

We were secretly filmed in IIT washroom: DU students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 About 10 students from Delhi University's Bharti College alleged that they were secretly filmed while changing in the IIT-Delhi washroom for a fashion show during the institute's ongoing fest, police said on Saturday.
 The girls from Bharti College's Élanter Society, in a video posted on social media, alleged that the administration didn't take action against the accused even after being informed. A complaint was received at Kishangarh police station regarding the incident and the accused, a 20-year-old contractual sweeper, was arrested,

the police said.
 "Today, a complaint was received through X at Kishangarh police station regarding making a video in the ladies washroom of IIT-Delhi by a boy," a senior police officer said. A case under Section 354C (voyeurism) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Kishangarh police station on Saturday and the accused -- a contractual sweeper -- was arrested and sent to judicial custody, the officer added. Further investigation is underway, he added.
 Meanwhile, IIT-Delhi has issued a statement saying the matter was handed over to the police immediately and added



the institute has "zero tolerance" for such cases. "The accused, in an unfortunate and regrettable incident, on October 6, was immediately handed over to the Delhi Police that is investigating the matter. He was identified as an employee of an agency to

which housekeeping services have been outsourced," it said.
 "The institute treated the matter with the utmost seriousness and urgency it deserved. The institute is fully cooperating with the police and has a zero-tolerance policy for any such instance," it added.
 The Delhi University Students' Union also condemned the incident and demanded strict action against the accused. In a letter DUSU president Tushar Dedha urged the Delhi police to take strict action in this case.
 NSUI's national secretary Nitish Gaur who participated in a fashion show competition at IIT Delhi, said, "On the day of the competition, their convener Fatima ma'am forced us to participate in the event, even though we were not well prepared and she was not with us.
 They had no choice but to comply with her orders and perform on the stage. However, what happened next was beyond our worst nightmare".
 "A housekeeping staff of IIT Delhi, who was supposed to maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of the premises, secretly recorded our alleged videos while some of our girls were changing in the washroom. The washroom was supposed to be a safe and private space for them, but this man violated our privacy and dignity by his disgusting act. We caught him red-handed with his mobile phone and confronted him. He confessed to his crime and begged for forgiveness," Gaur said in a press statement issued to media.
 "They immediately informed the authorities of IIT Delhi and demanded strict action against him. However, to our utter disappointment, they did not take the matter seriously and tried to cover up the incident. They did not register an FIR against the culprit, nor did they assure us that the videos would be deleted or not circulated," he said.

Video with message 'say no to Khalistan' at CP goes viral

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 Sikhs are fed up with Khalistanis and their activities are shameful to the majority of the community, said 30-year-old Jyot Jeet Singh whose video holding a placard with the message "Say No To Khalistan" at Delhi's Connaught Place has gone viral.
 Singh said his action, which came amid strained ties between India and Canada over the killing of a Sikh separatist leader, drew him both praise and abuse online.
 In the 2.40-minute video shot at Connaught Place on October 2, Singh in a yellow turban can be seen holding a placard with "Mera Bharat Meri Jaan" and "Say No To Khalistan" written on it. It also shows people shaking hands with him and making his videos.
 Singh, who is now actively involved in politics and anti-radicalisation work here after pursuing a disaster management course in London, told PTI, "While I got thousands of messages and calls from Sikhs lauding me for taking the bold step, there were also those who



threatened and abused me as the video was widely shared on social media." "The truth is Sikhs are fed up with Khalistanis. Their activities are shameful to majority of Sikhs as generations of our community sacrificed their lives for the country and the tricolor," he said.
 Singh, now a spokesperson of the Delhi unit of the BJP, said he learnt about counter-terrorism and anti-radicalisation work as part of his disaster management course. "I asked

the national flag and preventing an Indian diplomat from entering a gurudwara in the UK, are painful for the Sikhs, Singh said. Singh was appreciated for his unique protest with many openly appreciating his act. "I plan to do more such things and prepared to sacrifice my life for the country while challenging those who want to harm it," Singh said.
 "See what a lone Sikh with a placard in his hand and Bharat in his heart achieved at Connaught Place in Delhi yesterday. Such tiny bullets are enough to burst the gas balloon called Khalistan. Sikhs are also the cutting edge of Indian Army. Jai Hind," retired army general Satish Dua said, sharing the video.
 India has stepped up efforts to ensure activities of Khalistanis and their sympathisers in countries like Canada, UK, US and Australia are brought under control. The killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June in British Columbia in Canada triggered a row with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently alleging "potential" involvement of Indian agents in it.

