



All Set For #BollywoodMonster Bashup, page 9



Changes Coming To Brampton Soccer Centre, page 15



ICCC 20th Golf Classic Raises Charity Funds, page 17

Ottawa To Expand Visa Biometrics Program

Nationals From Europe, Africa & Middle East In Ambit; More Visa Application Centres To Open Globally

OTTAWA: Canada will expand its biometrics program this year. A Ministry statement said that expanding biometrics will strengthen Canada's immigration programs through effective screening and also facilitate application processing and travel – while maintaining public confidence in our immigration system. Canada currently collects biometrics from in-Canada refugee claimants and overseas refugee

resettlement applicants, individuals ordered removed from the country and individuals from 30 foreign nationalities applying for a temporary resident visa, work permit, or study permit. On July 31, 2018, nationals from countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East will be required to provide biometrics (fingerprints and a photo) if they are applying for a visitor visa, a work or study permit, or perma-

nent residence. To accommodate increased demand this summer and fall in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Ottawa has also announce that more Visa Application Centres (VACs) will open in: • Kigali, Rwanda; Stockholm, Sweden; and Tel Aviv, Israel by mid-September 2018 • Athens, Greece; Berlin, Germany; Lyon, France; and Vienna, Austria in early November 2018 and • Antananarivo, Madagascar

and Cape Town, South Africa in early December 2018. Additional VACs will also open in 2019. These will be announced at a later date. In advance of these VACs opening, some Canadian embassies in Europe will offer interim biometrics collection service points for applicants who have applied online or by mail and have received a Biometrics Instruction Letter.

Continued on page 4



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greets a group of kids during Canada Day festivities in Leamington Ont. Sunday, July 1, 2018. THE CANADIAN PRESS/ Geoff Robins

Ford Pauses Several Laws Passed By Wynne

Vaping, Ticket Scalping, Police Oversight To Be Re-examined

TORONTO: A number of laws passed by Ontario's previous Liberal government have been put on hold by the newly elected Progressive Conservative regime, including measures to tighten rules around vaping and to cap resale values for sports and concert tickets.

A spokesman for the Progressive Conservatives said Wednesday the new government, which was sworn in Friday, wants more time to consult and examine the laws before they come into effect. Simon Jefferies said the government will delay the implementation of new rules around vaping, which would have regulated the activity in much the same way as smoking.

"The government will work with the public, experts, and businesses to re-examine the evidence related to vaping as a smoking cessation tool to ensure that any changes are in the best interests of everyone and protect Ontarians' health and safety," he said in a statement. Halting the new regulations will not change the current provisions in the Smoke Free Ontario Act and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, he said.

Maria Papaioannoy-Duic, spokeswoman for the Vapor Advocates of Ontario, lauded Premier Doug Ford and new Health Minister Christine Elliott for the move. Vaping advocates have argued

that the activity is safer than smoking and moves people from the toxic chemicals found in tobacco to an alternative, which can help them break their habit.

"We're excited that the government ... (has) recognized our efforts and have paused the implementation of these regulations," she said in a statement. "We have the utmost confidence that they are going to look at the regulations based on science and not guesswork."

Joe Mihevc, the chair of Toronto's Board of Health and a city councillor who once served alongside Ford, said he questions the decision to pause the legislation. Public health units across

Continued on page

Canada Urged To Let Afghan Sikhs, Hindus Come As Refugees

TORONTO: Canada India Foundation (CIF) has condemned the killings of 19 Sikhs and Hindus in Jalalabad, Afghanistan on 1 July 2018, and urged members of the Sikh and Hindu minority community from Afghanistan and Pakistan to be allowed as refugees into Canada.

In a statement released in Toronto, Ajit Someshwar, Chair, CIF, said, "This dastardly act is yet another manifestation of the continuing victimisation of the religious minorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan by fundamentalist Islamist forces."

Canada India Foundation has urged that Canada should work to alleviate the plight of the religious minorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"Just as Canada took the lead in accepting Syrian refugees, the Canadian government should also allow the members of the minority communities such as Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan and Pakistan to immigrate to Canada," Mr. Someshwar said.

The Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility of the attack on July 1 that killed 19 members of the Sikh and Hindu community in Jalalabad, the town that borders Pakistan. Among those killed, include Avatar Singh Khalsa, a prominent community leader, who was the only Sikh candidate for the October 2018 parliamentary elections.

The Islamic State's statement said, "A suicide bomber detonated his vest at a gathering of Afghan troops and Hindus and Sikhs, who were on their way to meet the Afghan President." The statement added that the group

was targeted, as it comprised "polytheists."

Continued on page 5

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PM Does Not Recollect Any 'Groping' Incident

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he does not remember any "negative interactions" during an event he attended 18 years ago in British Columbia – acknowledging for the first time allegations of sexual misconduct that recently resurfaced about him at the event.

Trudeau told reporters in Regina on Sunday that he remembers attending the music festival in Creston, B.C., in the summer of 2000, but said he doesn't recall anything going amiss. "I remember that day in Cres-

ton well, it was an Avalanche Foundation event to support avalanche safety. I had a good day that day. I don't remember any negative interactions that day at all," Trudeau said.

This marks the first time Trudeau has offered direct comment on the 18-year-old allegation that has resurfaced in media reports in recent weeks. However, his answer is the same one that has been provided by his office in response to recent questions about the allegation. The alleged incident reported-

ly took place at a music festival where money was being raised for the Avalanche Foundation, a charity Trudeau became involved with after his brother Michel died in an avalanche in 1998.

In the days that followed, an editorial appeared in the Creston Valley Advance alleging Trudeau had apologized to an unnamed female reporter at the newspaper after "groping" her at the event. It alleged he told the woman he would not have "been so forward" if he had known she was reporting for a national

newspaper. The unsigned editorial resurfaced recently and has led to calls for the prime minister to address the allegations.

The allegation is particularly problematic for Trudeau, who frequently proclaims himself a feminist and has generally taken a zero-tolerance approach to allegations of sexual misconduct within the Liberal party.

Four MPs have resigned or been kicked out of the Liberal caucus over alleged sexual misconduct since Trudeau became party leader in 2013. - CP