

TOPOF THE WORLD



AUSTRALIA
Court upholds verdict against Cardinal Pell
Melbourne: An Australian appeals court Wednesday upheld convictions against Cardinal George Pell, the most senior Catholic to be found guilty of sexually abusing children, in a decision cheered by scores of abuse survivors and victims' advocates demonstrating outside the court. A unanimous jury in December found Pope Francis' former finance minister guilty of molesting two 13-year-old choirboys in Melbourne's St. Patrick's Cathedral more than two decades ago. The Victoria state Court of Appeal rejected his appeal in a 2-1 ruling, with the court's chief justice saying the majority found Pell's accuser to be a compelling "witness of truth."

HONG KONG
China confirms detention of UK mission worker
Beijing: A Chinese national working at Britain's Hong Kong consulate has been detained in China's border city of Shenzhen for violating the law, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Wednesday, likely worsening already strained ties between Beijing and London. Britain has said it is "extremely concerned" by reports that the staff member at the consulate in its former colony had been detained. Simon Cheng did not return to work on Aug. 9 after visiting the neighbouring mainland city of Shenzhen the previous day, Hong Kong news website HK01 reported, citing an interview with his girlfriend and family.

AFGHANISTAN
Death toll from Kabul wedding blast rises to 80
Kabul: The death toll from a suicide bomb attack on a wedding reception in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, has risen to 80, two senior officials said on Wednesday. The initial death toll after the Saturday night blast was 63, but some of the wounded had died, said Nasrat Rahimi, a spokesman at the interior ministry. Among the 160 people wounded at the wedding blast, many are in critical condition.

CONTRACEPTIVES IN SHORT SUPPLY

Venezuela's economic crisis pushes women into 'forced motherhood'

CHRISTINE ARMARIO
 CARACAS, AUGUST 21
 DR SATURNINA Clemente pulls up to the small clinic in the impoverished Caucaguita neighbourhood armed with one of Venezuela's most sought-after commodities: Hormonal implants to prevent pregnancy. In a country where contraceptives are in short supply, word in the shantytown on the outskirts of Venezuela's capital spreads quickly. The lucky get on a list run by community leaders. The less fortunate hope there will be extras. The veteran doctor has 104 implants and there won't be enough

for everyone. As a physician at the nation's largest pediatric hospital, Clemente knows first hand that the consequences for those who don't get one are high. "It's a sense of impotency, of frustration," she says. "You see that it's not enough, that the demand is much higher." As Venezuela's crisis deepens, women are bearing the brunt of the nation's upheaval. Despite promises by the socialist government to provide every woman access to family planning, recent surveys and interviews with health professionals indicate access to contraceptives remains incomprehensive. International organisations like the UN Population Fund have

begun stepping in by importing tens of thousands of contraceptives this year, but their work is still limited. It's an ordeal with increasingly international ramifications, as a growing number of pregnant women flee to countries like Colombia seeking care they cannot get in Venezuela. "Women are getting pregnant and don't have options," said Luisa Kislinger, a women's rights activist. "They're forced into motherhood." Nicol Ramirez is 15 and already a mother. Her name is on Clemente's list, but to get an implant she needs to show a negative pregnancy test. The young mom and her older sister frantically call their mother. They need



Dr Saturnina Clemente (left) at work. AP

40,000 bolivars, the equivalent of about \$3, in order to do the simple test at a nearby laboratory. "The situation in this country

isn't one for having children," Ramirez says, balancing her baby daughter on one hip. "I'm still a girl myself." During the late Hugo Chávez's presidency, Venezuela's government expanded services aimed at helping poor mothers by providing monthly cash transfers. Chavez lavished praise on women and hailed the so-called "revolutionary mothers" who would help promote his vision. The 1999 constitution he advanced guarantees "full family planning services" to women among a host of other benefits. "The socialist revolution should be feminist," he declared. Despite those initiatives, Chávez's government made only modest advances, at best, in improving contraceptive access. Government data shows that teenage pregnancies continued

to steadily increase during his time in power. "There was a major advance with the constitution, with getting all these new rights and state obligations," said Rachel Elfenbein, the author of an upcoming book on social programs created under Chávez for women. "But when it came to implementation, if and where it happened, it was patchy." President Nicolás Maduro has struggled to advance his predecessor's agenda amidst a crippling economic contraction worse than the US Great Depression. Few if any women still get cash transfers except for occasional "bonuses" equivalent to a dollar or two. Maternal

death rates rose over 65 per cent between 2015 and 2016. "Under Maduro we've seen an unprecedented setback," Kislinger said. Health professionals believe Venezuela could cut its high maternal mortality rate by a third doing one thing: Providing contraceptives. The extent of Venezuela's birth control shortage and the impact on women is difficult to quantify in part because the government has not released information on key indicators like teenage pregnancy since 2012. According to those now dated figures, just over 23 per cent of all births in Venezuela were to women under the age of 20. AP

We'll always have somebody there: Trump on Afghan troop withdrawal

LALIT K JHA
 WASHINGTON, AUGUST 21
 US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has indicated that American forces will not completely withdraw from warn-torn Afghanistan and America will have "somebody there" to make sure that Taliban does not regain control. During the presidential election campaign in 2016, Trump had pledged to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan and end America's longest war.