2 members of Canada based terrorist organisation KTF held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 The Delhi Police's Special Cell has arrested two members of the Canada-based designated terrorist Arshdeep Singh Gill alias Arsh Dallah-Duneke gang of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF). Those arrested have been identified as Harjeet Singh alias Harry Maud and Harry Rajoura alias Bada Harry, police said.
 Recently, the two members of Arsh Dallah gang nabbed by Mohali CIA were identified as Mandeep Singh, alias Deepa, of Ajitwal, Moga, Punjab; and Saurav Kumar, alias Saabi of Ludhiana.
 The duo was wanted by the Ludhiana and Moga police in multiple criminal cases and had also been declared proclaimed offenders by the respective local courts.
 Gangster Sukhdul Singh alias Sukha Duneke, one of



Punjab's most wanted criminals, was killed by unidentified assailants in the Canadian city of Winnipeg on September 20. It is believed to be a result of inter-gang rivalry, according to officials. He was a member of the Davinder Bamba gang, known for its involvement in a range of criminal activities, including extortion, drug trafficking, and murder.
 He was sought by Indian authorities for his alleged

participation in several high-profile crimes, including the assassination of a Punjab police officer in 2021. At least 18 cases, including those for murder, attempt to murder and robbery, were registered against him.
 According to intelligence reports, Arsh Dala, a designated "individual terrorist" under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) (UAPA) Act, has expanded his criminal network to potentially carry out terror attacks in Gurdaspur in Punjab, India.
 He has formed an association with United States (US) based Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the chief of the banned Khalistani terror outfit Sikhs For Justice (SFJ). Arsh Dala, based in Canada, has been involved in various criminal activities in India, including extortion and murder, and has been linked to the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF).
 He is notorious for generating funds and providing logistical support to gangsters and criminals. In August 2017, Arshdeep, with the help of the Moga police, got a police clearance certificate.
 At that time, he was wanted in three police cases. Later, a constable was suspended for giving him police clearance.
 He went to Canada on October 22, 2018, on a visitor visa. He also obtained a permanent residency in Canada based on this passport.
 A look-out notice has also been issued against him and open-dated warrant has been issued in five cases. Duneke was closely associated with Canada-based gangster-turned-terrorist Arsh Dallah. Arsh Dallah has been declared as most wanted terrorist by the India.

Deteriorating air quality prompts air body to invoke stage 1 of GRAP



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 The national Capital grappled with 'poor' air quality on Saturday as the Air Quality Index (AQI) reached 231 on Saturday. In fact, certain parts of Delhi also recorded an AQI labelled as 'severe'. Vehicles that visibly cause pollution will receive heavy fine impositions, while trucks not destined for Delhi will be diverted via eastern or western peripherals.
 The deteriorating air quality prompted the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to invoke stage-I of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) throughout the entire National Capital Region (NCR).
 Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday launched a month-long drive to prevent dust pollution in the capital and said strict action will be taken against anyone found violating relevant norms. Under the anti-dust campaign, 591 teams from 13 departments have been deployed for inspection all over Delhi. Rai also conducted a surprise inspection at the Wazirpur hotspot area under the anti-dust campaign on Saturday. The environment minister said that the hotspot was inspected in view of the rising AQI.
 During the inspection, officials of MCD, DPCC, Jal Board, DSIIDC, Delhi Traffic Police and PWD were present. Officials present in the Wazirpur area said that the main factors of increasing pollution here are illegal parking, traffic congestion, construction work near the road etc; all concerned departments have been instructed to take immediate action.
 The recent directive from the Centre's air quality panel, mandated a ban on coal usage

Atishi raises issue of tax notices to online gaming firms



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 In the 52nd GST Council meeting, Delhi and Goa raised the issue of tax demands on e-gaming companies and casinos. Delhi Finance Minister Atishi said tax notices for the past 6 years calculated at a much higher rate of 28 per cent are being sent to online gaming firms, even though on October 1, this 28 per cent GST was to be implemented.
 "An industry whose revenue is ₹23,000 crore, you are slapping a tax notice of ₹1.5 lakh crore... This is to kill the industry. This shows an unsafe erratic investment environment in Indian startups," Atishi said.
 Responding to online gaming companies and casinos, Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra on Saturday reiterated that 28 per cent GST was levied on online gaming and casinos even before.
 "Certain members had raised the issue of retrospective taxation. It was informed to them that this is not retrospective, and this was the law earlier. These liabilities already existed because money online games played with bets... They were already attracting (28 per cent GST) by way of betting or gambling," Malhotra told reporters.
 Malhotra further said some States like Delhi and Goa raised the issue of online gaming companies facing GST demand notices for alleged evasion.
 Taking a dig at Atishi, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said that it is shocking to see Delhi's Finance Minister supporting Online Gaming as source of entertainment for people in smaller towns of the country.
 "It seems problem with Atishi is that she has to oppose

