

Afghan Embassy shuts ops in Delhi, cites 'lack of diplomatic support'

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

OVER TWO years after the Taliban captured Afghanistan and the Ashraf Ghani government collapsed, the Afghanistan Embassy in New Delhi has said that it is ceasing its operations from Sunday (October 1), citing "lack of support from the host government", failure to "meet expectations... to serve the best interests of Afghanistan", and paucity of resources and personnel.

The Indian Express had reported on September 29 that the Afghanistan Embassy was likely to shut its operations.

"It is with profound sadness, regret and disappointment that the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi announces this decision to cease its operations," the Afghanistan Embassy said in a statement late on Saturday night.

It said the decision was taken after careful consideration, tak-

EXPLAINED

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Diplomatic tightrope walk

WHILE INDIA has a technical team in Kabul, where it is coordinating with the Taliban regime for delivery of humanitarian aid, the Taliban would now want to post their representative in Delhi. Since India has not recognised the Taliban regime, it will have to diplomatically negotiate the next steps.

ing into account the historic ties and longstanding partnership between Afghanistan and India. Listing the primary reasons for the "unfortunate closure", it alleged "lack of support from the host government" which, it said, hindered its ability to carry out duties effectively.

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Indo-US ties will go to Moon and beyond: EAM

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: In a clear indication that New Delhi views the spat with Ottawa and Washington over the killing of pro-Khalistan terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada as an aberration, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday that it is "hard to put a limit" on India's ties with the United States and "you ain't seen anything yet".

Speaking about US-India partnership at a festive 'Colors of India' event in Washington DC, Jaishankar said, "I can promise you that

“ In this changing world, India and the US have moved to a position where we really see each other as very desirable, optimal and comfortable partners...

(Earlier) we used to deal with each other...now we work with each other

— S JAISHANKAR,
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTER



this relationship, like the Chandrayaan, will go to the Moon, maybe even beyond.”

► **Related report, P 14**

World's highest rail bridge in J&K to become tourist spot



JAMMU, Oct 1 (PTI)

THE world's highest steel arch rail bridge over the Chenab River in Reasi district here is being developed as a tourist spot with authorities calling for necessary measures for increasing the visitors' footfall, officials said on Sunday.

The 1.3-km rail bridge located 359 metres above the riverbed -- 35 metres higher than the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris -- forms a crucial link in the 111-km stretch from Katra to Banihal, which is part of the ongoing prestigious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project.

Chief Secretary A K Mehta along with Deputy Commissioner, Reasi Babila Rakwal and other officers visited the bridge site near Jyotipuram, 42 km from Reasi town, on Saturday, the officials said. Mehta had a detailed inspection of the bridge in the presence of the engineers of the executing agency and officers of Indian Railways who apprised him about the unique features of this engineering marvel having no parallel in the world, they said.

Appreciating the engineering staff for moving towards completing the challenging task, the chief secretary impressed upon the district administration to take immediate measures to turn this "architectural marvel" into a tourist spot.

COULD HERALD TILT TOWARDS BEIJING IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Pro-China Opp candidate wins Maldives presidency, defeats 'India-first' leader

Former president transferred from jail to house arrest on Muiz's request

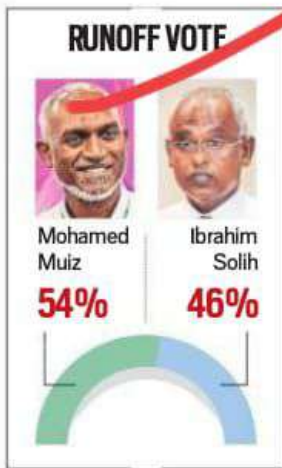
MOHAMED JUNAYD
MALE, OCTOBER 1

OPPOSITION CANDIDATE
Mohamed Muiz has won the Maldives presidential election, beating President Ibrahim Solih in a second-round runoff that could herald a pro-China shift for the Indian Ocean archipelago, from traditional partner India.

With nearly all votes counted, Elections Commission of the Maldives said on its website that Muiz had received 54% of the ballots in Saturday's vote, with 46% for Solih.

About 85% of 282,000 eligible voters in the Maldives, known for its pristine beaches and high-end resorts, turned up at more than 586 polling stations across 187 islands.

Solih, who championed an "India First" policy during his time, will remain president until Muiz's inauguration on November 17.



