

Nepal PM Oli leaves for China to attend SCO Summit, meet Xi

KATHMANDU, Aug 30: Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Saturday embarked on an official visit to China, where he will attend the SCO summit and meet Chinese President Xi Jinping.

He is paying a visit from August 30 to September 3 at the invitation of President Xi.

During the visit, he will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit and the commemoration of the “80th anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War”.

Oli will meet President Xi in Tianjin and also address the SCO Plus Summit on Sunday.

He is scheduled to meet other world leaders including Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the summit.

Nepal’s political circle has urged Oli to raise the issue of the recent agreement be-



tween New Delhi and Beijing to resume trade through Lipulekh pass. Nepal claims Lipulekh as its own territory, a claim that India has categorically rejected as “neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence”.

Earlier in the day, Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City Balendra Shah extended his best wishes to Oli

for the China visit and urged him to take up the issue with China.

While addressing the House of Representatives on Friday, Oli did not say if he would raise the matter with China, but later told reporters he would certainly do so with Chinese leaders.

Oli is being accompanied by his spouse Radhika

Shakya, and his delegation includes Minister for Science and Education Raghuji Pant, Minister for Tourism and Culture Badri Pandey and other high-ranking government officials.

He will return to Kathmandu on September 3.

Oli is also scheduled to visit India, tentatively two weeks after his trip to China.

8 Opposition-Ruled States Extend Support To Cut In Number Of GST Rate Slabs: Cong's Ramesh

NEW DELHI, AUG 30: Eight opposition-ruled states have extended their support to a reduction in the number of GST rate slabs and a cut in the rates for mass consumption items, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on Saturday.

At the same time, they have demanded a mechanism to ensure the benefits of the rate cuts get passed on to consumers, he said.

According to Ramesh, the eight opposition-ruled states have also demanded compensation to all states for a period of five years, with 2024-25 as the base year, since their revenues are bound to be adversely impacted by the rate cuts.

They have demanded additional levies on ‘sin’ and luxury goods over and above the proposed 40 per cent be fully transferred to states, he said.

“Eight Opposition-ruled states — Karnataka, Hi-



machal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal — have extended their support to the reduction in the number of GST rate slabs and a reduction in the rates themselves for items of mass consumption,” the Congress leader said on X.

He said these states have also called for a mechanism that ensures that the benefits of the rate cuts get passed on to consumers.

They have also demanded compensation to all states for

a period of five years with 2024-25 as the base year, since their revenues are bound to be adversely impacted by the rate cuts, Ramesh said.

The eight opposition-ruled states have also called for additional levies on ‘sin’ and luxury goods over and above the proposed 40% be fully transferred to states, he said, adding the Centre gets close to 17-18% of its revenue from various cesses that are not shared with the states.

The Congress leader

stressed that these demands are perfectly legitimate and are bolstered by recent papers published by the Union Finance Ministry’s own National Institute of Public Finance & Policy (NIPFP).

According to him, the Congress has for long been demanding a GST 2.0 that not only reduces rate slabs and cuts rates but also brings about drastic simplification of procedures and compliance requirements, especially for MSMEs.

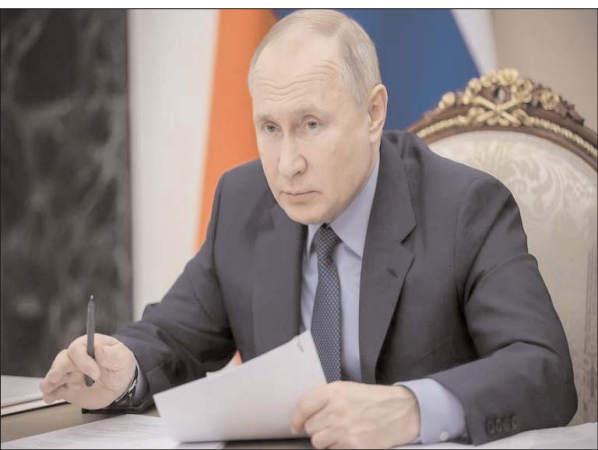
Ramesh further said the Congress has also been stressing the essentiality of ensuring that the interests of all states are fully protected.