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

GRAB THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

DDA Announces Mega E-Auction

(18th Phase)

Prime Commercial, Residential, Institutional, Industrial & Group Housing Plots, Built-up Shops, CNG Sites at Prime Location ... and many more

50 Institutional Plots Including 20 Religious plots (Leasehold)	12 Industrial Plots (Freehold)	28 Commercial Plots Including 4 gas godowns (Freehold)
02 CNG/Green Fuel sites (Annual License fee basis)	46 Residential Plots (Freehold)	19 Small Size Residential Plots (Rohini) (Freehold)
145 Built-up Shops (Freehold)	15 Kiosks (Monthly License Fee Basis)	16 Mobile Tower Sites (Monthly License Fee Basis)
13 Janak Place Shops (Freehold)	02 Group Housing Plots (Freehold)	105 Function Sites (Monthly License Fee Basis)

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

09.10.2023 (Monday) from 11:00 AM Opening of Helpdesk, Commencement of Registration & EMD Submission	06.11.2023 (Monday) upto 06:00 PM Closing Time of Registration & EMD Submission	07.11.2023 (Tuesday) Bidding for Function Sites, Kiosks, Mobile Tower Sites, CNG/Green Fuel Sites and Institutional Plots
08.11.2023 (Wednesday) Bidding for Industrial, Residential and Small Size Residential Plots	09.11.2023 (Thursday) Bidding for Commercial & Group Housing Plots, Janak Place Shops and Built up Shops	

Scan for list Scan for terms & conditions

For details about plots/properties and procedure, kindly visit our e-auction website <https://ddaeuction.ewizard.in> or click the e-auction link available on our site www.dda.gov.in and download the same through "REGISTER WITH US" link available at home page of e-auction website. Intending bidders may register themselves/their firms online at the above site through "REGISTER WITH US" link. Kindly note that digital signature of all the intending bidders are mandatory to participate in e-auction of DDA. A help desk has been opened at the Nagrik Suvidha Kendra, Ground Floor, D Block, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi which will start from 09.10.2023 to assist the intending bidders in the ongoing process of e-auction. For obtaining digital signatures, registration/training of prospective bidders and for any other clarification on e-auction process, please contact our help desk no. 9355030617/9355030616/9355030630/ 9355030621/ 8448288980/8448288988 from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm (i.e., from Monday to Friday) or e-mail at: ddaeuction@ewizard.in.

For further details contact: Commissioner (Land Disposal), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110 023

Visit our website www.dda.gov.in or dial Toll Free No. 18001100332 @ddaofficial @official_dda



MARKRAM RECORDS FASTEST WORLD CUP 100

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aiden Markram smashed the fastest World Cup century off just 49 balls, while Quinton De Kock and Rassie van der Dussen also made punishing hundreds as South Africa sounded early warning with a mammoth 428/5 against Sri Lanka in their World Cup match here on Saturday.

De Kock (100 off 84 balls), Dussen (108 off 110 balls) and Markram (106 off 54 balls) went on a rampage to power South Africa past the highest World Cup total ever - Australia's 417/7 against Afghanistan in the 2015 edition.

After De Kock and Van der Dussen set the platform for a massive score with their second-wicket stand with 204 runs, Markram applied a brutal coup de grace to pulverise Sri Lanka.

All three South African centurions - De Kock, Van der Dussen and Markram - also recorded their maiden World Cup hundreds.

A total of 39 fours and eight sixes came collectively from the Proteas trio.

Heinrich Klaasen hit another three fours and a six for his 20-ball 32 and David Miller clobbered three fours and two sixes for his unbeaten 21-ball 39.

Making the most of a favourable pitch against a depleted and erring Sri Lankan bowling line-up, South African batters motored on at a high scoring rate in the middle-overs to wrest control.

An early blow was dealt



when Dilshan Madushanka pinned Temba Bavuma (8) in front of the wicket, but that was the only moment of joy for the Sri Lankans.

De Kock and Van der Dussen, came together a mere 10 balls into the contest, were separated only after putting their team in a commanding position with the fourth high-

est ever partnership for any wicket for South Africa in the World Cup.

De Kock, set to retire from ODIs after the tournament, was in his elements in getting a hundred.

On the other hand, Van der Dussen celebrated his 50th ODI with a fifth ton of the career, cracking 13 fours and

two sixes in the process.

Markram began with two cracking straight drives for four off Madushanka and brought out every conventional stroke in his book to break the record set by Ireland's Kevin O'Brien (50 balls for 100) in 2011.

Van der Dussen survived a close chance on 65 when a mistimed hit fell very close to

Sadeera Samarawickrama, who, placed at short midwicket, responded tad late and missed the catch.

