

# NATIONAL POST

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RIGHT TO THE POINT

COMMENT

## Sisters symbols of freedom in brutal, emboldened Iran



Sisters Mandana, left, and Mahsa Sotoudeh, who are members of the Baha'i community, were released last week after three months of imprisonment by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps without charge or explanation.

COURTESY BAHAI COMMUNITY OF CANADA

### Alberta's referendum a yes across Canada: poll

More power over justice, immigration

MASON KOSSAK

Put to Canadians outside Alberta, nine of the province's upcoming referendum questions draw as much support as they do at home, a new poll suggests, and often more.

However, Jack Jedwab, president of the Association for Canadian Studies, puts the strong support for the referendum questions down to the wording, not necessarily a national appetite for the policies. The finding "says less about a broad national desire to remake the federation than about the way the questions are framed," he said in an email.

Albertans vote Oct. 19 on 10 referendum questions. Nine of them cover immigration, election rules and the province's place in the federation. These questions were put to Canadians in a new Leger poll commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies. The tenth referendum question, which asks whether the government should begin the legal process toward a binding vote on separating from Canada, was not tested.

The immigration question asks whether Alberta should take more control over immigration to cut it to more sustainable levels, prioritize economic migrants and give its residents first priority for new jobs. See REFERENDUM on A2

### PERSECUTION OF PACIFIST FAITH GROUP HAS WORSENED SINCE ANTI-REGIME PROTESTS, START OF WAR WITH U.S., ISRAEL



TERRY GLAVIN

Mandana and Mahsa Sotoudeh are free now. That's the good news. It's bittersweet, all the same.

Last Wednesday morning, without any explanation, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' intelligence forces released 38-year-old Mandana and her 25-year-old sister Mahsa, allowing them to return to their homes in Shiraz. The IRGC had arrested and imprisoned the sisters three months earlier, also without any explanation.

Mandana and Mahsa were never charged with anything, and their story is typical of the predicament endured by Iran's long-tormented Baha'i minority, which has only worsened since last summer's 12-day war with Israel. The Baha'i International Community has documented several hundred similar cases since last June.

The persecution went into high gear during the anti-regime protests that began last December, which resulted in the deaths of perhaps 30,000 protesters. The arbitrary arrests have intensified since the U.S.-Israeli war began in February. See GLAVIN on A9

### Liberals stymie ethics debate over Carney condo 'bailout'

JORDAN GOWLING

Liberal members of the House ethics committee shut down debate over an Opposition motion to investigate the Carney government's controversial plan to purchase thousands of unsold B.C. condos from developers.

An "emergency" meeting was called by the Conservatives during the summer recess on Tuesday to launch an ethics probe into the program, which would see Build Canada Homes and BC Housing partner to convert 2,200 unsold condo units in the province into affordable housing. The plan, announced unexpectedly, has received significant criticism from housing advocates and opposition parties, who have called it a "bail out" for developers that made bad calls speculating on rising real estate prices. See ETHICS on A4

### Judge exempts deaf man from Criminal Code

JAMIE SARKONAK

Comment

Last week, Alberta's top court ruled that a deaf man who never learned to communicate can't be tried for sex crimes, or even assessed for mental fitness to stand trial, because it would violate his Charter rights. This means the man is functionally

exempt from the Criminal Code, and is thus free to rape and even murder if he so wishes.

At the very least, the average Albertan isn't likely to run into Kendall Longclaws. He grew up on an isolated farm with seven siblings and continues to live there, in his 30s, with his parents. He doesn't leave the property without them. He's deaf. He can't read, understand a cal-

endar, or use a phone. The only word he can speak is "brother"; he can also write his name, play video games, and use grunts and rudimentary gestures that relate to his daily life, like "yes," "sorry," and riding horses. Beyond that, his family never taught him how to communicate.

Brief attempts at school and tutoring when he was a child went nowhere. He knows what "mom" means, but he lacks the ability to understand society's institutions, including courts and justice. See SARKONAK on A8

### ARRESTS IN CANADA TIED TO INDIAN CRIME WAVE

#### NIJJAR ASSASSINATION

Bishnoi Gang accused in killings, arsons, extortions

JESSE SNYDER

Canadian, U.S. and European authorities have arrested 24 suspects connected to three separate Indian crime groups, part of a widening crackdown on a transnational crime wave that has caused a ripple of murders, arsons and extortions across several major Canadian cities.

Three of the 24 suspects were arrested in Canada, according to a statements issued by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Canadian and U.S. authorities allege that many of the suspects are known associates of the Bishnoi gang, a criminal syndicate run by India's Lawrence Bishnoi, which operates a growing network focused around urban clusters in greater Vancouver, Toronto and Edmonton.

Another 13 suspects were arrested in the U.S. and one in Spain. Seven suspects had already been in custody before police publicized the arrests.

U.S. authorities unsealed three indictments on Tuesday against 37 suspects, including three major crime ring bosses based in India. Bishnoi is one, and the other two — Ravinder Dhanda and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria — are also known Indian drug and crime kingpins.

As part of the joint operation, police say they are also looking for 10 fugitives currently at large in the U.S., India and Europe, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office statement.

Neither the Department of Justice nor the RCMP directly named the Canadian suspects in its press releases. The RCMP arrested the three suspects in Surrey, West Vancouver and White Rock, B.C., and will now apply to have the trio extradited to the U.S.

"Together, we disrupted the operations of organized criminals who used murder, cruelty and fear to extort and control people in both Canada and the United States," RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme said in a statement.

See ARRESTS on A2



Why finding a job has become so difficult for young people. Page FP1

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