Mohamed Muiz (right) with a supporter of People's National Congress. Reuters

The coalition backing Muiz has supported Chinese loans and investment projects in the past.

Former President Abdulla Yameen, who has close links to Muiz, is serving an 11-year prison term for corruption and money laundering.

He was transferred from prison to house arrest Sunday, fulfilling campaign promise of his party candidate who won the election runoff.

"With today's result we have got the opportunity to build the country's future. The strength to

ensure the freedom of Maldives," Muiz said in a statement after his victory. "It's time we put our differences aside and come together. We need to be a peaceful society."

India's PM Narendra Modi sent a congratulatory message to Muiz after the announcement of his victory. "India remains committed to strengthening the time-tested India-Maldives bilateral relationship and enhancing our overall cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region," Modi said in a post on X. **REUTERS**

EXPLAINED

The fight between factions — pro & anti

SOLIH, SEEKING a second five-year term, had championed an 'India-first' policy during his time in power. The coalition backing Muiz has launched an 'India out' campaign, promising to remove a small Indian military presence of several surveillance aircraft and some 75 personnel. Muiz entered the fray with support from pro-China former President Abdulla Yameen, who was banned from contesting the election by the Supreme Court in August following a conviction for corruption and money laundering.

INDIA HAULS 15 ON SIZZLING SUNDAY

BEST DAY EVER AT ASIAD; SABLE SETS SCORCHING PACE

Avinash Sable became the 1st Indian to win gold in men's 3,000m steeplechase in Asian Games, battering the **Asiad record** and giving India its 1st track-and-field gold in Hangzhou in the process. Minutes later, shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor defended his 2018 gold. The 3rd gold, part of 15 medals India won on Sunday – its highest tally in a single day in Asiad – was clinched by the men's trap team shooters

> Sable (29), an Armyman from Maharashtra, led from start to finish to clock a Games record time of **8:19.50**, bettering 8:22.19 set by Iran's Hossein Keyhani in 2018

> Toor (28), the 2018 Asiad gold medallist, threw **20.36m on his last attempt** to overhaul Saudi Arabia's Md Daouda Tolo (20.18m). He also holds the Asian (21.77m) and Asiad (20.75m) records

“ I feel really good. My wife asked me to bring her gold, only gold – **TS Toor** ”



“ I have always followed the pace set by others. Today, I decided to set my own pace – **Avinash Sable** ”

> The men's trap shooting team of Zoravar Singh Sandhu, Kynan Chenai, Prithviraj Tondaiman clinched gold. With three medals on the final day of shooting events, the **shooters will return home with 22 medals** – 7 gold, 9 silver and 6 bronze – **their highest-ever in the continental showpiece**



> In a dramatic development, **Jyothi Yarraji's bronze was upgraded to silver** in women's 100m hurdles after Wu Yanni's disqualification

> Men's badminton team bagged silver, **India's 1st medal in men's team event in 37 years at Asiad**

> **Aditi Ashok 1st Indian woman to win an Asiad medal in golf**

INDIA'S DAY 8 MEDALS

🥇 Gold **3**
 🥈 Silver **7**
 🥉 Bronze **5**

TOTAL 15

INDIA'S TOTAL MEDALS

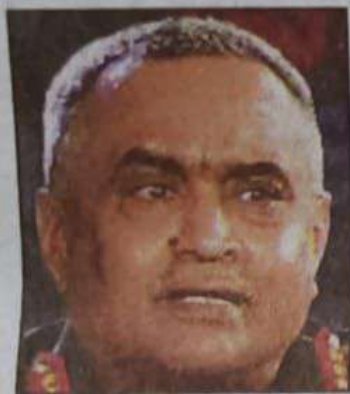
🥇 Gold **13**
 🥈 Silver **20**
 🥉 Bronze **20**

TOTAL 53

FULL COVERAGE P 22 & 23

Eye on China, Army chief heads for Tanzania as part of Africa outreach

New Delhi: Continuing with India's military outreach to the African continent where China has made deep strategic inroads, Army chief General Manoj Pande is now headed for a four-day visit to Tanzania.



Gen Pande will discuss measures to boost bilateral defence ties and engagements with the Tanzanian defence minister and chief of defence forces, among others, during his visit from October 2 to 5.

The Army chief is also scheduled to address the National Defence College in Dar es Salaam, and also interact with the commandant and faculty of the Command and Staff College at Duluti.