With no turn or grip for SL spinners, the South African batters capitalised with the ball sliding on to the bat in the middle overs. In fact, 85 runs came in overs between 19 and 29 featuring 11 fours and two sixes.

Dunith Wellalage bowled five straight dots to the right-handed Van der Dussen in the 26th over which forced the batter to try breaking the trend.

An attempted reverse-sweep sent the ball flying close to Pathum Nissanka, who put in a dive to his right but his one-handed effort had the ball popping out of his hand.



World Cup is an unfinished business: Rohit

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Absence of a global silverware in the cabinet always gives one a sense of emptiness, no matter how deified you are as a player.

Sachin Tendulkar felt that hollowness till the 2011 triumph happened, Lionel Messi had to wait for his piece of glory till 2022.

Rohit Sharma too is a champion player, but his craving for a 50-over ICC title is quite evident when he termed this World Cup as an "unfinished business" for him.

Rohit has won two ICC events - 2007 T20 World Cup and 2013 ICC Champions Trophy but everyone knows that in cricket, the real deal is the 50-over World Cup.

"Yeah, I mean look, you heard the great man say that so many times that you know, until he wins the World Cup, he's got a bit of unfinished business. I am sure you know who I'm talking about," Rohit said on Saturday with an obvious reference to the legendary Tendulkar.

"So, it's the same for us as well. You know, you want to win the World Cup. It's the biggest prize that you can have in your career. But again, there's a way to do it. There's a procedure that you need to

follow. There's a process to it," he said. The method in the madness, if you may!

Often desperation for the ultimate goal forces people to err on the side of risk and the Indian skipper does know the pitfalls.

"In desperation, you can do so many things that can lead to so many other things as well. So, it's good to be desperate. It's good to be hungry. But you've got to find that balance, right?"

"Balance to stay desperate and stay hungry for, scoring runs, lifting the trophy, winning games, whatever that is. But there is a balance that you need to find. You cannot get way too ahead of yourself because that can lead into something that you don't really wish for."

The seniors in this team have played a lot of cricket to know how to soak in the pressure. But to win that ultimate prize, even with 99 percent perspiration, the miniscule one percent of divine intervention can't be ignored.

"And then obviously we have to leave a lot of things to the Almighty as well because we need that luck, a little bit of luck in the tournament. I hope we get that luck. But yeah, it will be nice to win a World Cup."

World's Best

Patanjali Honey has been tested in world-renowned labs and it has **successfully passed** more than 100 parameters of purity.

Naturally boosts immunity

Contains fructose, minerals and vitamins

Anti-oxidant and anti-bacterial

Antiseptic and blood purifier

Useful in cold, cough and fever

Helpful in weight-loss

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE

PATANJALI

New Pack

Honey Squeezy

400g

हस्ताक्षरित हनी, शुद्धता के 100 से अधिक मापदंडों पर जा जा प्रमाणित है। हनी का जमाव उच्चतम स्वाभाविक गुण है।



In Jajpur, women redefine steel industry norms. From engineers to leaders, they break barriers, driving growth. Their roles empower, transforming the landscape and promoting inclusivity in the workforce, writes **SIDHARTH MISHRA**

WOMEN FORGE STEEL SUCCESS

About 100 kilometres from Bhubaneswar in the midst of Odia hinterland, a quiet social revolution is taking place. The place is Jajpur, an industrial hub, developed by the Odisha Government in an attempt to cultivate a prototype of the legendary steel city of Jamshedpur in Jharkhand. It is a dusty and bumpy road which takes one to Jajpur. Despite the roads, Jajpur has been a success story with big brands like Tata Steel and Jindal Stainless finding firm footing in the forested area, not just making steel but initiating a social revolution. The social revolution one is talking about is not the one which is ordinarily associated with corporate social responsibility but in the core areas of production and marketing.



Not undermining the role played by the self-help groups promoted by these consortia under the CSR activities, but what should actually be bringing laurels to these companies is the role women are playing on the shop floors of the hot and cold steel rolling mills. A quick employee survey of the Jindal Stainless at Jajpur reveals that of the 136 women employees, 74 are engineers and of them 50 work on the shop floor.

Unlike the rush we see these days in the engineering colleges for courses in emerging areas like AI, Data Science, IIoT and Machine Learning, here are women helming operations in white helmets not in air-conditioned labs but on the hot shop floor rubbing shoulders with their male counterparts. For years, the manufacturing and metallurgy sectors have been perceived as challenging and labour-intensive, often discouraging women.

