

BUDGET A STEP TOWARDS MODERN, SELF-RELIANT INDIA, FOCUSES ON POOR, MIDDLE CLASS: PM MODI | P3









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I DETAILS ON PAGE 5

OTTAWA POLICE PROVIDE DETAILS ON TRUCKERS CONVOY PROTEST

Ottawa police chief Peter sloly issued the following statement on the truckers protest in Ottawa. At that last media briefing, you will recall that we described this as a unique demonstration. You heard some of those elements from chair Deans and Mayor Watson. For those of you who

live in Ottawa's downtown core, you have seen that materialize over the last four days. Our frontline officers and civilian members or

> partners from national, provincial and municipal agencies have experienced the same thing. This demonstration is unique in nature, massive in scale, polarizing in context and dangerous in literally every other aspect of the event itself. This started on the West Coast

of Canada and spread across the country. It has been fluid, ever-changing and increasingly more difficult to manage. That has remained since the beginning; it continues to this current day. I want to provide you with the updated information, from the course of events that took place through Friday afternoon into Saturday, Saturday evening into Sunday, Sunday evening into Monday.

I CONTD. ON PAGE 7

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S. JAISHANKAR SLAMS RAHUL GANDHI OVER 'GOVERNMENT BROUGHT PAKISTAN, CHINA TOGETHER' REMARK

Responding to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remark that the BJP-led Central government brought "Pakistan and China together", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Wednesday that the two Asian countries have been sharing close ties since the last several decades. He also rejected Rahul Gandhi's allegation that "it is India's faulty foreign policy under the Narendra Modi-led government which made China and Pakistan join hands together against India, and convert into a front". Taking to Twitter to respond to the former Congress President's remarks, Jaishankar said: "Rahul Gandhi alleged in Lok Sabha that it is this Government which brought Pakistan and China together. Perhaps, some history lessons are in order: In 1963, Pakistan illegally handed over the Shaksgam valley to China. China built the Karakoram highway through PoK in the 1970s." Speaking in the Parliament on Wednesday, Rahul Gandhi slammed the Central government. "You put our nation at risk by creating such situations that made Pakistan and China get along against India. The single biggest strategic goal of India should be to keep China and Pakistan separate... and what you have done? You have brought

them together. This is a very serious threat to India. "You have made a huge strategic mistake in our foreign policy. You have taken two different fronts and converted them into one single front," the Congress leader said. Responding further, Jaishankar said: "From the 1970s, the two countries also had close nuclear collaboration. In 2013, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor started. So, ask yourself: were China and Pakistan distant then?"

CANADA SHOWS SUPPORT TO UKRAINE WITH DEFENCE MINISTER ANITA ANAND'S VISIT

KYIV, UKRAINE - National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces Defence Minister Anita Anand concluded a trip to Ukraine - the first of

three destinations on her first official foreign trip as Minister of National Defence. Over the course of her two-day visit, she re-affirmed Canada's strong commitment to Ukraine. and met with several of her Ukrainian counterparts and members of the Canadian Armed Forces deployed on Operation UNIFIER.

CONTD. ON PAGE 8

RON CHATHA ELECTED CHAIR OF THE PEEL POLICE SERVICES BOARD

REGION OF PEEL - Ron Chatha was elected as Chair of the Peel Police Services Board at its January Board meeting for the 2022 calendar year. At the same meeting, Ahmad Attia was elected Vice-Chair. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair are elected by their colleagues at the first Board meeting each year.

I CONTD. ON PAGE 8

PEEL POLICE TAKES DOWN PROLIFIC AUTO THEFT GROUP



REGION OF PEEL - Investigators from the Peel Regional Police Commercial Auto Crime Bureau were involved in a six-month multiiurisdictional investigation with numerous law-enforcement agencies and partners, resulting in the recovery of over 200 stolen vehicles worth over 11 million dollars and arresting numerous members of a prolific auto theft ring. I CONTD. ON PAGE 8

SECURITY SITUATION IN PAKISTAN REMAINS GRIM

NEW DELHI: The security situation in Pakistan has not improved in the

first month of the New Year, as the total number of causalities from terrorist attacks increased. Slightly fewer militant attacks occurred in January 2022 than in December last year, Friday Times reported. According to statistics released by Islamabad-based think-tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), the number of violent attacks in January 2022 decreased to 24 from 28 the previous month, although the rate of deaths and injuries increased by 15 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively, as compared to December 2021. I CONTD. ON PAGE 11

CITY OF BRAMPTON SUPPORTS ROGERS PROPOSED \$100M INVESTMENT IN AND RELOCATION TO DOWNTOWN

BRAMPTON- At its meeting yesterday, Brampton City Council approved a recommendation to support Rogers Communications' relocation to Downtown Brampton.

Through the proposed new development, 3,000 employees would relocate to a 200,000 square foot space in the downtown. The new campus would consist of mixed office and retail space, with room for additional offices to be added in phases. I CONTD. ON PAGE 8

DOSES AFTER DARK RETURNS WITH EXTENDED HOURS IN BRAMPTON AND MISSISSAUGA

BRAMPTON - Peel Public Health is excited to announce the return of Doses after Dark, a COVID-19 vaccine clinic that increases access to Peel residents who are unable to get vaccinated during regular clinic hours.

The extended clinic hours will offer all eligible residents the flexibility to get their booster dose (or their first and second doses) during hours that fit their schedule. No appointment needed - residents can walk in to get their choice of vaccine for their first, second or booster dose. As well, the clinics will provide first and second doses to children five to 11 years old. Clinic details:

* February 5th, 2022, 1 p.m. until midnight. Save Max Sports Centre, 1495 Sandalwood Pkwy E. I CONTD. ON PAGE 8



Y MEDIA GROUP WILL COVER BOXER SUKHDEEP SINGH CHAKRIA'S LIVE BOXING FOR THE CANADIAN MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP ON FEBRUARY 26TH AT THE CAA CENTRE, TICKETS AVAILABLE - VISIT TICKERMASTER.CA OR CALL AT 855-985-5000 (FROM EXTREME LEFT TO RIGHT) - BALDEV SIDHU (FATHER OF SUKHDEEP SINGH CHAKRIA), RYAN GRANT (COACH), BOXER SUKHDEEP SINGH CHAKRIA, YUDHVIR JASWAL (Y MEDIA GROUP EDITOR AND CEO), TYLER BUXTON (PROMOTER-UNITED BOXING).







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BUDGET A STEP TOWARDS MODERN, SELF-RELIANT INDIA, FOCUSES ON POOR, MIDDLE CLASS: PM MODI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday lauded the Union Budget 2022-23 as a step towards a modern, self-reliant India with its focus on providing basic amenities to the poor, middle class and youth. Addressing BJP workers at 'Aatmanirbhar Arthvyavastha' event, Modi stated that post-pandemic, the possibility of a new world order is emerging and the initial indicators of it are already visible. "People, globally, want to see an empowered and strong India. It is imperative for us that we take our country forward at a rapid pace and strengthen it across several sectors," he said. Highlighting the various aspects of the Budget, the Prime Minister said it has provisions to develop 'vibrant villages' on border. "Migration from border villages is not good for national security," he said, adding that the vibrant village programme will benefit border villages in Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The government will impart National Cadet Corps training to youth in border villages and will help them join the armed forces, he to our government's effective policies."

added. Modi stated that the houses provided under the PM's scheme have turned the poor into "lakhpatis". "In the last seven years, we have given 3 crore poor people pucca houses, and made them lakhpatis. Those who lived in slums, have their own houses. Our government has increased the price and size of these houses. Out of this, most of the houses are in the name of women. We have made women "maalkins" (owners)," he said. Modi said that the Budget proposes to make four-fold increase in public investments from UPA years and it will open up immense opportunities.

"In the last seven years, the decisions taken are continuously enlarging the Indian economy", Modi said. He added, "Seven-eight years ago, India's GDP was Rs 1.10 lakh crore. Today, our GDP is nearly Rs 2.3 lakh crore. Even the country's forex reserves have increased to USD 630 billion from USD 200 billion. All of this is due

PEOPLE SHOULD DESIST FROM MAKING UNINFORMED **COMMENTS: FM ON RAHUL GANDHI'S BUDGET REMARKS**



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday took a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for what she called as making uninformed comment on the budget and said he should first implement what he preaches in states governed by his party.

Following the presentation of Budget 2022-23 in Parliament, Gandhi dubbed it as a "zero-sum budget", saying it has nothing for the salaried, middle class, and the poor.

"That's not right. I wish as a leader of the oldest party, please understand what has been said. I pity people who come up with quick responses. Quick understanding response I am ready to answer but just because you want to put something on Twitter, it does not help," she said in an interaction with media.

She lamented that the Congress-led UPA government had left the country as part of the fragile five. In 2013, India was classified as among the 'fragile five' economies that heavily depended on foreign capital to finance growth. "Whatever he is preaching to us, he should go and implement in the Congress-ruled states," she said. She wondered if the employment situation in Punjab or Chhattisgarh was any better.

"Has he been able to stop suicides of cotton farmers in Maharashtra?," she wondered and said that before speaking he should do what he preaches.

"I take criticism but not from somebody who has not done his homework," she added. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, who was also presented at the briefing, quipped that it is correct to assume that Rahul Gandhi could not understand the budget which will have far reaching implications.

India, Oman to look at new avenues for defence industry cooperation

India and Oman agreed to identify new avenues and examine areas of mutual interest for joint ventures to enhance the defence industry cooperation between the two countries. Oman is an important partner for India, especially at a time when India is trying to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean Region. Oman is also the country's strongest defence partner in the Gulf region. Oman's Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, Mohammed Bin Nasser Bin Ali Al Zaabi is in the country on a four-day visit, and called on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday. Al Zaabi and Singh, the Defence Ministry said in a statement "discussed ways to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries". The Omani official is the executive head of the country's defence establishment, as Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Shihab holds the charge as its minister. He also briefed Singh about the 11th India-Oman Joint Military Cooperation Committee Meeting (JMCC) on bilateral defence cooperation which was held on January 31, co-chaired by Al Zaabi and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar.

