In this image courtesy of the US Marine Corps taken on Thursday and released yesterday, fortunate evacuees wait for their flight out of Afghanistan at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan.

PHOTO: AFP

Unite to defeat BJP

Sonia Gandhi urges all Indian opposition parties to set aside differences ahead of 2024 polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *New Delhi*

Congress President Sonia Gandhi yesterday said time has come for all Indian opposition parties to rise above their different compulsions and "plan systematically" and unitedly for the 2024 parliamentary election against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party.

"We all have our compulsions, but clearly, a time has come when the interests of our nation demand that we rise above them," Sonia said while virtually addressing a congregation of 15 opposition leaders including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

She said the ultimate goal is 2024 Lok Sabha polls and must plan systematically to give a government which believes in values of freedom movement and in the principles of the Constitution.

"The 75th year of Independence occasion to reaffirm our collective resolve. Congress will not be found wanting," Sonia said.

Mamata proposed a core group of opposition leaders to decide on joint programmes and movements.

She urged opposition parties to keep aside differences and work together to defeat BJP in 2024 parliamentary polls.

Among other opposition leaders who attended today's meeting were Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray, DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar, Rashtrya Janata Dal's Tejashwi Yadav and CPI(M) Sitaram Yechury.

However, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav stayed away from the meeting while Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati and Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party's Arvind Kejriwal were not invited.

Mamata Bannerjee who is sparing no chance to remind the Congress that they can't call the shots till they buck up themselves, too said that all parties need to come together.

The Opposition also plans to step up protests all over the country from September 20 to 30 addressing various public issues.

Over the next few days more such meetings are expected to be held with an eye on polls. But two messages from Sonia Gandhi were clear: One her meet was a rebuttal to the dinner meet called by the rebel G23 leader Kapil Sibal in which most top leaders attended. Second, pointed to Mamata and the likes questioning the COngress, the party may be down but it was definitely now out.

MORE NEWS

EU says no recognition of Taliban, no political talks

The European Union has not recognised the Taliban, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday, nor is it holding political talks with the militants, a week after they seized control of Afghanistan. The head of the EU executive spoke after visiting a reception centre in Madrid for Afghan employees of EU institutions evacuated from Kabul. Von der Leyen said she would propose an increase in the 57 million euros ($67 million) in humanitarian aid which the Commission had allocated this year for Afghanistan. She said EU development aid is tied to respect of human rights, good treatment of minorities and respect for the rights of women and girls. "We may well hear the Taliban's words but we will measure them above all by their deeds and actions," von der Leyen told a news conference. She said the Commission was ready to provide funding to EU countries which help resettle refugees, and she planned to raise the resettlement issue at a G7 meeting next week.

Suicide attack targeting Chinese national kills 2 in Pakistan

A suicide bomb attack in Pakistan on a motorcade carrying Chinese personnel injured one Chinese national and killed two local children, the Chinese embassy in Islamabad said yesterday. The attack took place on Friday at the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project in Balochistan, the embassy said. Several wounded people were treated at a local hospital, it said. The embassy called on the Pakistan authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of the attack. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident. In July, a suicide bomber attacked a bus carrying workers to a dam construction site in northern Pakistan, killing 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals. Pakistan's foreign minister said Pakistani Taliban militants known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan were behind that attack. Beijing is investing over $65 billion in infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, under its wider Belt and Road initiative.

Taliban websites disappear from internet, reason unclear

The official websites of the Taliban, who swept to power in Afghanistan on the back of a lightning offensive last week, appeared to have vanished from the internet late on Friday. It was not immediately clear whether a technical fault or something else was to blame. The Taliban operate separate websites in Pashto, Dari, Arabic, Urdu and English. All five appeared to be unreachable on Friday. A spokeswoman for CloudFlare, which online records list as providing protection for the Taliban sites, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The outage was first reported by The Washington Post.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

RUBY CEMENT HEIDELBERGCEMENT Group
হাইডেলবার্গসিমেন্ট বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড
SCAN CEMENT HEIDELBERGCEMENT Group
রেজিস্টার্ড অফিস: মৌজা-টাটকি, ডাক: তারাবো
তারাবো পৌরসভা, থানা: রূপগঞ্জ, জেলা: নারায়ণগঞ্জ।
কর্পোরেট অফিস: সিফনী (৭ম ও ৮ম তলা), প্লট নং: এসই(এফ) ৯ সড়ক নং: ১৪২, গুলশান এ্যাভিনিউ (দক্ষিণ), ঢাকা-১২১২।

