislative party leader, while former Chief Minister Harish Rawat will head the Campaign Committee for next year's poll. Jeet Ram, Bhuwan Kapri, Tilak Raj Behar and Ranjeet Rawat, have also been appointed as Working Presidents. Former Minister Navprabhat has been made the Manifesto Committee Chairman, former state chief Kishore Upadhaya the Coordination Committee Chairman and Prakash Joshi the Election Committee Chairman. Sumit Hridayesh will head the Publicity committee.



BIHAR MINISTER SAYS NEXT CM IN 2025 WILL COME FROM BJP

PATNA, (IANS) The relationship between the ruling alliance partners in Bihar, the JDU and the BJP is reportedly souring day by day. One such example came on Day 1 of the Assembly's Monsoon Session on Monday when Panchayati Raj Minister Samrat Chaudhary claimed that the BJP will form the next government in the state in 2025.

"The current government in Bihar is nothing but a political compulsion of both the BJP and the JDU. Nitish Kumar became chief minister of Bihar just because of the political compulsions of both the parties. In 2025, the chief minister of Bihar will come from the BJP," Chaudhary said. Chaudhary's statement was supported by Amrendra Pratap Singh, the agriculture minister of Bihar. He said that Chaudhary has not said anything wrong. "I also believe that one of our party leaders will be the next CM of Bihar in 2025," Singh said. Following the statement of these two leaders, the JDU reacted sharply to it. JDU MLC Sanjay Singh said that the BJP had contested the election alone in 2015 and everyone knows what happened. "Nitish Kumar is the leader of the National Democratic Alliance in Bihar and the BJP top leadership has accepted him as the chief minister of Bihar. If Chaudhary or any other BJP leader has an objection to his leadership, contact them. In a democracy, every political party has a right to contest elections either on its own or in alliance," Sanjay Singh said. "Samrat Chaudhary and Amrendra Pratap Singh are ministers in the Bihar government. They should give responsible statements in public."

GOVT CLUELESS ON HOW TO HANDLE CHINA: RAHUL

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Monday slammed the Narendra Modi government over reports of China's action in Demchok, saying the government is clueless on how to handle China and is ignoring their actions which will cause problems. "Government of India (GOI) is clueless on how to handle China. Ignoring their actions now will cause huge problems in the future," he said in a tweet.

He also attached a news report that claimed: "In Demchok, China's tents on India side; no date yet for talks".

Rahul Gandhi has been critical of the Modi-led Centre over its handling of China's actions in Ladakh and other areas.



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AFGHANISTAN ASKS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO PROBE TALIBAN'S CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY



NEW DELHI/KABUL, (IANS) Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has welcomed the recent Human Rights Watch and other verified independent sources' report on documenting the Taliban's violence and crimes, and "strongly condemns these reprehensible crimes". "The reports by verified independent resources and media indicate that the Taliban forces perpetrate in areas under their control unpardonable and prosecutable crimes, including illegal arrests, arbitral killings, torturing civilians, forced marriages, and violation of basic human rights, particularly women's rights," the Foreign Affairs Ministry said. "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan calls on the international community, human rights agencies, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to cooperate with the Afghan Government in preventing the Taliban's organised atrocities and prosecution of the perpetrators to put an end to impunity in Afghanistan," it added. The Afghanistan government, while appreciating the independent verified international agencies' efforts in confirming the Taliban's non-compliance to their international commitments and the Doha Peace Agreement, stresses the need to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Human Rights Council and dispatching a fact-finding delegation to assess and follow up on the Taliban's violations and crimes against humanity, it added. IANS had reported that Taliban forces that have taken control of districts in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province have detained hundreds of residents whom they accuse of association with the government. Human Rights Watch said the Taliban have reportedly killed some detainees, including relatives of provincial government officials and members of the police and army. The watchdog said that after Taliban forces took control of Kandahar's Spin Boldak border crossing with Pakistan on July 8, and the Spin Boldak district centre on July 16, they conducted searches to identify residents who have worked for the local government or security forces. Taliban forces that control areas around Kandahar city have carried out similar searches and have evicted some residents. Taliban have taken more than 300 people into custody and have detained them in unidentified locations. "There are grave concerns that Taliban forces in Kandahar may commit further atrocities to retaliate against the government and security forces," said Patricia Gossman, Associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Taliban leaders have denied responsibility for any abuses, but growing evidence of expulsions, arbitrary detentions, and killings in areas under their control are raising fears among the population."

CDC URGES VACCINATED PEOPLE TO WEAR MASKS AGAIN IN US AMID COVID-19 DELTA VARIANT FEARS



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its mask guidance on Tuesday (local time) to prevent further spread of the Delta variant in the United States, by mandating vaccinated people to wear masks in certain situations. The recommendation urges fully vaccinated people to wear masks indoors when in areas with "substantial" and "high" transmission of COVID-19, which includes nearly two-thirds of all US counties. "In recent days I have seen new scientific data from recent outbreak investigations showing that the Delta variant behaves uniquely differently from past strains of the virus that cause COVID-19," CDC Director Dr Rochelle Walensky told reporters on Tuesday (local time).

Soon after the announcement made by CDC, a statement issued by the White House stated that President Joe Biden and White House officials will resume wearing masks indoors when traveling to parts of the nation with high Covid transmission rates. "I hope all Americans who live in the areas covered by the CDC guidelines will follow it; I certainly will when I travel to these areas," Biden said.

Tuesday's regulations mean that even people who have been completely inoculated will once again need to mask up in public indoor spaces in parts of the country where the virus is ascendant.

TALIBAN NOW CONTROL ABOUT HALF OF AFGHAN DISTRICT CENTRES; HAS GAINED STRATEGIC MOMENTUM: TOP US GENERAL

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"We're going to find out, the levels of violence, does it go up, does it stay the same, there's the possibility of negotiated outcome still out there, there's the possibility of a Taliban takeover (and) any other number of scenarios," Milley said. He still expressed confidence in the ability of Afghan forces to fend off a Taliban takeover of the country. "The two most important combat multipliers, actually, are will and leadership.

And this is going to be a test now of the will and leadership of the Afghan people, the Afghan Security Forces and the government of Afghanistan. "I don't think the end game is yet written. A negative outcome, a Taliban automatic takeover, is not a foregone conclusion," he added.

While the militants are yet to capture any of the country's 34 provincial capitals, they are pressuring about half of them, said Milley. Afghan security forces are consolidating their



positions to protect those major urban centres including Kabul, he said. "What they're trying to do is isolate the major population centres. They're trying to do the same thing to Kabul." As of Wednesday, the Taliban now controls about 212 of Afghanistan's 419 district centres, Milley said, adding that it was a significant jump from the 81 district centres a month ago. The top US General attributed some of the Taliban's recent gains to Afghan forces consolidating in order to protect the population centre, The Hill news website said in a report. "Part of this is they're giving up district centres in order to consolidate their forces because they're taking an approach to protect the population," Milley said. "And most of the population lives in the provincial capitals and the capital city of Kabul. So they are right now, as we speak, adjusting forces to consolidate into the provincial capitals and Kabul." He also predicted that, following a lull in violence for the Eid al-Adha holiday, the rest of the summer could be decisive for the tide of the war, the report added.



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