The JMCC, the Defence Ministry said, is the apex body between the Defence Ministries of India and Oman to comprehensively review

and guide all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation. During the meeting, the two sides "reviewed the progress made in military-to-military engagements, including joint exercises, industry cooperation and various ongoing infrastructure projects" and decided to "identify new avenues and examine areas of mutual interest for Joint Venture in order to enhance defence industry cooperation". They also discussed conduct of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief exercise "involving the three services and enhancing the scope and complexities of the existing joint exercises." the statement mentioned, and added that both the countries "agreed to work together to combat the issue of drug trafficking prevalent in the North Arabian Sea." It was also agreed that the next JMCC will be held in Oman at dates convenient for both sides. The JMCC is meant to meet every year, but because of the pandemic and other factors, it had a three-year break after the last meeting in 2018 in Oman.

INDIA RECORDS OVER 1.61 LAKH NEW COVID-19 CASES, 1,733 DEATHS



Registering a downward trend in new Covid-19 infections for the third consecutive day, India reported more than 1.61 lakh cases on Wednesday, according to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

However, the number of Covid-19 related deaths rose to 4,97,975 with 1,733 fatalities—up from 1,192 on Tuesday—the health ministry's data showed. The fresh cases and deaths have taken India's tally to more than 4.16 crore.

Active cases of Covid-19 were down by 1,21,456 to reach 16,21,603—4.20 per cent of the total infections. The daily positivity rate was recorded at 9.26 per cent, lower than Tuesday's 11.69 per cent. The weekly positivity rate was 14.15 per cent, data also showed. The number of people who have recuperated from Covid-19 surged to 3,95,11,307, taking the national recovery rate to 94.60 per cent. Meanwhile, 17,42,793 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, taking the total testing numbers to over 73.24 crore.

VANDE BHARAT TRAINS CAN BE AN ALTERNATIVE: SHASHI THAROOR WANTS KERALA GOVT TO RETHINK ON SILVERLINE



Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who had earlier expressed support for the CPI(M)-led Kerala government's proposed semi-high-speed rail corridor, SilverLine, on Wednesday said it should be looked into if the new Vande Bharat trains announced in the Union budget would be a cost-effective and energy-efficient alternative to the rail corridor project. In his Facebook post, Tharoor said the announcement of 400 new Vande Bharat trains with a speed of 180 km per hour is significant for Kerala. "Both the central and state governments should look into whether the Vande Bharat trains would be a cost-effective and energy-efficient alternative to the rail corridor, K-Rail. If Kerala gets Vande Bharat trains, it may serve the need for fast transport facilities from the southern end of the state to the northern end. It would also address the concerns raised over the financial liability and environmental impact of the project," he said. Tharoor had earlier invited the wrath of the Congress after he publicly spoke in favour of the proposed project. The party even warned him of action if he fails to stick to its line on the proposed project, which is facing stiff opposition at the ground level. In December last year, Tharoor had embarrassed the Congress after he did not sign his party's petition — addressed to Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw — against the project.

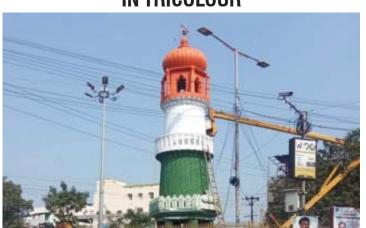
TREND OF DISRUPTIONS IN HOUSE DISTURBING, ACT TO FURTHER PEOPLE'S TRUST: NAIDU TELLS MPS



Arguing that the "trend of disruptions" in Parliament is "highly disturbing", Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu Wednesday asked members of the House to reflect and conduct themselves in a manner befitting both "trust" the citizens have in parliamentary democracy and the "historic time" the country is passing through.

Naidu, in his opening remarks to the Rajya Sabha, pointed out the voters' turnout in the last 70 years have increased from 45 per cent in elections to the first Lok Sabha in 1951-52 to over 67 per cent in the polls held in 2019. "This marks an increase of 50 per cent in voter participation. The voter turn in the polls to State Assemblies is even higher. This goes to prove that the citizens of our country continue to repose their faith in our democracy. However, our legislatures and the elected representatives of the people do not seem to be reciprocating in equal measure with the functioning of legislatures declining over the years," he said. As India is marking the 75th year of its Independence, he said "In this historic year, the need of the hour is for the 5,000 MPs, MLAs and MLCs to resolve to return to the people the favour they have been relentlessly doing by nurturing our democracy. The only way of doing so is to conduct ourselves in a manner befitting the trust the citizens still have in our parliamentary democracy".

AFTER BJP DEMANDS NAME CHANGE, JINNAH TOWER IN AP'S GUNTUR PAINTED IN TRICOLOUR



The Jinnah Tower in Andhra Pradesh's Guntur was painted in tricolour by a YSR Congress MLA on Tuesday, ANI reported. The tower has been surrounded with controversy for some time now, with the Bharatiya Janata Party demanding its name be changed.

The development comes after three people claiming to be from the Hindu Vahini organisation were detained on January 26 for trying to hoist the national flag at the tower, despite prohibitory orders.

On Tuesday, Guntur East MLA Mohammed Musthafa said, "On the request of various groups, it was decided to decorate the tower with the tricolour and to construct a pole to hoist the national flag near the tower." He added, "Necessary arrangements will be made to hoist the National flag at Jinnah Tower on Thursday."

According to a PTI report, in December last year, the state unit of the BJP had demanded that the tower's name be changed to honour former President Abdul Kalam. They threatened to destroy the monument if the YSRC government doesn't heed their demands.

Musthafa, however, slammed the BJP member for raising the issue. "BJP leaders should participate in helping needy people amid Covid-19 pandemic, instead of provoking communal clashes," he was quoted as saying by ANI.

Following the Republic Day incident, police had cordoned off the area to prevent any untoward incident that may flare up communal tensions. Musthafa along with GMC Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu had visited the monument on Tuesday to check security arrangements.



OMICRON SUB-VARIANT BA.2 MORE CONTAGIOUS, 39% OF INFECTED LIKELY TO INFECT OTHERS: STUDY

The latest version of the highly-infectious Omicron variant, BA.2 is The recovered people may still be vulnerable to the existing virus and transmitting even faster than the original, new studies have suggested. Studies have also found that the mild cases of the first may not offer much protection against future infections. This comes as a big jolt to all hopes that the wave of Omicron sweeping the world may help hasten the end of the pandemic.

In another research by the University of California, San Francisco, that was published online before being peer-reviewed reveals that the production of neutralising antibodies during an Omicron infection appears related to the severity of the illness.

In this study, done between December and January, more than 8500 cases of Covid infections were reviewed. After research it was found that people infected with BA.2 sub variants were about 33% more likely to infect others than those infected with BA.1.

Worldwide, 98% of cases of Omicron's basic variant BA.1 have been found, but the BA.2 sub-variant rapidly infected people in Denmark and overtook the basic variant in terms of infection.

FIRST STUDY FINDINGS

The milder form of most Omicron cases in vaccinated people may leave those who recover from them still vulnerable.

future variants that emerge, the researchers said.

The protection from a natural infection was about one-third that obtained through a booster shot, the study found.

SECOND STUDY FINDINGS

This study found a second-generation form of Omicron appears even more transmissible than the original.

It showed 39% of people infected with the BA.2 subvariant were likely to infect others in their households.

When compared with, only 29% of those who were carrying the original version were likely to infect others.

The study analysed data gathered from 8,541 households in December and January in Denmark. In Denmark, the new BA.2 subvariant of Omicron has become the dominant strain of the Covid-19 virus.

The risk of infection with either type was higher in those unvaccinated, underlining a positive effect of vaccination.

While BA.1 is still the most dominant type worldwide, recent trends suggest BA.2 is increasing in some countries.

These countries include India, South Africa, UK and Denmark, the World Health Organisation said last month.

PFIZER, BIONTECH SEEK FDA'S APPROVAL FOR **COVID-19 VACCINE FOR KIDS UNDER 5**



Pfizer on Wednesday asked the US to authorize extra-low doses of its Covid-19 vaccine for children under 5, potentially opening the way for the very youngest Americans to start receiving shots as early as (FDA) had urged Pfizer and its partner BioNTech to apply earlier than the companies had planned.

The nation's 19 million children under 5 are the only group not yet eligible for a vaccination against the coronavirus. Many parents have been pushing for an expansion of shots to toddlers and preschoolers, especially as the omicron wave sent record numbers of youngsters

If the FDA agrees, Pfizer shots containing one-tenth of the dose given to adults could be dispensed to children as young as 6 months. Pfizer said Wednesday it had started submitting its data to the FDA and expects to complete the process in a few days.

The FDA said Wednesday it will convene a panel of independent researchers and physicians in mid-February to help review the Pfizer data. The agency isn't required to follow their advice, but their input is a key step in publicly vetting vaccine safety and effectiveness.

The Biden administration has been trying to speed the authorization of Covid-19 shots for children, contending vaccinations are critical for opening schools and daycare centers and keeping them open, and for March. In an extraordinary move, the Food and Drug Administration freeing up parents from child care duties so they can go back to work.

WON'T DISCUSS CABINET RESHUFFLE IN PUBLIC: K'TAKA CM

BENGALURU, (IANS) Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday said that he won't discuss the issue of cabinet

reshuffle in public, indicating the pressure he is facing over the issue.

Answering a question to reporters whether the issue of cabinet reshuffle would be taken up during his New Delhi visit post the union budget, Bommai curtly said the issue can't be discussed in public. "I don't want to have any open discussion on the matter," he said. Ruling BJP legislators in Karnataka have raised their voice for sacking of sitting ministers who are not responsive and providing them an opportunity to serve as ministers in the interest of the party ahead of 2023 assembly elections.

Though the High Command is occupied with elections of five states, senior BJP legislators like Tippa Reddy, Abhay Patil, Basavanagouda Patil Yatnal and M.P. Renukacharya have demanded immediate cabinet expansion and have also stated that if it is not done in two months, then it is not required.

Bommai is in a fix over the issue as cabinet rejig will have direct consequences on the elections. To his comfort, senior cabinet ministers K.S. Eshwarappa and Bhyrathi Basavaraj have said that they are ready to step down if the party asks them. However, sources in the party say that it is going to be a roller coaster ride for CM Bommai as well as the party.

