

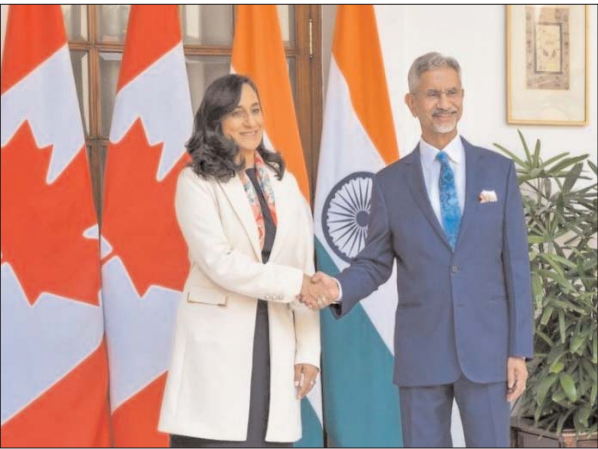
India, Canada firm up ambitious roadmap to expand ties

**NEW DELHI, OCT 13:** India and Canada have prepared an ambitious roadmap to advance ties in areas of trade, investment, critical minerals, energy and civil nuclear collaboration, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar made the remarks during his talks with his Canadian counterpart Anita Anand.

"India-Canada bilateral relations have been steadily progressing in the last few months. We are working to restore and reinvigorate the mechanisms necessary to advance our partnership," he said in his opening remarks at the meeting.

"As Prime Minister Modi noted during his meeting with Prime Minister Carney in Kananaskis, India's approach is to move forward with a positive mindset," he



became the prime minister following his victory in the parliamentary elections in April.

The renewed vibrancy in the ties between the two countries followed PM Modi's talks with Carney on the margins of the G7 summit at Canada's Kananaskis in June.

Before her talks with Jaishankar, Anand met PM Modi.

"When we look at Canada, we see a complementary economy, we see another open society, we see diversity and pluralism, and we believe that that is the basis for a close, sustainable and long-term cooperative framework," the external affairs minister said.

"Let me also say that both sides for our meeting today have prepared an ambitious roadmap to advance our co-operation in various domains, including trade, investment, agriculture, science and technology, civil nuclear collaboration, AI, critical minerals, and energy," he added.

Anand arrived in New Delhi last evening as part of her three-nation tour that will also take her to China and Singapore. (PTI)

Sonia Gandhi Unveils Statue Of Ex-Himachal CM Virbhadra Singh In Shimla

**SHIMLA, OCT 13:** Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Monday unveiled a statue of six-time Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Virbhadra Singh, at Daulat Singh Park on the historic Ridge Ground in Shimla.

Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Gandhi, accompanied by her daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, paid floral tributes to the late leader after inaugurating the statue.

The six-foot-tall bronze statue is placed near statues of notable leaders such as YS Parmar, the first chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, Mahatma Gandhi and former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

There was a huge turnout at the event and police have beefed up security measures.

A company linked to renowned sculptor Ram V Sutar and his son Anil Ram Sutar built the statue at Rs 40 lakh — Rs 24 lakh for construction and Rs 16 lakh for installation. Ram Sutar was also behind the 182-ft Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue built to honour Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.



Scion of the Rampur-Bushahr royal family, Virbhadra Singh first took office as chief minister on April 8, 1983 and spent the next four decades in public life, becoming the CM five more times. He died in 2021 after a prolonged illness.

His wife, Pratibha Singh, is the state party chief and his son, Vikramaditya Singh, is the Public Works Minister in the Himachal Pradesh government.

The statue unveiling and a rally that followed, were organised by Vikramaditya

Singh, who is also the chairman of the Raja Virbhadra Singh Foundation.

The statue's unveiling was initially planned for Virbhadra's birth anniversary on June 23, but was postponed.

A huge number of party workers and the general public turned up for the event. Security was tightened and around 400 police personnel were deployed for the event.

The city was divided into five security sectors with a special plan for traffic and parking. The movement of

transport and utility vehicles and heavy vehicles within the city was suspended till 3 pm.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri, HPCC president Pratibha Singh, as well as Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi, Sachin Pilot, and Deepender Hooda were present at the event.

The Congress's state in charge, Rajni Patil, cabinet ministers of the state and Congress leader Rajiv Shukla also attended the statue unveiling.

Indian Railways neglected for 50 years, now being revamped: Vaishnaw

**VALSAD (GUJARAT), OCT 13:** Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday said the Indian Railways remained neglected for over five decades, but now it is undergoing total transformation under the NDA Government.

Addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 41st Raising Day of the Railway Protection Force at Valsad in Gujarat, the Minister for Railways also announced that recruitment for RPF personnel will now be conducted every year, instead of every four to five years.

"For 50-60 years, the Railways remained neglected in the country. Today, the Railways is undergoing a total transformation. In the past 11 years, nearly 35,000 kilometres of tracks have been laid. This is unprecedented in the history of Railways. As a result, more trains are running today," Vaishnaw said in his address.

He informed that 1,300 stations are currently undergoing redevelopment. Of these, 110 stations have been inaugurated after the completion of work, while work on the remaining stations is underway.