অ-দাবীকৃত/অবিলিকৃত লভ্যাংশ সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, হাইডেলবার্গসিমেন্ট বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড এর সম্মানিত শেয়ারহোল্ডারদের নামে ইস্যুকৃত বিভিন্ন বছরের নগদ লভ্যাংশ যা শেয়ারহোল্ডারদের ঠিকানা, ফোন নম্বর এবং ব্যাংক হিসাব যথাযথ না থাকায় ফেরত আসে এবং যোগাযোগ করা সম্ভবপর হয়নি বিধায় উক্ত টাকা শেয়ার বিভাগে অবিলিকৃত বা অ-দাবীকৃত অবস্থায় সংরক্ষিত আছে।

বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ এন্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন এর ১৯ জুলাই ২০২১-এর পত্র নং SEC/SRMIC/165-2020/part-1/182-এর নির্দেশনার আলোকে The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (Capital Market Stabilization Fund) Rules, 2021-এর আওতায় ৩ বছরের অধিক সময়ের অ-দাবীকৃত নগদ লভ্যাংশ এর টাকা কমিউনিটি ব্যাংক বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড, কর্পোরেট শাখা, গুলশান-এর Capital Market Stabilization Fund (CMSF) শিরোনামীয় SND A/C No.- ০০১০৩১১৫২১৩০১ এ স্থানান্তর করতে হবে।

সম্মানিত শেয়ারহোল্ডারগণকে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, অ-দাবীকৃত নগদ লভ্যাংশ-এর টাকা গ্রহণের জন্য ২৩ শে সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২১ ইং তারিখের মধ্যে উপযুক্ত প্রমাণসহ হাইডেলবার্গসিমেন্ট বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড-এর শেয়ার বিভাগের ই-মেইল: share.bgd@heidelbergcement.com ঠিকানায় আবেদন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

এত সংশ্লিষ্ট যেকোন প্রয়োজনে সম্মানিত শেয়ারহোল্ডার/বিনিয়োগকারীগণ ০২-৫৮৮১১৬৯১ এক্সটেনশন: ৩০৪, ৩০৫ নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করতে পারবেন।

হাইডেলবার্গসিমেন্ট বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড-এর পক্ষে
মোঃ ইমদাদুল হক, এসিএ
কোম্পানি সচিব
তারিখ: ২২ আগস্ট ২০২১

Delta variant continues to disrupt life

AGENCIES

Australian police arrested hundreds of anti-lockdown protesters in Melbourne and Sydney yesterday and seven officers were hospitalised as a result of clashes, as the country saw its highest ever single-day rise in Covid-19 cases.

Mounted police used pepper spray in Melbourne to break up crowds of more than 4,000 surging toward police lines, while smaller groups of protesters were prevented from congregating in Sydney by a large contingent of riot police.

Victoria state police said that they arrested 218 people in the state capital Melbourne. They issued 236 fines and kept three people in custody for assaulting police. The arrested people face fines of A$5,452 ($3,900) each for breaching public health orders.

Police in New South Wales, where Sydney is the capital, said they charged 47 people with breaching public health orders or resisting arrest, among other offences, and issued more than 260 fines ranging from A$50 ($35) to $3,000. The police said about 250 people made it to the city for the protest.

Covid-19

- Police arrest hundreds of protesters as Australia reports record cases
- Shanghai places hundreds in quarantine after airport cases
- Sri Lanka announces lockdown as coronavirus cases surge

Sydney, Australia's biggest city with more than 5 million people, has been in a strict lockdown for more than two months, failing to contain an outbreak that has spread across internal borders and as far as neighbouring New Zealand.

The vast majority of the 894 cases reported across Australia yesterday were found in Sydney, the epicentre of the Delta variant-fuelled outbreak.

Australia has had about 43,000 COVID-19 cases and 978 deaths. But while those numbers are low, only about a third of Australians aged 16 and above have been fully vaccinated, according to federal health ministry data released on Saturday.

Meanwhile, authorities in Shanghai have quarantined hundreds of people in an attempt to halt a fresh Covid-19 outbreak in the city after infections were detected in cargo workers at its airport, the municipal government said yesterday.

\Two of the cargo workers, a Chinese national and an Ethiopian national, were included among four locally transmitted cases in mainland China's tally of 20 new confirmed infections for Aug 20, announced yesterday.

In Sri Lanka, authorities announced a 10-day lockdown starting on Friday night in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus, as surging infections and deaths overwhelm the island's health system.

The Indian Ocean nation recorded its highest single-day death toll of 187 and 3,793 cases on Wednesday.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa met with members of the presidential task force on coronavirus and was expected to address the nation on Friday evening.

Daily infections have more than doubled in a month to an average of 3,897, according to the Reuters Global COVID tracker.

AUGUST 22

1910 - Korea was annexed by Japan after five years as a protectorate.

1973 - Henry Kissinger was named US Secretary of State.

2006 - All 170 passengers and crew on board a Russian Tu-154 airliner were killed when it crashed in Ukraine.

