

### India woos Bhutan with Connectivity and trade

TNN, New Delhi

From identifying more border trade points to carrying out a feasibility study for a railway link between the two countries, India is going all out to thwart China's attempts to wear Bhutan away from India's sphere of influence.

After opening a new trade route last week, India is likely to approve Bhutan's request for another permanent land customs station (LCS) to facilitate more Bhutan exports to India and Bangladesh.

India is also considering opening another integrated check post (ICP), sources here said. These initiatives are significant as Bhutan dodges attempts by China to establish formal diplomatic relations with India's only neighbour which is yet to join Beijing's BRI initiative.

India realises though that Bhutan could still be susceptible mainly because of its border dispute with China which recently saw Beijing making a new territorial claim in Bhutan's east and close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh. Sources in New Delhi said that while a feasibility study is being carried out for a railway link between Mujnai in West Bengal and Nyoenpaling in Bhutan, Land Ports Authority of India has also identified Jaigaon in West Bengal's Alipurduar district for development of an integrated check post (ICP).

After a request from Bhutan, India is also considering notifying the Jitti-Nagrakata LCS as a permanent LCS which has until now been a seasonal station for trade in crops like orange, ginger and cardamom.

According to Indian authorities, Bhutan requested for it mainly to facilitate export of boulders and river bed materials to India and Bangladesh.

# Reduce dependence on Beijing

### Pompeo urges India as tensions boil between Beijing and Washington

AGENCIES

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called on India to tamp down its dependence on Chinese goods, amid growing tensions between Washington and Beijing, which has its own issues with New Delhi.

In remarks to a US-India virtual business summit, Pompeo said New Delhi was a natural partner to Washington as "one of a few trusted, like-minded countries".

"India has a chance to attract global supply chains away from China and reduce its reliance on Chinese companies in areas like telecommunications, medical supplies, and others," he told the meeting organised by the US-India Business Council.

"India is in this position because it has earned the trust of many nations around the world, including the United States."

Trump hints at closure of more Chinese consulates after Houston

Report says China still has 40,000 troops in Eastern Ladakh despite agreeing de-escalation after deadly clashes

Indian FM says country will never be a part of an alliance system



US-China relations -- already strained over the coronavirus pandemic, the situation in Hong Kong and trade -- took a turn for the worse Wednesday when Washington ordered that Beijing shut its consulate in Houston.

President Donald Trump said in answer to a question at a news briefing it was "always possible" other Chinese missions could be closed too.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the consulate was operating normally.

The ministry said Washington had abruptly issued the demand to close the consulate on Tuesday and called it an "unprecedented escalation."

Nuclear-armed neighbours China

and India, the world's two most populous nations, also have long had a prickly relationship.

But ties deteriorated significantly following a border clash on June 15 that left 20 Indian soldiers dead as well as an unknown number of Chinese casualties.

An ANI report yesterday said despite promises after rounds of talks, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has continued the deployment of around 40,000 troops in its front and depth areas of the Eastern Ladakh sector indicating unwillingness to de-escalate the situation.

Pompeo said the clashes were "initiated by" China's armed forces and

were another example of "unacceptable behaviour" from China's ruling Communist Party.

He praised India for banning 59 Chinese mobile apps, including TikTok, saying the video-sharing app "presents serious security risks for the Indian people".

However, despite the push by US, India is unlikely to join any alliance in the near future.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently said India will never be a part of an alliance system.

Speaking about the consequences of global shifts, including the United States and the assertiveness of China, he said they were opening spaces for middle powers like India, Japan, the European Union and others.

"The consequence of repositioning of the United States, that the big umbrella is now smaller than it used to be, has allowed many other countries to play more autonomous roles. It doesn't affect us as much because we were never part of an alliance system and we will never be. But countries who depended more on the US are finding they have to take a call themselves on many issues," he noted.

India must now take more "risks", as the world expected it to take a more proactive stance on the "big issues" of the day, including connectivity, maritime security, terrorism, climate change and terrorism, he stated.

### Ex-Nazi camp guard, 93, gets two-year suspended sentence



A 93-year-old former Nazi concentration camp guard was handed a suspended sentence of two years yesterday for complicity in World War II atrocities, in what could be one of the last such cases of surviving SS guards. Bruno Dey was convicted for his role in the murder of 5,232 people when he was a teenaged SS tower guard at the Stutthof camp near what was then Danzig, now Gdansk, in Poland. Judge Anne Meier-Goering said Dey had helped to "dehumanise human beings and turn them into numbers".

### Wife seeks 'compassion' for bi-polar Kanye West



Kim Kardashian West on Wednesday opened up about her husband Kanye West's bipolar disorder, calling on the media and public to show "compassion and empathy" in light of the rapper's recent erratic behavior. West launched his presidential campaign Sunday in a rambling speech where he made bizarre comments his life and broke down in tears. He has continued grabbing headlines in recent days for his tweets, later deleted, that accused his wife and mother-in-law of trying to lock him up, and suggested he is seeking a divorce. Bipolar disorder is a mental illness characterized by extreme mood swings. Patients experience both mania, where they feel euphoric and often act recklessly, and bouts of severe depression that can leave them unable to function and fixated on suicide.