“It hopes that the GST Council meeting scheduled for next week will not be merely a headline-grabbing exercise so typical of the (Narendra) Modi government, but will also advance the cause of genuine cooperative federalism in letter and spirit,” he added. (Agencies)

Putin advocates reforms in UN, IMF to reflect modern realities

MOSCOW/BELJING, Aug 30: Russian President Vladimir Putin, ahead of the upcoming SCO summit in the Chinese city of Tianjin, lauded Moscow-Beijing ties across all sectors including finance, culture, education, sports, politics, while reiterating both nations continued advocacy for reforms in the UN, and other global entities such as the World Bank and IMF to better reflect modern political realities and ensure broader representation for the developing world.

“Russia and China support reform of the UN so that it fully restores its authority and reflects modern realities. In particular, we advocate for making the Security Council



more democratic by including states from Asia, Africa, and Latin America,” Putin said in a handwritten interview to the Chinese media agency Xinhua, one day ahead of his visit to the

county, reports state media TASS. “Alongside our Chinese partners, we support the reform of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank,” he added.

“It is essential to end the

use of finance as an instrument of neo-colonialism, which runs counter to the interests of the Global Majority. On the contrary, we seek progress for the benefit of all humanity,” the Russian leader stressed.

Putin also noted close co-operation between Moscow and Beijing within the G20, BRICS and APEC.

Commenting on bilateral trade, he noted that the mutual trade in the Yuan and Ruble, had left the Euro and the USD as more of a statistical discrepancy than anything else, while confirming a joint initiative to launch a major gas route in 2027 under the moniker of Far Eastern Route. (UNI)

Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav joins 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar

SARAN (BIHAR), AUG 30: Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday joined the Congress’ ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ in Bihar’s Saran district.

In a post on X, senior Congress leader K C Venugopal said Yadav is a “steadfast ally” in the party’s fight against the BJP’s alleged attempt to destroy the country’s democracy.

“This morning, former UP CM Akhilesh Yadav Jee joined the Voter Adhikar Yatra in Saran. Welcomed him to this historic movement to protect democracy. He has been a steadfast ally in our fight against the BJP’s destruction of our democracy,



and a strong voice for the poor and underprivileged in UP and across the country,” Venugopal said on the social media platform.

He also shared photographs of Yadav meeting Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok

Sabha, and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

Rohini Acharya, the daughter of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, was also present there.

Acharya had contested from Saran in the Lok Sabha polls last year, and failed to

win the seat.

Gandhi launched the Congress’ ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ from Sasaram in Rohtas district on August 17 to protest against the Election Commission’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

The yatra, supported by all INDIA bloc constituents, will culminate in Patna on September 1.

The yatra has so far covered Gayaji, Nawada, Sheikhpura, Lakhisarai, Munger, Katihar, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Purnea, West Champaran, Gopalganj, East Champaran, and Siwan districts.

It will pass through Bhojpur and Patna.

MUMBAI, AUG 30: Veteran actor Soni Razdan says she was fascinated by the idea of a biopic on legendary Kashmiri singer Raj Begum, whom she initially knew little about but came to admire as a farsighted artist who defied odds to leave behind a lasting legacy.

Filmmaker Danish Renzu’s “Songs of Paradise” is inspired by the life and journey of Raj Begum and features Razdan as well as actor-musician Saba Azad in the lead roles.

The movie, which premiered on Prime Video on Friday, sees them play the character of Noor Begum in two different time periods.

Razdan, who had earlier worked with Renzu on several music videos, said he once told her about his film on Raj Begum.

“He told me about her, I said, ‘oh my gosh, how come I didn’t know about her?’ I thought it was a fascinating idea. He sent me all the research material. As I was going through it and listening to her songs, I started thinking about the character,” Razdan told PTI in an interview.

Raj Begum began her musical journey singing at weddings before emerging as one of Kashmir’s most powerful female voices. With her father’s encouragement, she joined Radio Kashmir in 1954, where her soaring, melodious voice made her a defining presence until her retirement in 1986.

Celebrated for singing straight from the heart, she



became a symbol of freedom and cultural expression for Kashmiri women.

In recognition of her contribution, she received the Padma Shri in 2002, the State Award from the Jammu and Kashmir government in 2009, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2013. She passed away in 2016 at the age of 89.

Razdan believes that Raj Begum was not just a singer but a pioneer whose resilience and dedication opened doors for women in Kashmir’s cultural landscape.

“The fact that she did what she did at a time when nobody was helping her and all the odds were against her... She fought for that. She realised during the course of her journey that things were much bigger than just herself.