CM Bommai was supposed to go to New Delhi on Thursday and has stated that on the request of MPs, he is taking a trip to the national capital on coming Monday. Four posts in the cabinet have been kept vacant and senior leaders are aiming for them. Some of the legislators are demanding the Gujarat model of cabinet reshuffle of resting old horses and providing opportunities to young faces.

'JAIL TERM CAN'T EXCEED 25 YEARS', SC SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE ON ABU SALEM'S PLEA

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to consider a plea by gangster Abu Salem that his imprisonment cannot extend beyond 25 years, according to the terms of his extradition from Portugal by the Indian government.

Advocate Rishi Malhotra, representing Salem, submitted before a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul that the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) court did not agree with the contention that it was bound by assurance given by the Indian government to the Portugal government during his client's extradition. He emphasized that the apex court has the power to grant him relief in the matter.

After hearing arguments, the bench also comprising Justice M.M. Sundresh sought Centre and Maharashtra government's response on Salem's plea. The plea contended that the 2017 judgment of a TADA court, sentencing Salem to life imprisonment, was contrary to the terms of the extradition treaty.

According to the plea, Indian government, on December 17, 2002, gave a solemn sovereign assurance through Deputy Prime Minister to the Portugal government that if Salem is extradited for trials in India, he would neither be conferred with death penalty nor be subjected to imprisonment for a term beyond 25 years.

Pointing at another error committed by the TADA court, the plea said: "Error committed by the TADA Court was with regard to the issue of 'Set Off'. According to the appellant though he was in custody for some offences of passport violation in Portugal since September 18, 2002 and was undergoing a sentence of 4 and half year, yet, the appellant was detained also on September 18, 2002 in pursuance to the Red Corner Notice issued by the Designated Courts, Mumbai".

The plea added that even if the said date is not to be taken into consideration for the purposes of "set off", the ministerial order of March 28, 2003, of the Ministry of Justice, Portugal by which it had admitted the extradition request of the Indian government to be tried for various offences ought to have been taken into consideration. "The TADA Court however, held that since the appellant was released in the Portugal case on October 12, 2005, therefore, the custody for the purposes of Set Off would be counted from October 12, 2005. The error lies in not taking custody from the Ministerial Order dated March 28, 2003".

Malhotra submitted that his client as per the imprisonment certificate has undergone around 17 years of sentence by counting his set off period from November, 2005 whereas his set off period should be counted from March 28, 2003.

46 MLAS HAD BACKED HIM AS PUNJAB CM CANDIDATE AFTER AMARINDER QUIT, **CLAIMS SUNIL JAKHAR**



Chandigarh: As the Congress has decided to take a feedback from voters and party workers to choose between Charanjit Singh Channi and Navjot Singh Sidhu as the CM face, a day-old video of senior party leader Sunil Jakhar referring to a majority of MLAs backing him as CM after Capt Amarinder Singh was ousted, has created a flutter in political circles.

Jakhar, who was one of the faces of the campaign for the coming Assembly elections, has apparently been left out by the party after it took a U-turn on going to the elections with a CM face.

The former PPCC chief, who was addressing a rally in Abohar in support of his nephew Sandeep Jakhar, is heard saying in the video that after Amarinder's ouster, 46 MLAs had voted for him, 16 for Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, 12 for Preneet Kaur, six for Navjot Singh Sidhu and two for Channi as the CM face.

Though the facts have been highlighted several times earlier, the timing of this statement by Jakhar is being seen by party leaders as a subtle reminder by the former PPCC chief to the party leadership about his relevance at a time when the party is asking its workers about the CM face.

The video of Jakhar claiming that a majority of MLAs had backed him for the Chief Minister's post after Amarinder Singh guit has sparked a buzz, adding yet another twist to the Congress's campaign for the crucial state election.

In the video that has gone viral, Jakhar, who is chairman of the Congress campaign committee, is heard saying in Punjabi that he has no complaints and "God does whatever is right".

TO CONDEMN EVERY MARRIAGE AS **VIOLENT AND EVERY MAN A RAPIST NOT** ADVISABLE: SMRITI IRANI



NEW DELHI: The protection of women and children in the country is a priority for all but condemning every marriage as violent and every man as a rapist is not advisable, Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Her comments came in response to CPI leader Binoy Viswam's supplementary guery on marital rape. He sought to know if the government had taken note of Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Act on the definition of domestic violence as well as Section 375 of the IPC on rape. "....let me say, to condemn every marriage in this country as a violent marriage, and to condemn every man in this country as a rapist, in this august house is not advisable," Irani said.

The minister said the senior member knows that Rule 47 of the procedures in the Rajya Sabha disallows elaboration on a subject that is currently sub judice.

The government's endeavour, she said, is to protect women in this country in collaboration with state governments. Currently, over 30 helplines are functional across India, which have assisted over 66 lakh women. Besides, 703 'one stop centres' are functional in the country and these have assisted over five lakh women.

"...protection of women and children in our country is a priority for all but yet again, let me reiterate that to condemn every marriage in this country as violent is not advisable," she said.

Viswam said he never meant every man is a rapist and posed another question - if the government could collect data on this issue and submit it to Parliament at the earliest.

To this, the minister said the member is suggesting that the Centre engage with state governments and seek records from them. But the Centre cannot make a recommendation on behalf of state governments today in this House, she added.

SUPREME COURT COLLEGIUM **RECOMMENDS ELEVATION OF 6 JUDICIAL OFFICERS AS DELHI HIGH COURT JUDGES**



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana has recommended to the Centre the names of six judicial officers for appointment as judges of the Delhi High Court.

The collegium, which also comprised seniormost judges Justices UU Lalit and AM Khanwilkar, held deliberations on February 1 and recommended the names of Poonam A Bamba, Neena Bansal Krishna, Dinesh Kumar Sharma, Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, Swarana Kanta Sharma and Sudhir Kumar Jain.

There are three women judicial officers whose names have been recommended for judgeship of the Delhi High Court which is functioning with 30 judges as against the sanctioned strength of 60.

The Supreme Court Collegium has also resolved to reiterate its earlier recommendation for elevation of five Judicial Officers as judges at different high courts.

While names of two judicial officers -- Shampa Dutt (Paul) and Siddhartha Roy Chowdhury -- have been reiterated as judges of the Calcutta High Court, two judicial officers from Bombay High Court and one Jharkhand High Court have been recommended.

The two Judicial Officers -- US Joshi Phalke and BP Deshpande -- have been reiterated as judges of the Bombay High Court. The Collegium resolved to reiterate its earlier recommendation for elevation of Judicial Officer Pradeep Kumar Srivastava as judge of the Jharkhand High Court.

MidWeek

Y MEDIA POLITICAL SENSEX, 5-STATES ELECTION, 2022



PM MODI, AMIT SHAH TO VISIT PUNJAB **SOON: CAPT AMARINDER SINGH**

PATIALA: On the first day of his election campaign here, Punjab Lok interest of Punjab and country. "The state, with its economy in Congress chief Capt Amarinder Singh today said for Punjab's survival, it is necessary for the Centre and state to work together, asserting both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah will campaign for the PLC-BJP-SAD Sanyukt coalition soon.

Blaming CM Charanjit Channi for the economic mess, the ex-CM said: "Punjab was reeling under

Rs 70,000 crore debt when I left. Channi added Rs 33,000 crore to it in just 111 days." A day after filing his nomination from the Patiala Urban seat, Capt Amarinder claimed he had cordial ties with Modi while he was the Gujarat CM and the RSS 'prabhari' for Punjab. Capt Amarinder said the alliance had been formulated in the

a shambles, is at a crossroads and needs Centre's support to go ahead."

Targeting PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, the former CM said his hug to Pakistan army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and the Pakistan premier's recommendation for his re-induction into the state Cabinet later clearly suggested he could not be relied upon, especially in a sensitive border state like Punjab. "We want peace with Pakistan but will not bow to them. We are prepared to fight, our Army is ready to take them head on," he said. The PLC's alliance with the BJP-led government at the Centre would ensure security in the state, he added.

CKS OFF DHURI CAMPAIGN



DHURI: A day after local Congress MLA Dalvir Singh Goldy started door-to-door meetings in Dhuri Assembly constituency, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) CM face Bhagwant Mann also started meetings in villages on Tuesday. Amid applause, Mann with his satirical skills targeted his opponents over a host of issues, especially corruption and failures in providing jobs.

"When Congress and SAD leaders come to your villages, security guards climb your rooftops as if they are in Pakistan. But I have never used such security. Even after becoming a Member of Parliament, I am still amid you without any special security, as I know you love

Mann visited various villages, including Bhalwan, Palasaur, Bhojowali,

Bhadalwad, Bhullerheri, Kaulseri, Samundgarh and others, and sought votes to make Punjab prosperous. "All successive governments have failed to take effective steps for the development of Punjab. Farm suicides are rising; youngsters are without jobs; and there are no doctors and teachers, but leaders of the Congress and SAD claim to have made Punjab prosperous," said Mann.

From Dhuri, the SAD-BSP has fielded Parkash Chand Garg, while Randeep Singh Deol is BJP candidate.

His opponents have also started targeting him and alleging that he has done nothing even after winning twice from Sangrur as MP. "I have been challenging Mann for an open debate as he has done nothing for the constituency," said Goldy.

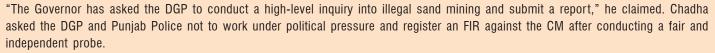
Probe ordered against Punjab CM Charanjit Channi, claims AAP's Raghav Chadha

CHANDIGARH: The Aam Aadmi Party has welcomed the order by Governor Banwari Lal Purohit asking the DGP to conduct a highlevel inquiry into allegations of illegal sand mining against CM Charanjit Channi.

Addressing mediapersons here on Monday, state affairs co-incharge Raghav Chadha said the AAP had submitted a letter to the Governor demanding an inquiry against Channi.

Chadha thanked the Governor for "accepting" their demand and hoped the Punjab Police would conduct a "fair and independent" investigation in the matter and punish the guilty.

Referring to the letter related to the order of inquiry, Chadha claimed the Governor had taken cognisance of the matter and ordered DGP VK Bhawra to take action against Channi for illegal sand mafia at Jindapur village in his Chamkaur Sahib segment.



