



Camilla Cabello poses backstage with her awards for Artist of the Year and Video of the Year for "Havana." REUTERS

# ECHO WORLD

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## Pak, India must engage in dialogue to resolve their differences: Imran

ISLAMABAD, AUG 21 /-/ Pakistan and India must engage in dialogue to resolve their differences, including on the Kashmir issue and start trading to normalise ties, Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan said today.

Khan on his Twitter account said the best way to alleviate poverty and uplift the people of the subcontinent was to resolve the differences through dialogue and start trading. "To move forward Pakistan and India must dialogue and resolve their conflicts including Kashmir," he tweeted. Khan's tweets came as he defended cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu, who is embroiled in a controversy after attending Khan's oath-taking ceremony on August 18. The Punjab minister was slammed by the Opposition and earned the displeasure even from his own chief minister Amrinder Singh over his decision to visit Pakistan and hug its Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

The newly-elected Prime Minister had said on Monday that Pakistan would work to have "best relations" with all its neighbours and hold talks to normalise ties. Earlier, in his address after leading his party to victory in the general elections on July 25, Khan had said Pakistan is ready to improve its ties with India and his government would like the leaders of the two sides to resolve all disputes, including the "core issue" of Kashmir, through talks. "If they take one step towards us, we will take two, but at least (we) need a start," he had said.

He had said good India-Pakistan relations will be beneficial for the entire region and suggested to increase trade ties between the two

neighbours. Bilateral trade witnessed a slight drop in 2016-17 to USD 2.29 billion, with exports from India at USD 1.83 billion and imports from Pakistan to India at USD 456.33 million. The imports from Pakistan have shown a gradual declining trend since 2012-13, when it touched USD 541.87 billion, according to official figures. The data reveals that the official trade between New Delhi and Islamabad accounted for only about 0.31 per cent of India's total global commerce. India had accorded the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan in 1996. A Pakistan Cabinet decision of November 2, 2011 to reciprocate remains un-implemented.



Pakistan substituted in March 2012 a 'positive list' of a little more than 1950 tariff lines, permitted for import from India, by a

'Negative List' of 1209 lines that cannot be imported from India. The India-Pakistan ties nose-dived in recent years with no bilateral talks taking place. The ties between the two countries had strained after the terror attacks by Pakistan-based groups in 2016 and India's surgical strikes inside Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The sentencing of alleged Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav to death by a military court in April over espionage charges last year further deteriorated bilateral ties. The two sides often accuse each other of ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, resulting in civilian casualties.

## Hugging Pak Army Chief was emotional reaction, says Sidhu; Imran calls him 'ambassador of peace'

ISLAMABAD/CHANDIGARH, AUG 21 /-/ Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu today defended hugging the Pakistan Army chief during his recent Islamabad visit, saying he got caught in the moment after hearing that Sikh pilgrims may get access to a shrine across the border.

Back from the swearing-in ceremony of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, the former cricketer compared his emotional reaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit to Lahore in 2015, when he hugged the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Sidhu said his trip was not a "political" visit but in response to a "warm invitation from a friend".

The Punjab minister said it was an emotional moment for him when General Qamar Javed Bajwa told him that he was opening a corridor for pilgrims from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to Kartarpur Sahib. Sidhu was slammed by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and the Akaal Dal, and criticised even by Punjab chief minister Amrinder Singh for hugging Bajwa at Imran Khan's swearing-in on August 18. After his Chandigarh press conference today, the BJP has again criticised Sidhu. Sidhu said Bajwa had met him

with enthusiasm when he spotted him sitting in the front row at the Islamabad ceremony. Immediately, he told me that they were making efforts to open the corridor from India's Dera Baba Nanak to Kartarpur Sahib, he said. This, Sidhu said, was being done to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev. The two shrines are about three kilometres apart.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan today came out in support of Sidhu, saying those who are criticising the Punjab minister are doing a great disservice to peace in the subcontinent. "I want to thank Sidhu for coming to Pakistan for my oath taking. He was an ambassador of peace and was given amazing love and affection by people of Pakistan," Khan tweeted soon after Sidhu's press conference. "Those in India who target him are doing a great disservice to peace in the subcontinent - without peace our people cannot progress," Khan said.