However, the stainless steel industry is gradually shattering these pigeonholes as more and more women take on diverse roles within the sector. They are today working as engineers, metallurgists, or quality control experts, proving their mettle in each of these fields. Their keen attention to every facet, problem-solving abilities, and devotion to quality has helped enhance the overall production and innovation in the industry. Women have made significant advances not just on the shop floors but in various domains within the stainless steel industry, such as research and development, marketing, finance, human resources, and operations.

Their contributions have proven precious, enhancing the industry's overall efficiency and growth. The astonishing figures from the employee survey from Jindal's Jajpur

“UNLIKE THE RUSH WE SEE THESE DAYS IN THE ENGINEERING COLLEGES FOR COURSES IN EMERGING AREAS LIKE AI, DATA SCIENCE, IIOT AND MACHINE LEARNING, HERE ARE WOMEN HELMING OPERATIONS IN WHITE HELMETS NOT IN AIR-CONDITIONED LABS BUT ON THE HOT SHOP FLOOR RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS. FOR YEARS, THE MANUFACTURING AND METALLURGY SECTORS HAVE BEEN PERCEIVED AS CHALLENGING AND LABOUR-INTENSIVE, OFTEN DISCOURAGING WOMEN”



plant showed that there are 24 other women engineers who are deployed in departments other than shop floor operations. In addition there are nine women managers in the non-engineering departments.

That women are increasingly taking up leadership and managerial roles in the stainless-steel industry today is a matter of record. Of the 136 women employees at Jindal's Jajpur plant, 22 are in leadership roles. Their ability to manage teams, harmonise operations, and make tactical decisions has been instrumental in the growth of various companies in this sector.

However, the contribution of women in manufacturing is not limited to only women engineers. Beyond the technical and managerial roles, women have also been actively participating in the workforce, contributing both to the manufacturing and the production processes. Whether it is operating heavy machinery, performing quality checks, or overseeing logistics, women are playing a vital role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the stainless steel industry. At Jindal stainless Jajpur plant, of the 136

women employees 54 are part of the skilled workforce.

According to Deepak Agrawal, Jindal Stainless' unit head at Jajpur, from day one it was ensured that there was no discrimination against women when it came to recruitment or allocation of responsibilities including the leadership role. "Hats off to their courage and perseverance as they overcame challenges of a very inhospitable terrain to help set-up a most modern stainless steel plant but also a lively township around it. Moreover, women in the industry have shown exceptional multitasking abilities and attention to detail, contributing to heightened operational efficiency. Their analytical and strategic thinking skills have been instrumental in streamlining processes and improving productivity," adds Agrawal.

"The notable influx of women joining various roles in recent years in the stainless steel industry can be attributed to several factors, including increased education opportunities for women, changing societal attitudes towards gender roles, and government initiatives

promoting women's involvement in the workforce. This shift is promoting diversity and inclusivity in leadership positions, which is crucial for fostering innovation and adaptability," says Dr DD Gautam, who teaches in the Sociology department at the prestigious Delhi School of Economics.

According to Prof JP Sharma, former Dean Business Studies at Delhi School of Economics, "While the government initiatives and policies have their role, the contribution of the business houses in the private sector cannot be ignored." Elucidating further, Prof Sharma said, "Jindal's Jajpur plant is an example of a private initiative giving shape to government vision. The corporate house took the initiative overcoming the fear of falling production and adding losses. Such fears are not there in government, thus the contribution of the private sector in establishing gender equipoise in this sector is greater than that of the government sector."

According to Agrawal, "The participation and influence of women in the Indian stainless steel

industry can only grow in the coming years. The industry is continuously espousing diversity, where the prized standpoints and aptitudes of women will undoubtedly play a vital role."

Business economist and Principal of Shyamal College of Delhi University Dr Rabi Narayan Kar says, "Companies are increasingly recognising the importance of gender diversity and are implementing policies and initiatives to encourage more women to join and thrive in the industry. Measures like training programs, mentorship opportunities and flexible work arrangements support women in their careers."

As one drives back from Jajpur to Bhubaneswar, one carries the images of women working and contributing with such alacrity in a domain which till a few years back was exclusive for men. They handle the heavy-duty machinery with a tenderness which is exclusive to the female gender, a tenderness which mellows hard steel to a shiny stainless metal.