Chadha said: "We have already exposed sand mafia in Chamkaur Sahib and said he and his relatives are associated with the sand mafia. Punjab can never be safe in the hands of a Chief Minister accused of sand mafia."

The AAP was keeping an eye on the Punjab Police probe as it was a "serious" matter, he said. In case of any lapse in the investigation,

the party would raise voice against it and bring the truth to the people, he added.

Reacting to the allegations, Sunil Jakhar, former PCC chief, said: "Apparently the highest court deciding a drug case kept the election process in mind, but the Governor has no such compunction instituting inquiry against the CM. Forget the constitutional propriety, even remaining shards of federalism demolished. The EC should stall order's execution."

CM CHANNI ASKS PEOPLE TO ENSURE HIS **VICTORY FROM CHAMKAUR SAHIB**



CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister and Congress candidate Charanjit Singh Channi on Tuesday asked people of his constituency Chamkaur Sahib to make him win with a margin of at least 50,000 votes in the February 20 state assembly polls.

His remarks came days after AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claimed that Channi was losing from his home turf Chamkaur Sahib seat.

Addressing a gathering of people after filing nomination papers from Chamkaur Sahib seat (SC) in Rupnagar district, Channi made an impassioned speech and asked people to ensure his victory as he recounted several development projects carried out in his home constituency. "You have to make (me) victorious by a margin of 50,000 votes," said Channi who was accompanied by his family.

Asking people to support him wholeheartedly in the upcoming elections, he said, "If we win (from Chamkaur Sahib) by less than 50,000 votes, then it will not be a victory."

He also targeted his political opponents, accusing them of joining hands to suppress the voice of people of Chamkaur Sahib.

"They can get as many raids conducted as they want, can get false FIRs registered as many as they want...people of Chamkaur Sahib are with me, no matter what," said the 58-year-old leader.

"I am your son and your brother. I have been with you for 15 years and never went away from you for even a single day. I am nothing without you," the three-time MLA said in his impassioned speech.

He urged people to support him in this election from this constituency as he has to visit various areas of Punjab for campaigning.

"I never showed my back to any village. Every work was done," he said. Opposition parties have targeted Channi over the recent Enforcement Directorate raids on his relative.

The ED recently seized cash amounting to over Rs 10 crore, including about Rs 8 crore from a relative of Channi, during raids conducted in connection with an anti-money laundering investigation against illegal sand-mining operations in the poll-bound state.

Channi has categorically denied any link in his relative's case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate and accused the political opponents of running a "slanderous and misleading" campaign against him. Channi has been representing Chamkaur Sahib constituency since 2007. In the 2017 assembly polls, Channi won from Chamkaur Sahib by a margin of 12,308 votes.

Channi on Monday had filed his nomination papers from Bhadaur (SC) seat in Barnala district.

The Congress on Sunday had fielded Channi from the second assembly seat Bhadaur (SC).

Channi, who replaced Amarinder Singh last year, is the first chief minister of Punjab from the Scheduled Caste community.

JAGMOHAN SINGH KANG, SONS JOIN AAP



CHANDIGARH: Ex-minister and three-time Congress MLA Jagmohan Singh Kang today joined the AAP. His sons Yadvinder Singh Kang and Amarinder Singh Kang also joined the party in the presence of AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab affairs co-incharge Raghav Chadha.

Kang was the vice-president of the Punjab Congress. Elected thrice as MLA in 1992, 2002 and 2012, he served as a minister in the Congress government from 1992 to 1995. Kang has a support base in the Kharar and Anandpur Sahib region. His younger son Amarinder was the state general secretary of the Punjab Congress' social media wing, while Yadvinder is a member of the Khijrabad zila parishad and had been aspiring for a Congress ticket from Kharar.

CENTRE FOCUSED ON CORPORATES, PUBLIC IGNORED: BHAGWANT MANN



CHANDIGARH: Reacting to the Union Budget, state AAP chief Bhagwant Mann said the Centre was so focused on their 'corporate friends' that they completely neglected the common man and the middle class. He said no special package for Punjab or farmers was a proof of the BJP government's vindictiveness against them. He questioned how the Centre would provide 60 lakh jobs as it had already sold major government sectors to private players.

INDIA'S CENTRAL ASIAN OUTREACH

ASAD MIRZA

India's ties with Central Asia can be traced back to the ancient Silk Road, along which goods, people, and ideas flowed. Geographically Central Asia has been at the intersection of crucial political and economic transformations for centuries. While the dissolution of the Silk Road limited exchanges, there is a renewed effort to reconnect India with the region by the leadership.

The importance which India attaches to the 5 Central Asian Republics (CARs) was shown by its commitment to hold a virtual summit with the Presidents of 5 CARs, when they were unable to travel to India to participate at the Republic Day parade as Chief Guests duet to Covid travel restrictions.

INDIA'S OUTREACH

As expected the issue of Afghanistan constituted one of the focus areas of the agenda for the summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the five Presidents decided to set up a joint working group on Afghanistan, with a broad consensus emerging on issues such as combating terrorism and drug trafficking.

Modi outlined the three focus areas for India in its relationship with CARs; Central Asia is central to India's vision of an integrated and stable extended neighbourhood and cooperation between India and Central Asia is essential for regional security and prosperity, secondly to establish a framework of regular interactions at different levels and among various stakeholders, and lastly to create an ambitious roadmap for future cooperation.

Modi also referred to India's close ties with all the Central Asian states at a bilateral level, and also underlined the importance of each of these countries. He described Kazakhstan as an important partner for India's energy security.

He highlighted the fact that India's state governments are active partners in growing cooperation with Uzbekistan, while there is an active partnership with Kyrgyzstan in education and high-altitude research. Modi described Turkmenistan as an important part of India's vision for regional connectivity, and said this was evident from "our participation in the Ashgabat Agreement".

With Tajikistan, he said: "We have a longstanding cooperation in the field of security. And we are continuously strengthening it."

IMPORTANCE OF CARS

In the last decade, Central Asian nations have also been looking for viable partners particularly in economic and security sectors. Both share common concerns in tackling radicalisation and terrorism.

However, bilateral progress can be described as slow. This is due to the associated concerns with security and capacity constraints, the security situation in Afghanistan and political differences within Central Asia.

India earnestly started its outreach with its �Connect Central Asia Policy' initiated by UPA II, later Modi became the first Indian head of state to visit all five nations in 2016. Since then there has been



MODI OUTLINED THE THREE FOCUS AREAS FOR INDIA IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CARS; CENTRAL ASIA IS CENTRAL TO INDIA'S VISION OF AN INTEGRATED AND STABLE EXTENDED NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA IS ESSENTIAL FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND PROSPERITY, SECONDLY TO ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK OF REGULAR INTERACTIONS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS AND AMONG VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS. AND LASTLY TO CREATE AN AMBITIOUS ROADMAP FOR FUTURE COOPERATION. MODI ALSO REFERRED TO INDIA'S CLOSE TIES WITH ALL THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES AT A BILATERAL LEVEL, AND ALSO UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH OF THESE COUNTRIES. HE DESCRIBED KAZAKHSTAN AS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER FOR INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY. HE HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT INDIA'S STATE GOVERNMENTS ARE ACTIVE PARTNERS IN GROWING COOPERATION WITH UZBEKISTAN, WHILE THERE IS AN ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH KYRGYZSTAN IN EDUCATION AND HIGH-ALTITUDE RESEARCH. MODI DESCRIBED TURKMENISTAN AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF INDIA'S VISION FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY, AND SAID THIS WAS EVIDENT FROM "OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE ASHGABAT AGREEMENT".

significant progress in cooperation, particularly in the fields of defence, energy and connectivity. The renewed Indian focus on the region can be attributed to the geopolitics of the region, particularly China's aggressive outreach with all 5 CARs.

India has also initiated multilateral engagement with the region at two levels. The first is through regional connectivity, with a renewed push for long delayed projects. This received a boost after Iran and India signed an agreement to develop Chabahar Port, when Modi visited Iran in 2016, the port has now become commercially operational. Further, to facilitate transport of goods between India and Central Asia via Iran, India joined the Ashgabat Agreement in 2018, including Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

More importantly, 12 years after becoming an observer, India joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a full member in 2017. SCO is not only beneficial for India to remain connected with Central Asia, but also has the potential for India to work collectively with other leading powers in the region to address economic and security issues that may have potentially detrimental concerns for the world.

While these steps have given a new lease of life to India's vision for Eurasian connectivity, New Delhi must combine skilful diplomacy with action on the ground to ensure the continued viability of these projects in the face of US-Iran tensions.

CHINA AND CARS

Though India has adopted a more proactive approach and explored new avenues for economic cooperation with CARs. China has aggressively wooed the CARs through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), besides leveraging its geography, finances and population to ensure that its projects can contribute to making its dream of a new and improved Silk Road a reality.

Operating at several levels the Chinese economic strategy in Central Asia also focuses on development of western China, through opening up of Xinjiang and ensuring its economic development in order to cool tensions there. In addition China needs CARs as a market for its goods besides getting its energy requirements through CARs.

Chinese anxiety to consolidate its links with CARs and disallow India from taking any initiative in the region is shown by its haste to hold a summit with the leaders of Central Asian countries on January 25, at a very short notice, after India had announced its summit. Chinese President Xi Jinping had offered \$500 million in assistance to the region and has vowed to strengthen trade with the countries.

On the other hand trade between India and Central Asia lies at a insignificant \$2 billion compared to Chinese trade with the CARs, which roughly amounts to \$100 billion. India could increase this bilateral trade by trying to meet its high import dependency for energy, through CARs, which are rich in resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium, etc. On the other hand it could explore areas where the Indian industry could export to CARs at a considerably lower cost. As stability in Central Asia remains critical to the interests of big players like Russia and China, the CARs will remain in focus at multilateral forums concerning Afghanistan; this also underlines the importance of improving relations with CARs for India to expand regional cooperation.

Disclaimer: Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, interfaith and current affairs. 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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CONTENT EDITOR

DR. PUSHPINDER BRAR CONTRIBUTING WRITER

SIA LAKHANPAL REBECCA TANDON POOJA LUTHRA REPORTERS

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IMRAN MAHMOUD PHOTOGRAPHERS

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Prime Minister on the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement on the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia:

"Today, we remember the six people who lost their lives and the 19 others who were seriously injured during the terrorist attack at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Sainte-Foy.