"Around 60,000 kilometres of tracks have been electrified. When people around the world look at these enormous achievements of the Railways, they are astonished, as even prosperous countries have not been able to achieve such electrification in such a short time," said the Minister.

Based on the experience gained from the first two Nammo Bharat services, mass production of Nammo Bharat trains will now begin, he said, adding that mainline EMU trains, which are in demand, are also being inducted.

"Approximately 3,500 general coaches have been added to trains, and produc-

tion of 7,000 general coaches is currently underway. The Railways is working with a focus on providing services to all sections of society, especially to low-income and middle-income families," he said.

The Kavach system has already been installed on nearly 1,200 locomotives, Vaishnaw informed.

Kavach is an indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system to prevent train accidents by automatically applying brakes.

On the modernisation of RPF, Vaishnaw said all its officers and field staff will soon get VHF (very high frequency) walkie-talkie sets as requested by the RPF director general recently.

"Just a few days back, the director general of the RPF requested that all officers and field personnel in the force should have VHF sets. I assure you that the chairman of the Railway Board will soon approve this, and once approved, you can purchase as many VHF sets as you need," said the minister.

Last year, 452 sub-inspectors were recruited in the RPF, and the recruitment process for 4,208 constables has now been completed, he said.

"We were all concerned that if recruitment happens only once every four or five years, it creates issues for candidates who aspire to join the Railways. Thus, we have taken a decision so that a fresh batch of constables can join the Railways every year," the minister said.

"Now, the Staff Selection Commission will recruit constables, sub-inspectors and inspectors every year. Allowing a new batch to join each year will help the force to move towards proper cadre management," he added. (PTI)

Ladakh Desperately Awaits Healing Touch, BJP Refusing To Fulfil Sixth Schedule Promise: Congress

**NEW DELHI, OCT 13:** Taking a swipe at the BJP, the Congress on Monday said Ladakh desperately awaits "a healing touch" from the nation and the leadership of a party that promised Sixth Schedule protection in its manifesto for the local hill council elections but is now refusing to fulfil that promise.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh made the assertion ahead of Mongolian President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa's visit to India.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Ramesh, recalled the contribution of 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, a highly revered Buddhist monk and public figure of Ladakh who served for an unusual ten years as Ambassador to Mongolia.

He also recalled that India played an important role in Mongolia's joining the UN in October 1961 and the turning point in the relationship was then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's inspired appointment of the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in October 1989 as India's Ambassador to that country.

Ramesh noted that the Leh Airport was renamed after the 19th Koshak Bakula Rinpoche by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who hailed him as the "architect of modern Ladakh".

"The President of Mongolia arrives in New Delhi today accompanied by a high-powered delegation. Diplomatic relations between India and Mongolia go back to December 1955. India played an important role in Mongolia's joining the UN in October 1961," Ramesh said on X.

The turning point in the relationship was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's inspired appointment of the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in October 1989 as India's Ambassador to Mongolia, he said.

"He took over in January 1990. He was a highly revered Buddhist monk and public figure of Ladakh and served for an unusual ten years as Ambassador.

"He played a key role in helping Mongolia rediscover and celebrate its Buddhist heritage after the collapse of communism there in 1990 it-

self. He remains an iconic figure in Mongolia," Ramesh said. On June 10, 2005, the Leh Airport was renamed after the 19th Koshak Bakula Rinpoche, he said.

"The revival of Buddhism — not just in Mongolia and the erstwhile USSR — but also in India itself owes much to him," he said.

"The 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche's Ladakh now desperately awaits a healing touch from the nation but most of all by the leadership of a party that promised Sixth Schedule Constitutional protection in its manifesto for the local hill council elections in 2020 but is now as the ruling party refusing to fulfil that promise," Ramesh said.

Leh was rocked by widespread violence on September 24 during an agitation spearheaded by LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) for statehood and extension of Sixth Schedule safeguards.

Opposition leaders have been vocal in condemning the deaths during the protest and the subsequent arrest of climate activist Sonam

Wangchuk under the stringent National Security Act (NSA).

Mongolian President Khurelsukh will undertake a four-day visit to India beginning Monday to explore ways to boost bilateral ties in areas of energy, mining and defence.

Khurelsukh will be accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising cabinet ministers, parliament members, senior officials and business leaders, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

It will be Khurelsukh's first visit to India as the president.

The Mongolian leader will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, the ministry said.

President Droupadi Murmu will also meet the visiting leader and host a banquet in his honour.

The partnership between the two countries spans across sectors such as defence and security, energy, mining, information technology, education, healthcare and cultural cooperation. (Agencies)

Centre ignoring Cong-ruled states, Himachal didn't get adequate help for disasters: Priyanka

**SHIMLA, Oct 13:** Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday accused the Union Government of not providing adequate help to disaster-hit Himachal Pradesh, claiming that the Centre was "ignoring" states ruled by the Congress.

She made the remarks during a rally that followed after a statue was of six-time Himachal Pradesh chief minister Virbhadra Singh was unveiled by senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi at Daulat Singh Park on the historic Ridge Ground in Shimla.