(The writer is an author and President, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice, New Delhi)

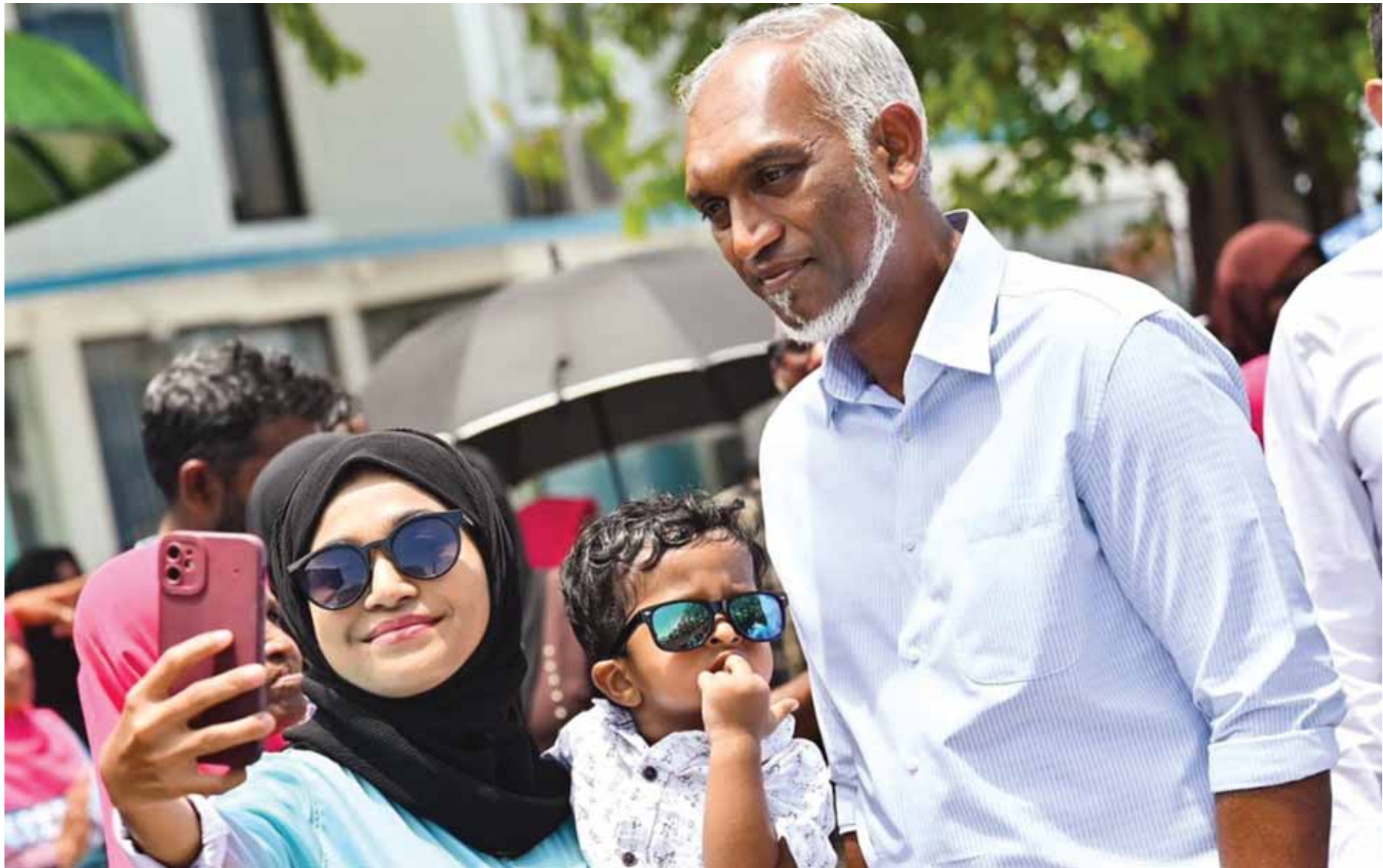
Maldives poll alters Indian Ocean geopolitics

The recent election results in the Maldives might change India's bonhomie with the archipelago. The President-elect Mohamed Muizzu, the winning candidate for the PNC-PPM coalition, was earlier a Mayor of the capital city of Male. In last Saturday's run-off election, Muizzu defeated incumbent President Ibrahim Solih, commonly known as Ibu of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), by 19,000 votes or an 8 per cent margin.

The Opposition parties in the Maldives branded Solih's India leaning or the "India-first" policy as a direct threat to the island nation's sovereign status. China's long arm of influence through money, muscle power and wolf-warrior diplomacy are a real threat for India. With Chinese President Xi Jinping at the helm of affairs since 2012, China is all out to encircle India in its neighbourhood through its infamous "String of Pearls" policy. For years, the Maldives has remained under the strong influence of India. But Xi's aggressive plan for the expansion of China's influence through the historic Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has finally reached the Maldives, a country of just around 400,000 people. It is spread over 1,200 islands in 90,000 square miles which crisscrosses key trade routes wherein both India and China vie for control and influence. Abdullah Yameen, the former President of the Maldives first took initiatives to move closer to China.

The new President-elect Muizzu has come out tough on India. He has clearly revealed his soft corner for China. From the "India First" policy of the Solih regime, Muizzu may shift towards better friendly ties with China. He has already stated in public that "the people have decided and don't want Indian troops to stay in the Maldives. Therefore, foreign soldiers can't be here against our sentiments, against our will".