"On the fifth anniversary of this tragedy, we also mark the first National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia. Today, we pay tribute to the victims of this hateful act of terror, who were senselessly killed at the hands of bigotry, Islamophobia, and racism. We express solidarity with the survivors and those injured, the families and friends who lost a loved one, and all the communities of Quebec City and across Canada whose lives have been

"We also honour the heroes and first responders who acted swiftly and courageously to save the lives of worshippers. This cowardly attack sought to instill fear and divide us. Instead, Canadians came together and united around shared values of diversity, peace, and respect. They showed their support to Muslim communities in Quebec City and across Canada by fighting discrimination, intolerance, and hatred in all its forms.

"Canada strives to champion human rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of belief. The government condemns Islamophobia and all forms of racism and discrimination in our society, and that is why confronting Islamophobia is an important part of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy.

"Last July, the Government of Canada held a National Summit on Islamophobia, where we committed to supporting anti racism programs that address Islamophobia and hate-fueled violence. We are moving forward with our intention to work with Muslim communities on the designation of a special representative to combat Islamophobia.

"Our strategy includes a whole-of-government approach to tackling systemic racism with dedicated knowledge and expertise through the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat. It also includes investments to empower communities to combat different forms of racism, including Islamophobia, and to advance digital and civic literacy initiatives that address online



disinformation and hate speech. We will establish a National Support Fund for Survivors of Hate-Motivated Crimes to help survivors and are committed to renewing and strengthening the Anti-Racism Strategy in 2022 with a National Action Plan to expand on our ongoing work to combat hate and racism.

"The government will continue to strengthen gun control. On July 7, 2021, we extended background checks to cover the lifetime of an applicant looking to obtain a firearms licence. We have also banned 1,500 assaultstyle weapons, and will proceed with a mandatory buyback, meaning these firearms can never be sold, transferred or bequeathed, and ensuring they're rendered fully and permanently inoperable at government expense. We know there is more work to do and we want to work with any province or territory that wants to ban handguns across their jurisdiction. Our government also invested in the Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Program, to provide funding and support for communities at risk of hate crimes.

"On behalf of the Government of Canada, I encourage everyone to take a moment to remember the victims and survivors of the fatal shooting at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec and to all those affected by this heinous crime. Together, we will continue to fight against Islamophobia, and all other forms of hatred, as we build a stronger, more diverse, and more inclusive Canada."

PRIME MINISTER ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement on Black History Month:

"Today marks the start of Black History Month. It is a time to honour the legacy of Black Canadians, past and present, and to recognize and celebrate the significant contributions they continue to make to our country. "This year, the Government of Canada's Black History Month theme is 'February and Forever: Celebrating Black history today and every day.' It invites us to pay tribute to, and learn more about, the important roles that Black Canadians have played in building and shaping a more prosperous, diverse, and inclusive Canada.

"Black Canadians and their communities have a long history of being trailblazers and change makers. Among them is Dr. Alexandra Bastiany, an advocate for diversity in medicine who recently became Canada's first Black woman interventional cardiologist. Twenty-oneyear-old Alphonso Davies from Edmonton is taking the soccer world by storm. Born to Liberian parents, he came to Canada at the age of five. He now plays for the Canadian men's national soccer team and is a Global Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"Black history is Canadian history. Canadians of African ancestry have been an integral part of the fabric of this land for centuries. While Black History Month is a time for learning and celebration, we cannot forget that people of African descent created Black History Month in opposition to anti?Black racism, hate, and discrimination. Racism, hate, and discrimination continue to be a reality for many Canadians. We also know that the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed social and economic fractures in Canada. Inequality, injustice, and inherent privilege still exist in our society, and we must continue to work together to build a better and more inclusive future for all Canadians

"As part of our strong commitment to combat all forms of anti?Black racism and advance human rights and economic prosperity for Black Canadians, we officially recognized the United Nation's International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-24). And we are making it a priority to develop a whole of government action plan to ensure equality before the law, eradicate systemic racism, and improve the social, health, and economic well?being of Black Canadians.

"We continue to work in partnership with Black communities to advance this work. In 2020, we launched Canada's first Black Entrepreneurship Program to support Black Canadian business owners and entrepreneurs - for whom barriers were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic - as they grow their businesses, and to empower them to succeed into the future. We also committed to developing a Black Canadians Justice Strategy in consultation and cooperation with provinces, territories, and Black Canadians.

PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU SPEAKS WITH PRESIDENT OF FRANCE **EMMANUEL MACRON**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke with the President of France, Emmanuel Macron. Prime Minister Trudeau and President Macron shared their concerns over Russia's aggressive and destabilizing actions in and around Ukraine, and underlined the need for Russia to engage constructively to find a diplomatic solution. Prime Minister Trudeau stated that the strength of the NATO Alliance is its unity, and emphasized the importance of continued coordination and dialogue between Allies and partners. The two leaders emphasized that any further military incursion into Ukraine would have severe costs and serious consequences, including through coordinated sanctions. The two leaders considered opportunities to address global security and foreign policy challenges by working together and with partners and Allies in multilateral institutions. They discussed expanding cooperation with respect to engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. The Prime Minister and President spoke about the situation in Ethiopia, and emphasized their commitment to continue working with countries in the Sahel to help restore peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. The leaders both expressed their support for the people of Lebanon, and discussed the importance of governmental reforms and holding elections in the country. Building on Canada's recent hosting of an international ministerial meeting on Haiti, the Prime Minister and President discussed support for Haiti, including with respect to public security, open and inclusive political dialogue, governance, and humanitarian needs.

OTTAWA POLICE PROVIDE DETAILS ON TRUCKERS CONVOY PROTEST

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

As we talked about on Friday, the ingress of thousands of vehicles, particularly heavy trucks, caused almost immediate traffic gridlock through Friday into traffic chaos on Saturday and Sunday.

As we told you on Friday, the ingress level of vehicles and demonstrators would make large areas of the downtown core as well as the access routes in and out of the city, bridges, 400-series highways, and major thoroughfares difficult to navigate for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists of any kind.

It would create situations, pockets of dangerous areas for people to travel through.

It will require our residents and our businesses to get updated information from ourselves or city partners and other agencies around the current state of issues and risks and make informed decisions for the safety of themselves, their families and their businesses.

For the most part, the people who have been directly affected have been incredibly patient, incredibly resilient, and they have suffered a lot. I would like to recognize those people who live, work or need to commute through the downtown core of Ottawa. They've been incredibly and negatively impacted by the course of demonstrations and the impact of those demonstrations on their lives and livelihoods.

We are incredibly concerned about the stress they've been under, not just in the last several days but in the last months and years of the pandemic. We're very much aware of this. We're doing everything possible to mitigate those impacts against individuals, families, and businesses.

At the same time, I need to let everyone know of the incredible level of bravery, compassion, professionalism and dedication of all Ottawa Police Service members, all of the partner agencies that have joined us here in the last four days, all of our partners at the City of Ottawa and anyone who's played any direct role in supporting the operations around this demonstration. They have been an incredible group of individuals who kept this city safe during a situation that could have become riotous, it could have led to significant and severe injuries, and it could have led to the loss of lives.

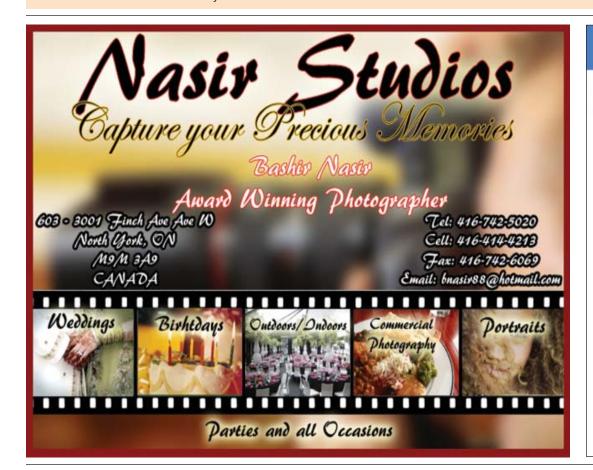
None of that has occurred over the last four days. Let me repeat. No injuries, no deaths, no riots in the last four days in the nation's capital, even though we have a global cause, national protest.

Tens of thousands of individuals from a wide variety of causes gathered to actively demonstrate 24 hours a day for the last four days. All of that, coupled with thousands of heavy trucks, SUVs and cars driving into the city and congregating in the core of this city, 24 hours a day for four days a week.

I want to specifically thank the following agencies who have come from the federal, provincial and municipal levels: The RCMP, Ontario Provincial Police, Gatineau Police, le Sûreté du Quebec, London Police Services, Hamilton Police Services, Peel Region Police Services, Toronto Police Services, York Region Police Services and Durham Region Police Services.

They have sent members of their organization with experience and expertise, professionalism, compassion and joined under our Incident Command System. They have provided very needed, timely, professional, and effective services to keep this city safe. To keep our community safe. To keep our residents safe. To keep our city workers safe. To maintain emergency routes for fire, ambulance and police. To ensure the safety of our health care centers, hospitals or vaccination clinics. To ensure as much as possible the continuation of business within the city and the lifeblood of the city in terms of our ability for our residents to receive emergency services.

There were reports of denial of service—injuries and trauma-related directly to the demonstration. I can tell you that is not true. We have verification from ambulance services, fire services and police services that while they were delays in responses and, in some instances, gaps in services delivery, nobody was directly affected regarding ambulatory service requirements or emergency services requirements. Despite the massive traffic chaos and gridlock that we saw, not just in the core but on our major access ingress routes in the bridges to 400 series highways, that is an incredible level of coordination and professionalism that was demonstrated over the last four days.