"After Sukhvinder Sukhu became CM, heavy rains hit Himachal, but the Union Government did not provide adequate help to Congress-ruled state despite several requests," Priyanka said.

She alleged that the BJP Government, which was only interested in winning elections, has discriminated against the Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh.

From June to September this monsoon, 47 cloud-bursts, 98 flash floods and 148 major landslides were reported in the state, killing 270 people in rain-related incidents. The total loss was pegged at Rs 5,426 crore.

In the last two years, too, Himachal Pradesh saw

thousands of crores worth of damage, according to state authorities.

Priyanka also accompanied her mother, Sonia, in paying tributes to Virbhadra Singh during the inauguration of the late leader's statue.

The six-foot-tall bronze statue is placed near the statues of notable leaders such as YS Parmar, the first chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, Mahatma Gandhi and former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Later addressing the rally, Priyanka said, "We need leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Virbhadra Singh who always followed the path of honesty and truth and remained dedicated to people's development".

"Unfortunately, there are very few leaders following this path in the country but Congress's Rahul Gandhi is raising issues of the people fearlessly," Priyanka said.

She asserted that one needs to go beyond "social media and PR" to work for the people.

"When I came for canvassing in the last elections, people told me about Virbhadra Singh's connect with the people and his simple be-

haviour as was the tradition with Congress leaders. And I am happy that Chief Minister Sukhu has taken forward the tradition," she said.

"It is true that we love this land, the mountains and the valleys," she said, exhorting everyone to save the hills.

Priyanka said the Congress will try to fulfil the "cherished dream of our ancestors", underlining that right mindset and honest politics is important for the development of the nation.

She also extended Diwali greetings to the people of the state.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu also praised Virbhadra Singh as the "sadak, bijli aur development ka neta" (the leaders known for his work on roads, electricity and development). "He was so connected with the people that he opened schools for even one student," Sukhu said.

Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri thanked Sonia and Priyanka Gandhi for attending the rally held in honour of Virbhadra Singh, who he said had an emotional relation to the people of the state. "People were waiting for this moment for a long time."

Agnihotri also lauded Indira Gandhi who as prime minister in 1971 announced

the complete statehood of Himachal Pradesh from the Ridge Ground.

Scion of the Rampur-Bushahr royal family, Virbhadra Singh first took office as chief minister on April 8, 1983 and spent the next four decades in public life, becoming the CM five more times. He died in 2021 after a prolonged illness.

Singh's wife, Pratibha Singh, is the state party chief and his son, Vikramaditya Singh, is the Public Works Minister in the Himachal Pradesh government. Both the leaders struck an emotional chord with the people and thanked them to grace the occasion.

The statue unveiling and a rally that followed, were organised by Vikramaditya Singh, who is also the chairman of the Raja Virbhadra Singh Foundation.

The statue's unveiling was initially planned for Virbhadra's birth anniversary on June 23, but was postponed.

A company linked to renowned sculptor Ram V Sutar and his son Anil Ram Sutar built the statue at Rs 40 lakh — Rs 24 lakh for construction and Rs 16 lakh for installation. Ram Sutar was also behind the 182-ft Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue built to honour Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Bhutan should compensate WB as floods caused by water gushing down from Himalayan kingdom: Mamata

**KOLKATA, OCT 13:** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday claimed that water flowing down from adjoining Bhutan caused floods in north Bengal and sought compensation from the Himalayan kingdom.

The chief minister, who is visiting the natural disaster-hit region to oversee relief and rehabilitation work, said at Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri district that the losses occurred owing to rainwater flowing down from Bhutan through various rivers.

"We have faced losses due to water coming down from Bhutan... We want them to give us compensation," Banerjee said in a short address during a government programme.

"I have been insisting on setting up an Indo-Bhutan Joint River Commission for some time now and I de-



mand that West Bengal be made part of it. Under our pressure, there's a meeting scheduled on the 16th of this month and our officers will attend that," she added, alleging that the Centre has deprived the state of monetary assistance for handling calamities.

Banerjee visited multiple relief camps in Bamandanga area of Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri district, one of the worst-affected areas due to heavy rain on October 4 which

flooded the region and caused widespread damage to life and property in the upper reaches of Darjeeling and its foothills.

"We will conduct a survey of the houses that have been washed away once the floodwaters recede completely and will take measures to rebuild them," she assured the victims currently lodged in the camps.

The CM also said that a temporary bridge has been constructed over the adja-

cent Gathia and Diana rivers after the earlier one had collapsed during the floods.

"To ensure that the victims do not suffer further on account of loss of vital documents such as Aadhar Card, PAN card, land titles etc. which have been washed away by the floodwaters, I urge them to register their losses at the ongoing camps so that the state government can reissue duplicate copies at the soonest," she said.

At least 32 people have been killed and thousands left homeless in landslides and floods in the northern districts of West Bengal.

Banerjee is currently on her second visit to north Bengal after the natural disaster hit the region. She will be there till Friday.

The CM was in north Bengal for four days from October 5 to oversee the relief work.