### Humans were in America 30,000 years ago: study

Tools excavated from a cave in central Mexico are strong evidence that humans were living in North America at least 30,000 years ago, some 15,000 years earlier than previously thought, scientists said Wednesday. Artefacts, including 1,900 stone tools, showed human occupation of the high-altitude Chiquihuite Cave over a roughly 20,000 year period, they reported in two studies, published in Nature. No traces of human bones or DNA were found at the site. The stone tools -- unique in the Americas -- revealed a "mature technology" which the authors speculate was brought in from elsewhere. The saga of how and when Homo sapiens arrived in the Americas -- the last major land mass to be populated by our species -- is fiercely debated among experts, and the new findings will likely be contested. "That happens every time that anybody finds sites older than 16,000 years -- the first reaction is denial or hard acceptance," said Ardelean, who first excavated the cave in 2012 but did not discover the oldest items until 2017.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## Trump is first racist US president: Joe Biden

THE STATESMAN/ANN

US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said on Wednesday that Donald Trump is the first racist to become president in remarks his opponent's re-election campaign quickly rebuked.

Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama, the first Black US president, fielded a question at a Service Employees International Union roundtable from a healthcare worker concerned about the Republican president calling the coronavirus pandemic the "China virus."

He responded by saying it was "absolutely sickening" how Trump "deals with people based on the colour of their skin, their national origin, where they're from."

"No sitting president's ever done this. Never, never, never. No Republican president has done this", the former vice president said.

In response to that, Trump campaign senior adviser Katrina Pierson called Biden's

comments "an insult to the intelligence of Black voters" given the onetime senator's past work with segregationist lawmakers. She said Trump "loves all people" and "works hard to empower all Americans."

Race became an even more central issue as protests raged over unarmed African Americans being killed by police in the aftermath of the May death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his neck into the pavement for more than eight minutes.

Biden has effectively been his party's leader since his last challenger in the Democratic primary, Bernie Sanders, ended his campaign in April.

Biden is currently leading in national polling, as well as in surveys conducted in several swing states like Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, battlegrounds that were critical to Trump's victory in 2016.

The 2020 US presidential election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3.

## I am ready to fight again

### Says Afghan girl who shot dead two Taliban gunmen for killing her parents

AFP, Ghazni

An Afghan girl who shot dead two Taliban fighters after they gunned down her parents said she was ready to confront any other insurgents who might try to attack her.

Qamar Gul, 15, killed the militants when they stormed her home last week in a remote village in the central province of Ghor.

"I no longer fear them and I'm ready to fight them again," Gul told AFP by telephone from a relative's home, where she was being watched by guards.

A photo of Gul posing with a gun has circulated online, with many praising her actions and calling for her safe passage out of the country.

It was about midnight when the Taliban arrived, Gul said, recounting the events of that night. She was asleep in her room with her 12-year-old brother when she heard the sound of men pushing at the door of their house.

"My mother ran to stop them but by then they had already broken the door," Gul said. "They took my father and mother outside and shot them several times. I was terrified."

But moments later, "anger took over." "I picked up the gun we had at home, went to the door and shot them," said Gul, who was taught by her father how to fire an AK-47 assault rifle.

Her brother stepped in when one of the insurgents, who appeared to be the group's leader, tried to return fire. "My brother took the gun from me and hit (shot) him. The fighter ran away injured, only to return later," Gul said.

By then, several villagers and pro-government militiamen had arrived at the house. The Taliban eventually fled following a lengthy firefight.

Officials told AFP the Taliban had come to kill Gul's father, who was the village chief, because he supported the government.

"I am proud I killed my parents' murderers," she said.



Flames rise as a wildfire burns near the village of Kechries, Greece, on Wednesday. Greek firefighters brought in reinforcements from across the country to help control a large forest fire fanned by strong winds near the seaside village of Kechries in the eastern Peloponnese, fire brigade officials said. Authorities said they had been forced to evacuate a residential settlement as the blaze, burning through pine trees, came close to a military camp where explosives were stored.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Don't expect first vaccine until early 2021: WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

Researchers are making "good progress" in developing vaccines against COVID-19, with a handful in late-stage trials, but their first use cannot be expected until early 2021, a World Health Organization (WHO) expert said on Wednesday.

WHO is working to ensure fair vaccine distribution, but in the meantime it is key to suppress the virus's spread, said Mike Ryan, head of WHO's emergencies programme, as daily new cases around the globe are at near-record levels.

"We're making good progress," Ryan said, noting that several vaccines were now in phase 3 trials and none had failed, so far, in terms of safety or ability to generate an immune response.

"Realistically it is going to be the first part of next year before we start seeing people getting vaccinated," he told a public event on social media.

WHO was working to expand access to potential vaccines and to help scale-up

production capacity, Ryan said.

"And we need to be fair about this, because this is a global good. Vaccines for this pandemic are not for the wealthy, they are not for the poor, they are for everybody," he said.

The US government will pay \$1.95 billion to buy 100 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Pfizer Inc and German biotech BioNTech if it proves safe and effective, the companies said.

Ryan also cautioned schools to be careful about re-opening until community transmission of COVID-19 is under control. Debate in the United States over restarting education has intensified, even as the pandemic flares up in dozens of states.

"We have to do everything possible to bring our children back to school, and the most effective thing we can do is to stop the disease in our community," he said. "Because if you control the disease in the community, you can open the schools."



## Afghan air raids kill 45

REUTERS, Herat

Afghan government forces killed 45 people, including civilians, in airstrikes against Taliban fighters in a western province bordering Iran on Wednesday, drawing condemnation from the US envoy trying to start peace talks involving all sides.

Ali Ahmad Faqir Yar, the governor of Adraskan district in Herat province counted at least eight civilians among the dead as he gave the death toll, but it was unclear if all of the other casualties were Taliban.

"Forty-five people had been killed so far in airstrikes by security forces in the Kham Ziarat area, Taliban were among those killed," he said. Other local government officials in the province gave the same death toll.

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