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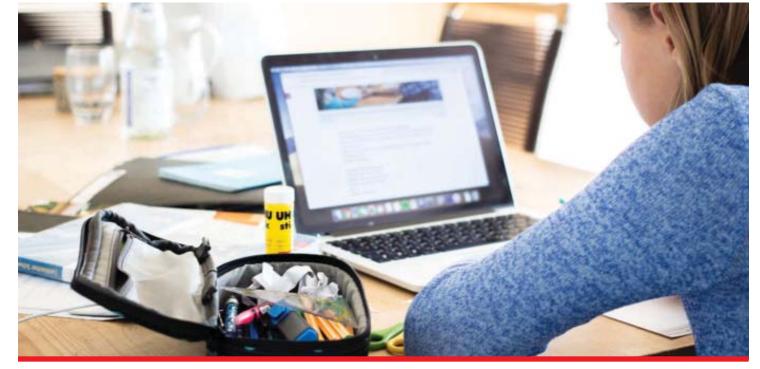
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Ontario Launches New Preview Sites for Online Courses

TORONTO - The Ontario government is expanding access to highquality online learning courses for secondary school students through partnerships with school boards, TVO and TFO. Starting today, secondary school students will be able to preview online course content at www.ontariocoursepreview.ca. The move is a significant step forward in providing greater quality, choice and flexibility to students. As part of the Broadband Modernization Program, the government has taken action to ensure network connectivity to all schools in Ontario. The government has now confirmed that internet connectivity is complete at nearly 100 per cent of schools - 4,841 elementary and secondary schools are now connected, with three active connectivity projects underway in remote schools.

Students will be able to preview the online courses, which will help students and families make informed decisions for online course selections for the 2022-23 school year. New online courses will be added to the preview sites over time, providing Ontario secondary students with more options to reach their academic goals and meet the new online graduation requirements (opt-out provision remains available for all students). School boards make a selection of online courses available to students who can register through their local school as part of the course selection process. The move positions Ontario as a leader in providing modern, online learning options that will ensure students have the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

Expanding online course options will provide students with greater choice and flexibility in meeting their education needs while augmenting their learning experience and building digital literacy and

Ontario-certified teacher-led online courses in a manner that respects the unique needs of the French-language and Catholic systems. The online course previews give students and families an idea about what teacher-led online learning looks like. Additional courses may be offered by school boards. Students should connect with their school to see what courses are offered and how to register.

"We have created the gold standard of online learning courses that are dynamic, led by an educator, and offer course variety for students," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "We are placing a major emphasis on real-world learning by embedding life and job skills into the curriculum - while ensuring they learn in digitally connected classrooms, regardless of where they live."

The Ontario government's new requirement for online learning is outup to one credit earned remotely during the April 2021 to June 2021 school closures will count towards the online learning graduation

cial government is improving access to the internet at all publicly funded schools in Ontario. Under the Broadband Modernization Program, schools across Ontario have completed improvements to their broadband networks, so that students can access online learning resources. The program also provides more efficient technology to support affordable network scale-up and enhanced cyber protection in the future and addresses long-standing internet access challenges other transferrable skills. School boards will continue to deliver faced by students and educators in northern and rural communities.

DEFENCE MINISTER ANAND MEETS WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Today, Defence Minister Anita Anand met North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and reaffirmed Canada's unwavering commitment to the Alliance and the rules-based international order.

Minister Anand discussed her two-day trip to Ukraine and emphasized Canada's support for the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. She and Secretary General Stoltenberg expressed their deep concern about the continuing Russian military buildup in and around Ukraine and underscored the importance of continued coordination and collaboration among NATO Allies in the face of the current security environment. They also agreed on the importance of continuing to provide strong political and practical support to Ukraine, including through Canada's Operation UNIFIER, which was recently extended and expanded until the end of March 2025, and is helping Ukraine move towards greater NATO interoperability.

During the meeting, Minister Anand and Secretary General Stoltenberg also discussed the priorities for the upcoming Defence Ministers' Meeting, ways to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture and Canada's ongoing work to establish and host a NATO Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security.

Canada will continue to enhance its relationships with NATO Allies The Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of National Defence

and partners in order to collectively address threats in the rapidly evolving security environment, and to help build a stronger and more resilient Alliance.

Minister Anand's bilateral meeting in Brussels is part of her first official foreign trip as Minister of National Defence. It comes after a two-day visit to Ukraine where she met with her Ukrainian counterpart and members of the CAF deployed on Operation UNIFIER. The Minister will now travel to Latvia to meet with counterparts and CAF personnel deployed on Operation REASSURANCE where she will continue to work with Allies to support the security and stability of Central and Eastern Europe.

Quotes

"The NATO Alliance and rules-based international order are core elements of Canada's defence and foreign policy, and have kept Canadians safe for over seven decades. Russia's ongoing aggression in Eastern Europe reminds us yet again of the importance of trans-Atlantic solidarity. Canada's commitment to the NATO Alliance is unwavering, and we will continue to work with our Allies to maintain a modern, agile and united alliance in the face of current and future

challenges."

lined in Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 167, including eligibility and implementation requirements and parent opt-out provisions. The PPM also clarifies that, for students currently in Grade 10,

requirement. As part of a strategy to reduce barriers to online learning, the provin-

PREMIER FORD COMMEMORATES BLACK **HISTORY MONTH**



Premier Doug Ford issued the following statement to commemorate Black History Month:

"Today marks the beginning of Black History Month, a time to honour the legacy of Black Ontarians throughout our province's history and today. Ontario's diversity is one of our greatest strengths and Black Ontarians and their communities have done so much to contribute to our province.

Black History Month is also a time to reaffirm our commitment to fight racism and discrimination in all its forms, and work together to build a more inclusive Ontario where everyone, regardless of their race, has the opportunity to succeed.

Building a more inclusive Ontario also means investing in Black communities and the next generation of Black leaders. It means working with Black children, youth and families to achieve their potential. That is why our government is investing in the Black Youth Action Plan to help youth and young adults build their careers and achieve economic success. We are also introducing a new Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs grant to support the needs of Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs and accelerate small business growth that will benefit the broader community.

I encourage all Ontarians to take time this month to learn about the legacy and contributions of Black Ontarians, by participating in Black History events and supporting local community partners because Black History is our history."

PEEL POLICE TAKES DOWN PROLIFIC AUTO THEFT GROUP

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Peel Regional Police commenced "Project High 5" in collaboration with investigators from Halton Regional Police, York Regional Police and the Ontario Provincial Police. This investigation was supported through the funding provided by the Ontario Government, Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. The investigative team also included members from Canada Border Services Agency, Mississauga, Port of Montreal - SPVM Police, Équité Association, Port of Halifax and Halifax Police Service. These partnering agencies were able to aid in the recovery of several stolen vehicles while many others were recovered within the Greater Toronto Area.

Project High 5 was initiated after a documented increase in motor vehicles being stolen from residents within the Region of Peel and Greater Toronto Area. It is alleged that suspects forced open the driver's door and obtained access to the vehicle's On Board Diagnostic Port (OBD). Once this was achieved, they utilized key programming devices to program a new aftermarket key fob. These were not the result of relay thefts and were captured by victims and neighbouring residences on home security. Most of the vehicles targeted have been identified as being the most commonly stolen vehicles by Équité Association, namely, Toyota Highlander, Honda CRV, Ford F150, Range Rover, and Lexus SUV models.

CITY OF TORONTO'S WINTER CREWS READY FOR FORECASTED SNOWFALL

The City of Toronto's winter crews are ready to work non-stop to respond to a forecasted snowfall of approximately 25 cm of snow beginning Wednesday evening. Preparations and planning have been underway today for the coming storm with operations focused on the safety and movement of residents and emergency vehicles, with salting and plowing of roads, sidewalks and bike lanes. The City has the following 24/7 staff and equipment that will be used in response:

More than 1,500 personnel (contracted and City staff)

- * 600 snow plows
- * 360 sidewalk plows
- * 200 salt trucks

The City maintains 14,743 lane-km of roads, currently 6,500 km of sidewalks and 640 km of bike lanes. Given the length of the storm and amount of snow predicted, the City is taking several steps to ready for this multi-day snowfall. Salters will be deployed as soon as the expected rain changes to freezing rain. Plows and salters will be strategically placed across the city, ready to begin operations in their assigned areas as soon as possible in response to the weather. Plowing crews will be deployed on major streets and sidewalks as the snow falls and plow hard and fast overnight.

CITY OF BRAMPTON SUPPORTS ROGERS PROPOSED \$100M INVESTMENT IN AND RELOCATION TO DOWNTOWN

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

This strategic new location and investment will help spur a vibrant transitoriented community and situate the new Rogers Brampton office at the centre of Canada's Innovation Corridor, broadening both Rogers and Brampton's access to talent. Additionally, the relocation of the Cybersecurity unit from the Rogers Brampton Campus to the Innovation District will bolster and strengthen the city's position as a national leader in Cybersecurity.

DOSES AFTER DARK RETURNS WITH EXTENDED HOURS IN BRAMPTON AND MISSISSAUGA

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

* February 12th, 2022, 1 p.m. until midnight. Rockwood Mall Clinic, 4141 Dixie Rd.

If preferred, residents can also book an appointment through the Provincial booking site to ensure they get a spot. Our special late-hour clinics hosted last year for doses 1 and 2 were especially busy, so appointments will go quickly. We're expecting special guests, giveaways, and a fun and festive environment.

Media are invited to attend both clinics where Dr. Lawrence Loh, Peel's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Paul Sharma, Peel's Director of Public Health Emergencies, will attend and be available for comment at specified hours. Media may also have limited access inside the clinics for B-roll, as well as footage where staff and public are amenable.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to secure an interview time, please email Peel Public Health to confirm attendance and to schedule an interview.

RON CHATHA ELECTED CHAIR OF THE PEEL POLICE SERVICES BOARD

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Chatha, who served as Board Chair in 2020 and Vice-Chair in 2021, was appointed to serve as a provincial representative on the Board in

January 2019 for three years and re-appointed in January 2022 for an additional 3-year term.

Ron has been a Realtor since 2008 and is currently working for a leading real estate firm in Peel Region. Ron has a lengthy history of serving his community outside of real estate. Passionate about community service, Ron is an active volunteer serving on many not-forprofit boards. He serves as a board member for the Peel Children's Aid Foundation and has also served on Brampton's School Traffic Safety Council. He is also currently the Chair of the Committee of Adjustment and Minor Variance for the City of Brampton. Ron is also an avid sports fan who enjoys playing cricket and watching cricket, basketball, and hockey.

"Having served as Chair of the Peel Police Services Board previously, I am honoured that my Board colleagues chose once again to place their trust in me and for allowing me the opportunity to serve in this important role," said Chatha.