2010 - Thirty-three Chilean miners trapped underground for 17 days manage to send message to surface, making first contact with rescuers.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

TALIBAN TAKEOVER THROUGH TWO AFGHANS LENSES

Questions are swirling in the air after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan last week ending the rule of West-backed government of Ashraf Ghani. It took the Taliban just over a week to seize control of the whole country and to obliterate government forces, trained for years and equipped by the United States and others at a cost of billions of dollars. The Taliban have offered a pledge of reconciliation, vowing no revenge against opponents and to respect women's rights, press freedom. They have also pledged an 'inclusive government' based on Sharia. But there are huge concerns globally and within Afghanistan about the Taliban's brutal human rights record and tens of thousands of Afghans are still trying to flee. Pockets of resistance have emerged against the new ruler of Afghanistan, where one's ethnic identity often eclipses national one. Can the Taliban be trusted this time? What form of government is on the cards? Will it be inclusive? What will be the future of their new regime? Can they deliver for Afghans? Will there be another civil war? -- questions like these are making the headlines in Western-backed news media around the world. But little is coming out from the Afghans themselves. The Daily Star's correspondent Mostafa Shabuj has asked these questions and more to two Afghan youths from two major ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Here is their conversation:

THE DAILY STAR: How is the situation there? Why people are fleeing?

Ali from Kabul: The situation is calmer after the Taliban's take over. The people who are leaving the country are mostly (80 percent) Pashtuns who were the translators, interpreters, and employees of US/ western entities. These people are leaving the country, not for the Taliban but to grab the opportunity of a better life abroad.

Irfanullah Irfan from Kunar province: At the beginning, people were scared because they thought that the Taliban would torture or kill them. But the sense of panic ebbed as Taliban announced general amnesty. Now people are feeling relatively safe.

TDS: Why did the Ghani regime fail? Why didn't the Afghan army fight?

Ali: Although I don't support the Taliban, I am happy that it (the Ghani regime) collapsed. It was an epitome of corruption, injustice, and nepotism and it heavily priorotised Pashtuns. So was the Karzai regime. Therefore, they collapsed. I would blame more on the Afghan technocrats than the western powers. Corruption and shameless patronizing of Pashtun ethnic groups resulted in empowering the Taliban. Both Karzai and Ghani had sympathy for the Taliban because both are Pashtuns. They wanted the Taliban to be a force, a pressure group, against non-Pashtuns especially the Tajiks (the second dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan).

Irfan: Yes, due to the ethnicity biases the previous government has collapsed.

TDS: Do you trust this Taliban?

Irfanullah Irfan: The Taliban have pledged to rebuild the country, save it from corruption and nepotism. We are welcoming them this time. Besides, they said they won't repeat the past mistakes and promising an inclusive government taking in all major ethnic groups on board. That is giving me hope.

Ali: As I said before, corruption, injustices, and Pashtun ethnocentrism pushed the Afghanistan people from the previous government. Even during their past stint, the Taliban courts were transparent and delivered justice faster than the Ghani regime. Nevertheless, only Pashtuns are keeping their faith in the Taliban, not the others yet.

Irfanullah Irfan, a 28-year-old from the Pashtun ethnicity, is working for an international NGO in Afghanistan.

Ali, a 30-year-old from Hazara ethnicity, is a former consultant of World Bank and Afghan ministry of urban affairs.

TDS: Can Taliban deliver?

Irfan: Taliban should form a unity government along with the other ethnic groups and they have already promised to do so. We hope they stick to their promises, including their commitment to build good relationship with other countries.

Ali: Taliban would not be able to govern properly. It won't be easy for them. Taliban only have the Sharia ideology. Most of them are from rural areas and most of them are Durrani Pashtuns, they don't know the urban life, they don't know the bureaucracy to run the government.

TDS: what will happen to progressive groups if the Taliban imposes Sharia laws?

Irfan: See, we are Muslims and we have no issue with the Sharia laws. Yes, they will apply the Sharia rules. No doubt about this but as I said, they already allowed women in works and they have no problems with the media and social media. Taliban said they are not against any groups that follow the Sharia rules. But the concern remains how moderately they will apply the Sharia.

Ali: The whole world is now watching the Taliban's activities. I think they haven't changed. They will impose all the restrictions gradually as they did before which will make troubles for all of us who grew up in the last two decades in a republic era, not under the strict Sharia law. If they don't impose that thann they are no longer the Taliban. They will lose their core support base.

TDS: Are you worried about the remaining cultural heritage sites?

Irfan: Yes, they damaged some sculptures in Bamiyan last time. It seems they have learnt a lot over the past two decades.

Ali: As I said, they will show their characters soon.

TDS: Who will be the major players in Afghanistan?

Ali: Pakistan, Iran, China, and Russia will be the big players. India is out.

Erfan: The Taliban government should maintain a good relationship with all the nations.

TDS: What will happen to your Afghan cricket team?

Irfan: We are worried about our cricket teams as the T20 world cup is knocking at the door.