Thus, it is clear that naval and air force personnel stationed on the Addu and Lammu Islands since 2013 to maintain and operate two helicopters and Dornier aircraft that India had given to the Maldives for reconnaissance operations have to be called back now. Currently a total of 75 Indian military personnel are there in these islands as per the record of the Maldivian National Defence Force. Again, the fate of the construction of a coast guard harbour base at the Uthuru Thila Falhu atoll, inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in May 2023, is uncertain. It is pertinent to mentioned here that an MoU signed by External Affairs



Minister S Jaishankar with the Maldivian Defence Minister on maritime security in February 2021 was at the centre of the Opposition protest in that country. For the Opposition, this is a secret agreement signed with India by compromising the country's sovereignty. These issues are very sensitive and Muizzu must look into them before taking any action.

But why does the Maldives matter to India? Yes, it does seriously matter to India. First of all, the island nation is situated at a crucial location in the Arabian Sea region of the Indian Ocean and India shares a sea border with that country. The island country is very near to India. It is just 70 nautical miles from the Minicoy Islands or locally known as Maliku in Lakshadweep and 300 nautical miles from the West coast of India.

Secondly, it is situated at the centre of the commercial sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean. Third, so far India has a preeminent position in that country, almost virtually spreading its influence over the entire nation.

Fourth, it is truly critical for maintaining regional political

stability and security. Fifth, the Maldives, irrespective of its size and global influence, holds the key to important shipping lanes that continuously provide energy supply to three big economies of the region: India, Japan and China. Sixth, it is also an important member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) where India is the most dominant among all. Finally, it lies in the Indian Ocean through which major trade lanes of the globe pass. And India being a world power and now being the fifth largest economy of the world, will definitely have an eye over all its neighbours so as to build constant communication and grow trade ties with them.

For long, the Maldives have become another battleground for two neighbouring regional giants: India and China. Clearly, it is one of South Asia's many nations that have been maintaining closer ties with both Beijing and Delhi. However, India has a deeper historical, cultural and economic tie with the Maldives than China does. The MEA rightly states that "India and the Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and com-

mercial links steeped in antiquity. The relations have been close, cordial and multi-dimensional. India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with that country."

This shows how India shares an enduring relationship with the archipelago nation. Again, in 1988, the bilateral engagement flourished between the two countries, when India launched the "Operation Cactus" to abort a coup attempt by a group of Maldivians to depose the government of then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. The coup was led by a businessman called Abdullah Luthfi who took help of the armed mercenaries of the Sri Lankan Tamil secessionist organisation People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE).

The irony is that Gayoom approached several other countries like Sri Lanka, Singapore, Pakistan, the US and the UK for immediate help to thwart the coup. When all of them refused, then UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher advised Gayoom to ask India for help. India quickly restored

the status quo and brought back stability in the neighbourhood. But today, political scenario in the island nation has completely changed as China has started engaging the political leadership of the Maldives. This has become a cause of concern for India because China has simply found a secured place for both its investment and military expansion (probably in near future) right at the former's backyard.

The cordiality in bilateral relations continued between India and the Maldives during the country's first democratically elected government in 2008. But with the coming of Abdullah Yameen coming to power in 2013, India's relationship with the island country sharply spiralled downwards. He was famous for attacking democracy, raising the anti-India banner and advocating proximity to Beijing. His only intention was to arouse nationalist sentiment to lessen Delhi's influence over the country. However, when Solih came to power in 2018, once again India-Maldives relations cemented towards better partnership and development.

It is Delhi's turn now to

engage the island nation. Meanwhile, the Indian High Commissioner to Male, Munnu Mahawar, has already met Muizzu and handed over a letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulating him on his election victory. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has stated that Delhi will look forward to engaging the new establishment in Male on all fronts. It is certain that the power balance between the two Asian giants Indian and China may change with the election of Muizzu. The fact is that India and China are already facing serious troubles in their bilateral relationship because of border disputes. And this came out in the open when Xi refused to attend the latest G-20 summit hosted by India last month.

Male should not be apprehensive about making Delhi closer than Beijing. Muizzu must understand that China's engagement is a long trap. Many of African and Latin American nations are fast falling into this trap by accepting financial assistance from China. All of them should be aware that China's new partnership model is purely opaque and not time tested. Unlike the

American or the global liberal ties, Chinese one is more of an intervention and a sharp attack on the former. China has been facing serious problems with its own regions like Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and most prominently, Taiwan (an island that does not accept China's suzerainty, though it is mentioned as Chinese Taipei in international lexicon for various purposes). Especially, the smaller, poorer and island nations like the Maldives should be extremely cautious while engaging with authoritarian regimes like China.