Ahmad Attia, who served as Chair in 2021 and Vice-Chair in 2020, was appointed to the Police Services Board on May 23, 2019, as the citizen appointee for the Region of Peel. Ahmad was born and raised in Mississauga, where he and his wife live and raise their three children. Ahmad is a businessman and entrepreneur who has dedicated his life, professionally and through his volunteerism, to advancing community and social causes. With over 15 years of experience, Ahmad currently serves as CEO of Incisive Strategy, where he has demonstrated deep expertise in crisis management, public affairs, and risk management.

CANADA SHOWS SUPPORT TO UKRAINE WITH DEFENCE MINISTER ANITA ANAND'S VISIT

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Minister Anand and Ukraine's Minister of Defence Oleksii Reznikov held their first in-person bilateral meeting, which follows three previous meetings held in recent months.

The ministers discussed the recently announced extension and expansion of Operation UNIFIER, the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) military training and capacity-building mission in Ukraine. Minister Anand reiterated that Canada remains steadfast in its support of the Ukrainian people in the face of Russian aggression and intimidation, and is committed to finding peaceful ways to advance democracy and stability. Minister Reznikov expressed deep appreciation for Canada's continued military and diplomatic efforts in support to Ukraine.

While in Kyiv, Minister Anand also spoke with the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Oleksiy Danilov, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Denys Monastyrsky. They discussed the ongoing security challenges facing Ukrainians, and Canada's commitment to helping Ukraine strengthen its ability to defend itself against a range of threats. They further underscored the importance of collective security in preserving global peace and security, and the rules-based international order.

The minister also had the opportunity to meet with members of the CAF deployed on Operation UNIFIER, and personally thanked them for their significant contributions in support of the security forces of Ukraine. She emphasized the important role the CAF's work plays in helping to enhance these forces as a whole.

Minister Anand will next be traveling to Brussels to meet the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Jens Stoltenberg. While there, the minister intends to reaffirm Canada's commitment to transatlantic security and emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation with our European allies and partners to build a safer and more secure world. Afterwards, the Minister will travel to Latvia to meet with her counterparts and CAF personnel deployed on Operation REASSURANCE, and reaffirm Canada's commitment to the security and stability of Central and Eastern Europe.





BIKRAM MAJITHIA VS NAVJOT SIDHU

MORE OF A PERSONAL FIGHT, SAY LOCALS

ring in Amritsar East, the home turf of his arch-rival Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, for the ensuing 2022 Assembly polls, the stakes are high on both sides.

Residents feel that it would be a tough fight, which could tilt on either side. Both candidates have remained unbeaten on the political pitch. Sidhu was three-time MP and sitting MLA from East, whereas Bikram was a three-time MLA from Majitha.

With Majithia, the SAD has made its debut in the East. During the SAD-BJP alliance, this seat was in the BJP quota.

Post delimitation in 2012, East was represented by Navjot Kaur Sidhu (BJP candidate), who quit the medical profession to enter politics. Despite being a Congress-dominating belt, she won with 33,406 votes on the BJP ticket.

In 2016, Sidhu, a three-time Lok Sabha MP from Amritsar between 2004 and 2014, quit the SAD-BJP alliance and joined the Congress. In 2017, he won the seat by a convincing margin of 42,332 votes. Meanwhile, Sarbjit Singh, Verka resident, said with the Congress domibetween 1,000 and 2,000 votes," he added.

With SAD MLA and ex-minister Bikram Majithia throwing hat into the nance in the area, Sidhu could deliver better while Majithia, who was facing drug charges, could be the last choice. "Despite winning with a mammoth margin, the Sidhu couple could hardly deliver as they were not cooperated by the top leadership, be it Parkash Singh Badalled SAD or Capt Amarinder Singh-led Congress. The families belonging to Maqboolpura, Verka and Batala road localities have been harshly affected by the drug menace and no successive governments have been able to curb it. They too have Sidhu as a better choice as he presented the 'Punjab model' and a vision for the state's resurrection. But Majithia will certainly give a tough fight."

> Ironically, some residents resent the scant visits of Sidhu. Even his 'missing' posters too had surfaced a couple of times here till June 2021. Kamal Makhan of Sharifpura said the SAD could not be taken lightly. "It seems Majithia's candidature was not decided in a day. Over the recent period of time, the SAD has increased its invasion with a strong workers' base at the grassroots level in East. Majithia will give a tough fight to Sidhu and the margin could be anything

PM-DEVINE TO BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS, PROVIDE LIVELIHOOD IN NE: FICCI



GUWAHATI, (IANS) The northeast region chapter of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Tuesday, welcomed the Union Budget presented in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for focusing on infrastructure, and said that the the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North-East (PM-DevINE) would help bridge critical infrastructure gaps in remote areas and provide livelihood options to the people in the region.

North East Advisory Council Chairman of FICCI, Ranjit Barthakur terming the budget as pragmatic, said that it focused on core sectors like. health care, infrastructure, MSMEs Technology and financial inclusion. He said: "We particularly welcome the focus on infrastructure and social development projects through the PM-DevINE. The initiative would help bridge critical infrastructure gaps in remote areas and provide livelihood options to the people in the region. We hope the initial outlay of Rs 1,500 crore for the scheme would be suitably enhanced as per requirement."

Terming the focus on Energy Transition and Climate Change "a step in the right direction", Barthakur said that the northeast India is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots of the country and the region locations in the northeast and can be capitalised for tourism".

could benefit immensely from the decision to bring about legislative changes to promote agro forestry and private forestry.

The old economic model of rapid growth is now recognized to be the fundamental cause behind the depletion of our natural resources. Since 2020, climate and biodiversity risks have topped the World Economic Forum's Annual Risk Report analyzing business percep-

Climate change has been costing the world over \$150 billion annually since 2017, he added.

The FICCI leader said that the decision to provide financial support to farmers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, for agro-forestry is also a very welcoming step.

"We will be requesting the government to allow the tea Industry also to take advantage of the proposed legislative changes and financial support," he told the media in Guwahati. He also welcomed the decision to enhance support to MSMEs by revamping the CGTMSE

"As in most other parts of the country, in the northeast region too micro enterprises suffered the most as a result of the Covid pandemic and we are hopeful that the additional credit of Rs 2 lakh crore which would become available, would help in ensuring continued financial sustainability of the MSMEs."

Another important budget announcement that could help the education sector in the region, particularly in remote hilly areas is the decision to expand the reach of PMevidya "One Class One TV Channel" from 12 channels to 200 channels.

This will help the state Governments in providing quality education to students in remote rural areas without depending on internet connectivity. Barthakur said.

FICCI Assam State Council Chairman Dipankar Barua said that the tourism and hospitality sector in Assam is going through a very difficult time and welcomed the decision to extend the benefits under ECLGS (Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme) scheme upto march 2023 with a focus on the hospitality sector. He also welcomed the announcement of the National Ropeway Development Programme "Parvatmala" and "this programme would help connect many remote

TECH-LED DEVELOPMENT IN HEALTH, EDUCATION WILL HELP INDIA: ODISHA CM

BHUBANESWAR, (IANS) Giving a mixed reaction to Union Budget 2022-23, Chief Minister of Odisha and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik said the proposed technology led development in health and education will help the country to a large extent in this

"The focus of the budget on technology and infrastructure-led growth will have a positive impact. The production linked initiative schemes in 14 sectors and extension of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme would be helpful in mitigating supply side constraints," Patnaik said in a statement on Tuesday.

However, the sectoral allocation is slashed in critical sectors like agriculture and farmers' welfare, higher education, rural development and women and child development, which could hamper inclusive growth, he said.

Similarly, reduction in allocation under MGNREGS in a pandemic situation is not going to help poor people, he pointed out.

KEJRIWAL ANNOUNCES RS 10 LAKH ASSISTANCE TO DELHI RAPE SURVIVOR

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced an assistance of Rs 10 lakh to help the Kasturba Nagar rape victim, whose horrendous ordeal had shaken the city.

"I have ordered Rs 10 lakh assistance amount to help this daughter. Delhi government will do everything possible to get justice for this daughter. We are hiring a good lawyer for her. We will also fast-track this matter so that the daughter can get justice as soon as possible," he said in a tweet.

Later in the day, Revenue and Law Minister Kailash Gahlot, along with Delhi Commission for Women chief Swati Maliwal, met the 20year-old survivor, who informed them that she was abducted from her home and gang-raped by three men who are involved in illicit trade of liquor and drugs locally. While they were gang-raping her, the women present therein were instigating the men to rape her. She further informed that they beat her up brutally, shaved her head, blackened her face and made her walk around the neighbourhood with a garland of slippers and shoes. A video of the unfortunate incident was also received by the Commission which clearly showed the sad plight of the victim. Maliwal had earlier issued notice to Delhi Police seeking immediate arrest of all the culprits, both men and women. She had also recommended that the girl and her family be shifted to a safe house and be provided protection.

'SADA CHANNI' JERSEYS KICK UP A ROW IN JALANDHAR



JALANDHAR: Leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday lodged a massive protest near PPR Mall here where they stopped two trucks carrying sports jerseys with 'Sada Channi' printed on them.

AAP candidate from Jalandhar West Sheetal Angural said he got the information that a truck was unloading packets of these jerseys near the market and reached the site. He said he immediately called AAP leaders and workers at the site and got the truck halted.

District AAP chief Raiwinder Kaur, Jalandhar AAP candidate Surinder Sodhi and a large number of workers reached the site carrying party flags and raised slogans against the state government. The AAP leaders flayed the government resorting to cheap tactics to win the elections by offering voters freebies when the election code was in place.

"The Congress was planning to give these tracksuits to every household and ask for votes," said the leaders as they also burnt the effigy of Jalandhar West Congress MLA Sushil Rinku alleging that the trucks were going to his constituency.

AAP leader Sodhi, who retired as IG Punjab Police, said the incident showed how the police was hand-in-glove with the ruling party. "Had I been the police officer of Jalandhar today, I would have got the SHO of this area suspended for not having noted the movement of this truck. Our party volunteers have played a vigilant role and got the government's illegal activity stopped," he said.