To move forward, Khan said Pakistan and India must engage in dialogue and resolve their conflicts, including the Kashmir issue. "The best way to alleviate poverty and uplift the people of the subcontinent is to resolve our differences through dialogue and start trading," he said.



Gold medalist Saurabh Chaudhary of India (M), silver medalist Tomoyuki Matsuda of Japan (L) and bronze medalist Abhishek Verma of India pose for a photo—REUTERS

## Kerala struggles to find its feet after deluge, seeks special package of Rs 2,600 cr from Centre

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 21 /-/ Kerala today sought a Rs 2,600 crore special package from the Centre even as the state struggled to find its feet after the devastating deluge that left 223 dead in a

fortnight and forced over 10 lakh people out of their homes. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan chaired a meeting of the state cabinet, which decided to seek a special package from the Centre

under the centrally-sponsored schemes including the latter's flagship rural employment programme MNRGS. Vijayan said a special session of the state assembly has been convened on August 30 to discuss the situation arising from the calamitous floods, the worst in a century. The chief minister had earlier said the state had suffered damages of about Rs 20,000 crore. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and two other union ministers have collectively announced interim assistance of Rs 800 crore for the state so far. Vijayan said Kerala would also ask the Centre to hike the limit of loan it can secure from the open market for the massive rebuilding exercise after 13 of the state's 14 districts were savaged by floods, traumatising people and devastating its infrastructure.

## Mamata talks to Vijayan, assures city Malayalees of all help

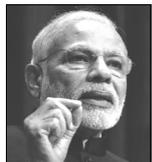
KOLKATA, AUG 21 /-/ West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has said the Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan over phone about the safety of the relatives of Malayalees residing in the city and the Bengalis living in the flood-ravaged state.

Mamata said this when members of the Confederation of Kolkata Malayalees Organisation (COKMO) called on her at her residence today. She also assured the COKMO members of all cooperation and also assured them of making arrangement for special trains to ferry their relatives, Bengali tourists and other Bengalis living there to their homes. COKMO general secretary K Nandakumar told news agency PTI that he had informed Banerjee that there are 25 lakh Bengalis living in Kerala and they are facing problem in returning for want of trains.

The West Bengal chief minister assured to arrange for special trains and buses for those stranded and assured the city Malayalees to monitor the situation and take requisite steps, Nandakumar added. "We thanked Mamata Banerjee for her kind support. She gave enough time and patient hearing. We submitted our memorandum personally. She assured us of all cooperation," Nandakumar said. Expressing concern over the situation in Kerala, Mamata said that though a lot of relief materials and money was being sent to it the situation needs more support. She had earlier announced that the state would donate Rs 10 crore as flood relief to Kerala. (PTI)

## India-China ties a factor in global stability: Modi

NEW DELHI, AUG 21 /-/ Terming India-China relations as a factor in the world stability, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said maintenance of peace in the border areas is indicative of the maturity



with which the two neighbours have handled their differences and did not allow them to become disputes.

According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Modi made these remarks when State Councilor and Defence Minister of China General Wei Fenghe called on him here today. Modi appreciated the increased momentum of high-level contacts between India and China in all spheres, including in the areas of defence and military exchanges.

"Termining India-China relations as a factor of stability in the world, the Prime Minister said that maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is indicative of the sensitivity and maturity with which India and China handle their differences, not allowing them to become disputes," the statement said. Prime Minister Modi also warmly recalled his recent meetings with President Xi Jinping in Wuhan, Qingdao and Johannesburg.

## SC shocked over 2 lakh children 'missing' in survey on child care institutions

NEW DELHI, AUG 21 /-/ The Supreme Court today expressed shock at the discrepancy in two surveys reflecting a difference of around two lakh children staying in child care institutions and said it was "very, very disturbing" that such children were being "treated" as mere numbers.