It is better for President-elect Muizzu to take a quick decision on how to reorient India-Maldives bilateral relations before it is too late. His tenure should not be started with a negative note. Both Male and Delhi need each other. They should forge ahead with mutual understanding and trust. Both the countries need to collaborate to fight larger challenges in regard to transnational crimes, humanitarian disasters and natural calamities in the coming days.

(The writer is currently president of the Global Research Foundation)

Male should not be apprehensive about making Delhi closer than Beijing. President-elect Muizzu must understand that China's engagement is a long trap. Many of African and Latin American nations are fast falling into this trap by accepting financial assistance from China. All of them should be aware that China's new partnership model is purely opaque and not time tested.



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Empowering animals: Recognising sentience in law

The gap between legal rhetoric and actual animal rights in India persists despite landmark judgments. Recent PILs highlight animal suffering, emphasising the need for enforceable protections. Mexico's proposed constitutional reform recognising animals as 'sentient beings' sets a positive precedent, writes **Sonal Gupta**

The disconcerting disparity between legal rhetoric and the actual state of affairs concerning animal rights and protections has long been a matter of grave concern. In India, the groundbreaking judgment in *Animal Welfare Board of India vs A Nagaraja & Ors* (2014) ostensibly championed animal rights by affirming that animals possess a fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. However, this elevation of their status from statutory to fundamental rights, while a partial triumph, has not translated into effective protection for animals in India.

Recent developments, such as the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) initiated by the Humane Society of India in *Human Society of India vs State of Telangana & Ors* before the

Telangana High Court, serve as a stark reminder of the harrowing ordeals faced by countless animals, including species safeguarded by the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This PIL highlights the dire conditions in unlicensed and unregulated pet shops, where animals languish and perish due to the "lackadaisical discharge of statutory responsibilities."

The Telangana High Court has acknowledged this pressing issue and directed relevant authorities to submit a status report.

Confronted with this glaring incongruity, it is imperative that we reevaluate our priorities and acknowledge that the true measure of societal progress is how we treat the defenseless, voiceless beings among us. Mere recognition of rights, devoid of effective

enforcement and tangible change, remains an exercise in futility. It is abundantly clear that the time for passive acknowledgment has passed; what is needed now is action-meaningful and resolute action.

In this context, the timely proposal by Mexican Senator Ángel García Yáñez in September 2023 to introduce a constitutional reform in Mexico, recognizing animals as "sentient beings" in the Political Constitution of Mexico, represents a significant step in the right direction. In Mexico, as in many parts of the world, animals often suffer due to inadequate legal protection and enforcement. While existing laws may acknowledge the importance of animal welfare, they frequently lack the teeth necessary to deter cruelty effectively. Recognition of animal



sentience in the Mexican Constitution would signify a paradigm shift. It would acknowledge that animals, like humans, experience pain, suffering, and a range of emotions.

The importance of such a move in India can be understood by examining the current state of laws protecting animals.

In India, Sections 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, and Sections 428 and 429 of the Indian Penal Code address various forms of cruelty and atrocities to animals but prescribe meagre penalties, as low as Rs 10 and Rs 50, with short terms of imprisonment, if at all. This pales in comparison to the severity of cruelty that animals often endure, including cases such as the 2018 incident in Haryana, where a pregnant goat was raped and subsequently died. Such penalties are clearly unjust when cruelty to animals can be as heinous as rape or other unnatural offences.

Furthermore, while the Constitution of India, through its non-enforceable and non-justifiable Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 51A(g),

imposes a duty on citizens "to have compassion for living creatures," it falls short of recognizing the emotional, mental, and psychological suffering endured by animals. While India has instituted basic animal protections to prohibit physical mistreatment or violence, a more comprehensive approach is necessary to consider the mental and emotional well-being of animals.

The enactment of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act in the UK in 2022 serves as a commendable example. This legislation firmly incorporates animal sentience into the legal framework, marking a crucial advancement in animal welfare. Animals, though unable to communicate in human language, possess intricate biological and emotional faculties akin to humans. Their lives

transcend mere existence and embody sentience, a necessitated concept for comprehensive animal protection laws.

The time for change is now. It is incumbent upon us that we act decisively to ensure a more compassionate and just world for all creatures, great and small. Recognizing animals as sentient beings in the legal framework is not just a legal necessity; it is a moral imperative.

The chasm between legal rhetoric and on-the-ground reality can only be bridged when we acknowledge and protect the sentience of animals and take concrete actions to ensure their welfare and well-being because animal life is "beyond" mere existence.

(The writer practises law at the Supreme Court of India)