“She was paving the way, opening doors for generations to come. I think she must have been so aware of the responsibility she carried — that’s the kind of person she was. She was a very farsighted person. That was her whole life.” Instead of getting

overwhelmed by the responsibility of playing a renowned figure, the veteran actor said she immersed herself in the songs and the emotions of the character and trusted the process.

“I just left it to fate. I don’t really overthink it at all. I relied on Danish a lot and I think the whole atmosphere around shooting in Kashmir on the locations, everybody in the crew was Kashmiri. So, it just helped to kind of give us that support system that you need as an artist doing something like this.

“Of course, it is a big responsibility but you can’t think about that when you’re doing your work. You just think of what you have to do and the scene and the emotions and all those things. I think everything else sort of just kind of falls into place at some point. That’s how it works for me, at least.” Narratives from conflict zones often dwell on violence and politics, leaving the experiences of everyday life unheard. With “Songs of Paradise”, Razdan hopes to shift that gaze.

“We always focus on the

obvious drama. But there’s always the unobvious drama, which plays out in people’s lives. People just live their lives as they always do. And I think that always gets neglected.

“Even if you see films on World War II. There are very few films like ‘The Book Thief’, where it was about a little girl wanting to read when books were being burnt in a small town. The thing is that these are stories, which we don’t see, need to be told. So hopefully more of them and Danish is going to start the trend now.” Razdan said the support Raj Begum received from men, including her father and mentors, breaks stereotypes and shows how they helped her overcome barriers.

“Especially for a place like Kashmir, where you think that men are going to be very patriarchal, society is regressive, and God knows what else.

I think it breaks those stereotypes, for sure. And tells us a true story of how, actually, men can be very supportive, especially when so many odds are stacked against a woman,” she said.

Presented by Excel Entertainment and produced by Apple Tree Pictures Production and Renzu Films Production, “Songs of Paradise” is written by Renzu along with Niranjana Iyengar and Sunayana Kachroo.

It also features Zain Khan Durrani, Sheeba Chaddha, Taaruk Raina and Lillete Dubey in pivotal roles. (Agencies)

BJP, RSS, EC indulging in 'vote chori' in India, alleges Rahul Gandhi

ARA (BIHAR), AUG 30: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday slammed the NDA government at the Centre for the ongoing special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bihar, and accused the BJP, the RSS and the Election Commission of indulging in ‘vote chori’ in the country.

Addressing a public rally during the Congress’ ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ in Ara, the district headquarters of Bhojpur, Gandhi claimed that the electoral roll revision was an “attack on the Constitution and the democratic system of the country”.

“The BJP, the RSS and the EC are indulging in ‘vote chori’ (stealing of votes) in the country,” he alleged.

The ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ that started from Bihar will become a “country-wide movement against stealing of votes of people”, he said.

“The NDA government succeeded in stealing votes in Maharashtra and other



parts of the country. But we will not allow the BJP and the EC to steal even a single vote in Bihar,” Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, claimed.

“Voting is the right of Dalits, minorities and women, but the Narendra Modi government steals votes to win polls,” he alleged. The right to vote has been guaranteed by the Constitution of India, he said.

Holding a copy of the Constitution in his hand, he accused the BJP of “attacking it by stripping people of their right to vote”.

“We will not allow the BJP to further steal votes in any other parts of the country. Now, people have started calling BJP leaders ‘vote chor’ (Vote thieves),” Gandhi claimed.

Jagdeep Dhankhar Applies For Pension As Former MLA In Rajasthan

JAIPUR, AUG 30: Former vice-president of India Jagdeep Dhankhar has applied for pension as a former legislator in Rajasthan, officials said.

Dhankhar, who represented the Kishangarh Assembly constituency as a Congress MLA from 1993 to 1998, received pension as a former legislator until July 2019. It was discontinued after he was appointed the governor of West Bengal.

With his tenure as the vice-president ending following his resignation citing “health



issues” on July 21, Dhankhar has applied afresh to the Rajasthan Assembly secretariat

seeking resumption of his pension as a former MLA, the officials said.

The secretariat has initiated the process, and the pension will be applicable from the date his resignation as the vice-president was accepted, they said.

The pension for a former MLA in Rajasthan starts at Rs 35,000 per month for a single term, and goes up with additional terms and age.

Those above 70 receive a 20 per cent hike.

Dhankhar, now 74, is entitled to Rs 42,000 pension per month as a former legislator, the officials said. (Agencies)