The second edition of the India-Tanzania mini defence-expo, which will showcase Indian defence production capabilities, will also be conducted in Dar es Salaam to coincide with Gen Pande's visit.

In recent months, defence minister Rajnath Singh has visited Nigeria, while Gen Pande has gone to Egypt. India is also looking to export BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and the Akash air defence missile to some African countries. TNN

In Slovakia elections, pro-Russia party wins vote but needs allies for coalition

Robert Fico Opposes Sanctions On Russia, Wants To Block Kyiv From Nato, Seeks EU & US To Force A Compromise On Ukraine

Prague: A populist former PM and his leftist party have won early parliamentary elections in Slovakia, staging a political comeback after campaigning on a pro-Russian and anti-American message, according to complete results announced Sunday. Former PM Robert Fico and the leftist Smer, or Direction, party had 22.9% of the votes, or 42 seats in the 150-seat parliament, the Slovak Statistics Office said. A liberal, pro-West newcomer, the Progressive Slovakia party, took second place, with 18% of the votes, or 32 seats. The left-wing Hlas (Voice) party, led by Fico's former deputy, Peter Pellegrini, came in third with 14.7% (27 seats).

Public and exit polls predicted a tight race but in the end, Fico won relatively big after his campaign attracted voters who favoured the far-right. With no party winning a majority of seats, a coalition government will need to be formed. The president traditionally asks an election's winner to try to form a government, so Fico is likely to become prime minister again. He served as prime minister in 2006-2010 and again in 2012-2018. Fico said he was ready to open talks with other parties on forming a coalition government as soon as President Zuzana Caputova asks him. Caputova said she will do it on Monday. "We're here, we're ready, we've learned something, we're more experienced," he said.



Fico has vowed to pull out Slovakia military support for Ukraine. 'People in Slovakia have bigger problems than Ukraine,' he said

Saturday's election was a test for the small eastern European country's support for neighbouring Ukraine in its war with Russia, and the win by Fico could strain a fragile unity in the EU and Nato. Fico, 59, has vowed to withdraw Slovakia's military support for Ukraine in Russia's war if his attempt to return to power succeeds. "People in Slovakia have bigger problems than Ukraine," he said.

The country of 5.5 million people created in 1993 following the breakup of Czechoslovakia has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine since Russia invaded last February, donating arms and opening the borders for refugees fleeing the war. Slovakia has delivered to Ukraine its fleet of Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets, the S-300 air defence system, helicopters, armoured vehicles and much-needed demining equipment. The current government is planning to send Ukraine artillery ammunition and to train Ukrainian service members in demining.

Slovakia so far has been a staunch supporter of neighbouring Ukraine since Russia invaded last February, donating arms and opening the borders for refugees fleeing the war

Winning approval for sending more arms to Ukraine is getting more difficult in many countries. In the U.S. Congress, a bill to avert a government shutdown in Washington, DC, excluded President Joe Biden's request to provide more security assistance to the war-torn nation. In other countries, including Germany, France, and Spain, populist parties skeptical of intervention in Ukraine also command significant support. Many of these countries have national or regional elections coming up that could tip the balance of popular opinion away from Kyiv and toward Moscow.

Fico opposes EU sanctions on Russia, questions whether Ukraine can force out the invading Russian troops and wants to block Ukraine from joining Nato. He proposes that instead of sending arms to Kyiv, the EU and the US should use their influence to force Russia and Ukraine to strike a compromise peace deal. AP

Sunak: No plan to send military trainers to Ukraine



Russian ex-President Dmitry Medvedev on Sunday said any UK soldiers training Ukrainian troops in Ukraine would be legitimate targets for Russian forces

Manchester: British PM Rishi Sunak said Sunday there were no immediate plans to deploy military instructors to Ukraine, rowing back from reported comments by his defence minister that he wanted to begin training Ukrainian troops in the country. To date, Britain and its allies have avoided a formal military presence in Ukraine to reduce risk of a direct conflict with Russia. British defence minister Grant Shapps said in an interview with 'Sunday Telegraph' that he wanted to deploy military instructors to Ukraine, in addition to training Ukrainian armed forces in Britain or other Western countries. Hours after that interview was published, Sunak said there were no immediate plans for that. Russian ex-President Dmitry Medvedev on Sunday said any British soldiers training Ukrainians in Ukraine would be legitimate targets for Russian forces. AP