The whole drama continued for over five hours and SAD candidate Jagbir Brar and BJP candidate Sarabjit Makkar too reached the spot levelling allegations against the state government for indulging in unfair means. Police teams, too, reached at the spot.

The matter finally got resolved as District Congress Committee chief Balraj Thakur finally reached the spot and presented a bill from a Ludhaiana-based hosiery company saying "We had ordered their track suits from the district Congress for our party workers who will go for door-to-door canvassing." The matter ended at that point.

'PM MODI HAS TRACES OF GOD IN HIM': MP CM



PANAJI, (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "super-human and there are traces of God in him". Madhva Pradesh Chief Minister Shivrai Singh Chouhan has said. "I see in Narendra Modi... there are traces of God in him. He is a repository of unending powers. How can one person work so much? Congress ran a government for years before this. Were there development works everywhere you went?" Chouhan said at a BJP election rally in the Dabolim Assembly constituency in poll-bound Goa. "I am not saying this because I am a Chief Minister and a BJP worker. I am saying what I feel in my heart. It is fortunate that the country has a Prime Minister like Narendra Modi. He has an incredible personality," Chouhan added. Chouhan went on to describe Prime Minister Modi as a super-human. "Narendra Modi is super human. He is a man of ideas." The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister also said that Prime Minister Modi had restored India's pride overseas. "When the Congress was in power, people abroad used to ignore us when we say we come from India. There was no respect. They would not look at us with pride. India used to be discussed vis-a-vis issues related to corruption."

MUKHTAR ANSARI GETS BAIL IN 14-YR-OLD CASE



LUCKNOW, (IANS) There is finally some good news for beleaguered mafia don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari.

Ansari has been granted bail in a 14-year-old Gangster Act case. The Ghazipur Session Court granted bail to Ansari on a personal bond

of Rs one lakh on Tuesday. He is currently lodged at Banda jail in Uttar Pradesh.

Since there are several other cases that are lodged against Ansari in Mau and other parts of Uttar Pradesh, his release from the jail is unlikely in near future. A sitting MLA from Mau assembly seat, Mukhtar Ansari has been lodged in jail since 2005 for the murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai. More than 40 cases had been lodged against him at a single police station in the Ghazipur district. The five-time MLA has been acquitted in a number of cases. Earlier, in the wake of Mukhtar Ansari's transfer from Punjab's Ropar jail to Uttar Pradesh's Banda jail, his son Umar Ansari had alleged threat to his father' life at the Banda jail. After meeting Mukhtar at Banda jail last month, Umar told reporters that a conspiracy is being hatched to kill his father. According to Umar's claim, the district administration and the local police are hand-in-glove with criminals lodged at the jail.



Ministry of Cooperation gets Rs 900 crore in Union Budget 2022-23

NEW DELHI, (IANS) The Union Budget has allocated Rs 900 crore to the Ministry of Cooperation compared to the revised estimate of Rs 403.30 crore in the current fiscal. The Ministry was allocated Rs 373 crore in the revised estimate of the 2021-22 while Rs 30.30 crore was given for the National Council for Co-Operative Training (NCCT) which has been increased to Rs 39 crore in 2022-23. Earlier Rs 373 crore was allocated under Central Sector Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Cooperation (CSISAC) but it has been reduced to Rs 50 crore in the FY23. The govenrment has allocated Rs 11 crore to Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM). For the first time, a separate Budget has been provided to VAMNICOM. It is envisaged to convert it into a full fledged independent institution with its own budgetary allocation. Earlier its budgetary requirements are met through the Grants-in-aid released to NCCT.

Similarly, Rs 10.90 crore has been allocated to the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies while one crore has got one crore for Cooperation

Credit Guarantee Fund. The Budget has also made a provision of Rs 30 crore for Cooperative education whereas Rs 25 crore has been given for Cooperative Training. The government has also announced the reduction of Minimum Alternate Tax on Cooperative Societies from 18.5 per cent to 15 per cent while an announcement was made to reduce the surcharge on Cooperatives Societies from 12 per cent to 7 per cent having income between Rs. 1 to 10 crores. An amount of Rs 350 crore has been provided for digitisation of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies. The scheme aims to computerize 63000 PACS leading to increase in efficiency, profitability, transparency & accountability in the working of PACS. Similarly, a total of Rs 274 crore has been provided for an Umbrella Scheme "Prosperity through Cooperatives" which would have a number of subcomponents with the aim of all round development of cooperatives in the country. The Ministry of Cooperation was created in 2019 to reorganize and regulate the cooperative sector in the country and the Ministry is headed by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

TRINAMOOL HOLDS ORGANISATIONAL POLLS. MAMATA TO BE ELECTED CHAIRPERSON



KOLKATA, (IANS) In the midst of the simmering differences between its generation next leaders and a section of old guards, the much-hyped organisational polls of Trinamool Congress is taking place in the iconic Netaji Indoor Stadium on Wednesday where the party MPs, MLAs, Councillors and district leaders will be choosing their Chairperson, All India President and members of the National Executive Committee. The party has invited all the other political parties but the BJP, to see the election process. Partha Chatterjee, Returning Officer of the election, said the party had invited leaders of other political parties to see the election procedure. Trinamool leaders in other states like Tripura, Goa, Punjab, Haryana and Meghalaya have been invited to attend the election. Apart from the post of chairperson where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will be nominated uncontested, the party leaders will elect the All-India National President and members of the national working committee. Political experts are of the opinion that the election will lead to several crucial decisions regarding the formation of the new working committee as well as increasing the authority of the party's national president within the party.

STALIN WRITES TO KERALA CM TO MAINTAIN WATER LEVEL IN SIRUVANI DAM



CHENNAI, (IANS) Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has written a letter to his counterpart Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan urging him to direct the Kerala irrigation officials to maintain the water level at Siruvani dam at its full capacity. Stalin in the letter written on Tuesday said that this was to ensure regular supply of water to Coimbatore corporation and surrounding areas. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister in the letter alleged that the Kerala irrigation department has been maintaining the level in the dam at 877 m, instead of its full capacity of 878.50m despite heavy rains in the past three years. Stalin said that this was affecting the regular supply of water to Coimbatore corporation and was creating drinking water problems in Coimbatore and surrounding areas.

UNION BUDGET IS 'ANTI-FARMER': MANISH SISODIA

NEW DELHI, (IANS) Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday slammed the Union Budget 2022-23 and termed it as "antifarmer". Sisodia, who is also Delhi's Finance Minister claimed that the government has reduced the allocation for Minimum Support Price (MSP) in the budget. "The public had huge aspirations from the budget due to the pandemic related woes. The people have been left bereft. There's nothing in this budget for the common man, nothing that will reduce the backbreaking inflation," Sisodia said in a virtual conference. He said, "They (Centre) reduced the targets and number of beneficiaries of the MSP. The target for the purchase of paddy and wheat has been reduced from 1,286 million tonnes to 1,208 million tonnes. MSP allocation has been reduced from 2.48 lakh crores to 2.37 lakh crores. They did not just reduce their targeted procurement but also the budget allocation essential for the agriculture sector from earlier 4.5 per cent to 3.8 per cent." "This is a complete fraud. The Centre itself is admitting that it is reducing the scope of the scheme (MSP) and the beneficiaries will reduce from 1.97 crore farmers to 1.68 crores. There couldn't have possibly been a more anti-farmer budget in our history," he added. Talking about the budget share for the health sector, Sisodia said, "The pandemic taught the whole world that health infrastructure needed hefty investment to protect lives. But, the Central government has kept the health allocation as it was in the last year." "Education faced a huge blow because of Covid....But, the Central government in no way talked about the New Education Policy (NEP) in its budget.

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WHO: IN 10 WEEKS, OMICRON SURGE CAUSES COVID CASES TO SOAR

The World Health Organization (WHO) chief said Tuesday that 90 million cases of coronavirus have been reported since the omicron variant was first identified 10 weeks ago - amounting to more than in all of 2020 the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. With many countries easing their restrictive measures amid public fatigue about them, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyeus cautioned that omicron should not be underestimated even though it has shown to



bring less severe illness than earlier variants - and cited "a very worrying increase in deaths in most regions of the world." "We are concerned that a narrative has taken hold in some countries that because of vaccines – and because of omicrons high transmissibility and lower severity – preventing transmission is no longer possible and no longer necessary, he told a regular WHO briefing on the pandemic. "Nothing could be further from the truth," Tedros added.

Putin: US, NATO have ignored Russia's top security demands

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that the US and its allies have ignored Russia's top security demands but added that Moscow is still open for more talks with the West on easing soaring tensions over Ukraine. Putin noted that the US and its allies have ignored the Kremlin's demands for guarantees that NATO won't expand to Ukraine, won't deploy weapons near the Russian border and will roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. The Russian leader argued



that the Western allies' refusal to heed the Russian demands violates their obligations on integrity of security for all nations and insisted that a solution could be found through more talks.

US pauses Masood Khan's appointment as Pakistan Ambassador

The US State Department has been taking unusually long to process the appointment of Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Washington, Masood Khan and the delay has triggered an impression of a pause in the process, Dawn reported.

Khan, who served as President of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) till last August, was nominated as Ambassador to the US in November.

He had previously served as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and New York and as Ambassador to China.

Khan was to replace the outgoing Ambassador of Pakistan in Washington Asad Majeed Khan. The request for agreement for Masood Khan had been sent to the State Department in the second week of November, a Pakistani diplomat said. The agreement is the approval of a designated diplomat by the receiving state. Normally, the State Department took four to six weeks to issue agreements for Pakistani ambassadors in the past, a former foreign secretary said.

Security situation in Pakistan remains grim

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

In January 2022, militants carried out 24 attacks, in which 42 people were killed, including 22 security forces personnel, 16 civilians, and four militants, while 79 people were injured, of which 62 were civilians and 17 were security forces personnel. The majority of attacks last month took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), followed by Balochistan and erstwhile-FATA.

PICSS recorded 12 militant attacks in KP in which 15 people were killed (9 civilians; 5 security forces) and seven people were injured (4 security forces; 3 civilians).

In Balochistan, militants carried out six attacks in which 17 people were killed, most of whom were security forces personnel (14 security forces; 3 civilians), and 32 people were injured, mostly civilians (26 civilians; 6 security forces).

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