Ali: I don't know what is waiting for the cricket team but I like Pakistan cricket team.

TDS: Last question. Are there any chances of civil wars?

Ali: We might have another civil war in a year or two but it will depend on how the Taliban behave. Much depends on the government formation. Will it be inclusive and power-sharing or not? If not, then pockets of resistance will start especially in the Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek areas. We have a rich ethnic diversity. The Afghan constitution recognizes 16 ethnic groups but there are more than 40 ethnic groups according to researchers. Pashtuns are around 39%, Tajiks around 30%, Hazara 23%, Uzbek, Turkmen 18%, etc. Right now every group wants a share of the governmental power. The ruling Pashtuns never wanted to conduct a census because they feared that if a census is done then their real numbers might come out and they will no longer be able to claim that they are the majority.

Irfan: This Taliban is reformed and they promised a unity government. But I can't say anything about it because we don't know how the Taliban will treat the new generation who emerged for the democracy in a republic era.

Invitation to Bid (ITB) for Laboratory Equipment

Tender Ref. No. icddr,b/SCM/OTM/2021/39 **Date: 22 August 2021**

icddr,b leads the four-year TB implementation project titled "USAID's Alliance for Combating TB in Bangladesh Activity". icddr,b invites renowned equipment manufacturers and authorised agents/distributors of laboratory equipment to participate in a bidding process for supplying and installation of laboratory equipment (portable X-ray system with AI).

Interested participants can download the **ITB** document from the web address below: **https://www.icddrb.org/work-with-us/tender-notices**

(Supply & installation of laboratory equipment (portable X-ray system with AI)

Pre-bid meeting will be held on **26 August 2021 at 12:00 PM** through Microsoft Teams. Interested bidders should notify icddr,b about their interest in participating in the pre-bid session through email **[supplychain@icddrb.org]** by **25 August 2021 within 5.00 PM**. Please mention **'Bid Reference'** and **'Interested in Pre-Bid Participation'** in the email subject.

Offerors shall submit their password protected **Technical and Financial** offers through email to **supplychain@icddrb.org**. Offers must be received not later than **05 September 2021 by 3:00 PM BST**. Bid opening session will not be conducted as a public opening. Please see the bid document for details.

icddr,b reserves the right to accept or reject all/part of the proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever. This **ITB** will also form a part of the contract and will be binding upon the tenderer.

icddr,b

Senior Manager, Procurement
Email: supplychain@icddrb.org

Malaysia PM sworn in

AFP, *Kuala Lumpur*

A new Malaysian leader was sworn yesterday following the previous government's collapse, reclaiming the premiership for his scandal-mired party without an election.

Ismail Sabri Yaakob is a stalwart of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the lynchpin of a long-ruling coalition that lost power in landmark elections during the multi-billion-dollar 1MDB graft scandal in 2018.

He was named as the new prime minister Friday, days after his predecessor quit following a turbulent 17 months in office.

Malaysia's king opted to appoint a new premier based on who had majority support in parliament, rather than call an election, over concerns a vote could worsen a dire coronavirus outbreak.

In an elaborate ceremony at the national palace, Ismail Sabri, wearing a traditional Malaysian outfit, took the oath of office before the king.

The 61-year-old was deputy prime minister when UMNO was a partner in the last government, and has held several other cabinet posts during a long political career.

His predecessor Muhyiddin Yassin quit after losing his parliamentary majority, as public anger grew over his government's handling of the pandemic.

After announcing the new leader, the king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, urged politicians to put aside their differences to fight the virus.

Ismail Sabri becomes Malaysia's third new prime minister in less than four years. But his government is essentially a rejigged version of the one that collapsed a week ago, with Muhyiddin and his allies backing him.

There have been signs of public unhappiness, with a petition against his appointment garnering hundreds of thousands of signatures, and some fear his government will be as unstable as its forerunner.

Sri Lanka bans 'drunk driving' of elephants

AFP, *Colombo*

Sri Lanka will issue captive elephants with their own biometric identity cards and ban their riders from drinking on the job under a wide-ranging new animal protection law.

Many rich Sri Lankans keep elephants as pets, but complaints of ill treatment and cruelty are widespread.

The new measures are aimed at protecting the animals' welfare and include strict regulations around working elephants, as well as mandating a daily two-and-a-half-hour bath for each creature.

It brings in multiple regulations for working elephants. Baby elephants can no longer be used for work -- even cultural pageants -- and cannot be separated from their mothers. Logging elephants cannot be worked for more than four hours a day and night work is prohibited.

From now on, no more than four people can ride an elephant at once. Their use in films is banned, except for government productions under strict veterinary supervision, as is allowing their riders to drink while working. Owners must send their animals for medical check-up every 6 months.

Those who violate the new law will have their elephant taken into state care and could face a three-year prison sentence.