The top court was shocked when it was told that as per a 2016-17 survey carried out at the directions of the Union ministry of women and child development, the number of children living in child care institutions (CCIs) was around 4.73 lakh, while the data filed in the court by the government this March says it was about 2.61 lakh. "It is not clear what has happened to the

balance of around two lakh children. These children appear to be missing from the statistics," a bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur said. It also asked the Centre "how many children are missing in this country besides these two lakh" and said if the provisions of law were being implemented in "letter and spirit", then child abuse incidents like those in Muzaffarpur and Deoria would not have happened.

The bench, which also included Justices S Abdul Nazeer and Deepak Gupta, observed that there was a possibility that the CCIs may have given "inflated figures" to state governments to get more funds. This serious issue needs to be looked

into, it said. The counsel representing the Centre told the court that the government had compiled the data supplied by states and union territories about the number of children living in CCIs and filed the report in this regard in March. "We rely on figures provided by states. The states have to say how there is such a variation. We will get back to the states as to which figure is correct," the Centre's counsel told the bench, adding "if these children are missing, it is a cause of serious concern and this is very, very alarming."

The bench referred to the suggestions given by advocate Aparna Bhat, who is assisting the court as amicus curiae in the matter, and said it was contemplating setting up of a national level and state level committees to monitor the CCIs. It noted the submissions of amicus curiae that committees at the national and state levels could deal with the issue of CCIs so that recent incidents like alleged rape and sexual abuse of minor girls and women at shelter homes in Muzaffarpur in Bihar and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh were prevented. The Centre's counsel told the court that he would take instructions whether the government was prepared to have such a committee at the national level in this regard.

The bench posted the matter for hearing on August 28.

## Stand-off continues in Tollywood as both sides refuse to budge

### Artists Forum ready for talks with WATP but wants producers to start process

KOLKATA, AUG 21 /-/ The stand-off between artists and producers of Bengali TV serials here continued for the fourth day today with no shooting taking place in any of the eight studios.

None of the two warring sides, the Artists Forum and the Welfare Association of Television Producers (WATP), refused to budge from their stands on the issue of regularisation of pay.

The Forum was ready for talks with the WATP but the producers should initiate the process and write a letter to the Forum at the earliest, its general secretary Arindam Ganguly told newsmen after an afternoon meeting. "We do not have any closed mindset. In the interest of everyone concerned, we are ready to start shooting at any moment but that has to be preceded by a discussion with the WATP that must send us a letter inviting us for talks," said Ganguly, also an actor.



Members of Artists' Forum speaking to newsmen after their meeting —Arijit Ganguly

artist exceeded 10 hours. This arrangement has been agreed upon in the July 8 meeting between the Federation of Cine Technicians and Workers of East India, the Forum and the producers, he said. Ganguly said many producers paid the salary of the artists in the given time, but many did not and the Forum took up the agitation in the interest of every artiste. The WATP has on Monday said the July 8 meeting did not pass any resolution about the payment system and only recorded the minutes. Ganguly however, said this was not true and alleged that the producers did not show any initiative to resolve the impasse.

Due to the disruption of the shooting schedule, the channels were forced to go for repeat telecast of the episodes aired earlier, a spokesman of the WATP said. The Star Jalsha channel said in a statement. In West Bengal the shooting of all television shows has presently been stalled due to an ongoing standoff between the Artists Forum and the WATP. "This development" caused an undesirable disruption of supply of fresh episodes of the daily fictional programmes," it said.

Under the present arrangement, Kerala can obtain three per cent of its gross state domestic product (GSDP) as loans and wants it to be raised to 4.5 per cent so the state can mobilise an additional Rs 10,500 crore from the open market, he said. As the massive humanitarian tragedy unfolded in the picturesque state, relief poured in. Governments of other states, corporate entities and individuals, including small children, have loosened their purse strings. The chief minister said the United Arab Emirates has promised an assistance of USD 100 million (About Rs 700 crore) for the state's reconstruction. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, called on Prime Minister Modi and made the offer for assistance, Vijayan said. The state-level bankers committee has also decided to declare a moratorium on repayment of agricultural loan for a year. Over 10.78 lakh people, including 2.12 lakh women and 1 lakh children below 12 years of age, are taking shelter in as many as 3,200 relief camps a fortnight after a murderous monsoon rampaged through the state in its second spell that began on August 8.