The Trump administration has intensified its efforts to seek a negotiated settlement of the war in Afghanistan. Reuters

tions on the ongoing peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Trump said he would like to look at various alternatives. "One of the alternatives is going on right now. We're talking about a plan — I don't know whether or not the plan is going to be acceptable to me. Maybe it's not going to be acceptable to them. But we are talking. We have good talks going, and we'll see what happens. This is more

“We have good talks going, and we'll see what happens. This is more than other presidents have done.”
— DONALD TRUMP
 US PRESIDENT
 than other presidents have done," he said. "We have brought it down.

Trump: Democrat-voting Jews uninformed or disloyal

Again attacks congresswomen Omar and Tlaib; Jewish groups slam comment

JONATHAN LEMIRE & DARLENE SUPERVILLE
 WASHINGTON, AUGUST 21



Representatives Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. Reuters

Representatives Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, who are Muslim.

Trump has closely aligned himself with Israel, including conservative PM Benjamin Netanyahu, while the congresswomen are outspoken critics of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. Tlaib is a US-born Palestinian American; Omar was born in Somalia. "Where has the Democratic Party gone? Where have they gone where they are defending these two people over the state of Israel?" Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday. "I think any Jewish people that vote for a Democrat, I think it

shows either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty." A number of Jewish groups noted that accusations of disloyalty have long been made against Jews, including in Europe during the 1930s. Ann Lewis and Mark Mellman of Democratic Majority for Israel called it "one of the most dangerous, deadly accusations Jews have faced over the years. False charges of disloyalty over the centuries have led to Jews being murdered, jailed and tortured." At Trump's urging, Israel last week blocked Omar and Tlaib from entering the country. AP

India fights UK Ambedkar memorial closure

ADITI KHANNA
 LONDON, AUGUST 21



It was inaugurated by PM Modi during his visit to the UK in 2015.

THE INDIAN government has lodged an appeal against a local UK council's attempt to close down a memorial dedicated to Bhimrao Ambedkar in north London, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the UK in November 2015. Ambedkar House, at 10 King Henry's Road in north London where the architect of the Indian Constitution and Dalit rights activist lived in 1921-22 during his student days at London School of

Economics, is housed within a four-storey residential property. Camden Council, the local authority, recently rejected an application filed by the Indian authorities to convert the resi-

dential property into an official museum/memorial. "The four-storey property does not have permission to be used as a museum and must be returned to residential use,"

Pak submits compliance report to FATF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 21

CORDING to a media report. The Asia-Pacific Group — the regional affiliate of the FATF — is currently conducting in Canberra (Australia) five-year mutual evaluation of Pakistan's progress on upgrading its systems in all areas of financial and insurance services and sectors, a senior government official told Dawn. This round is not directly linked to Pakistan's performance on its commitments with the

FATF on money laundering and terror-financing, but its assessment report can indirectly impact the country's position to move out of the grey list. The assessments, represented from Pakistan by State Bank of Pakistan Governor Baqir Reza, will conclude on August 23, the daily said. Pakistan has submitted its compliance report on 27-point action plan committed with the

FATF to the APG, which is reviewing its compliance on about seven areas mostly relating to financial and insurance services and facilities as part of an ongoing five-year review cycle. These areas cover safeguards against money laundering and terror financing by outfits and non-government entities through banking and non-banking jurisdictions, capital markets, corporate and non-corporate sectors.

MEANWHILE

PARTS OF TITANIC BEING LOST TO SEA

Some parts of the wreckage of the Titanic that sank over 100 years ago in the Atlantic Ocean is deteriorating rapidly, according to an international team of deep-sea explorers. Strong ocean currents, salt corrosion and metal-eating bacteria are attacking the ship, which sank in 1912 on its maiden voyage.



10 tonnes of trash was collected from the Everest this year. Reuters

Nepal prohibits single-use plastic in Everest region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 KATHMANDU, AUGUST 21

SINGLE-USE plastics have been banned in the Everest region to reduce the vast amounts of waste left by trekkers and mountaineers, Nepali authorities said Thursday. In addition to seeing a record number of climbers this year, a government-led cleaning initiative on Everest — the world's highest mountain — also collected over 10 tonnes of trash. The new ban in Khumbu Pasang Lhamu rural municipality, home to Mount Everest and several other snow-capped mountains, covers all plastic of less than 30 microns in thickness as well as drinks in plastic bottles, and will be effective from January.

"If we start now, it will help keep our region, the Everest and the mountains clean long term," local official Ganesh Ghimire said. The region receives over 50,000 tourists every year, including climbers and trekkers. The local body will work with trekking companies, airlines and the Nepal Mountaineering Association to enforce the ban. Environmentalists are also concerned that the pollution on Everest is affecting water sources down in the valley. Six years ago, Nepal introduced a \$4,000 deposit per team of climbers on Everest that would be refunded if each climber brought down at least eight kilos of waste, but only half of the climbers return with the required amount.