

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Govt fully committed to foreign policy with national interests at its centre: Nepal's FM

KATHMANDU, SEP 15 : The Nepal government is fully committed to conducting its foreign policy by placing the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national security, and long-term national interests at its centre, Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a meeting of the House of Representatives, Khanal also said that the expression "old baggage" was not directed at Nepal's dignified history, national heritage, sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, the protection of national interests, or the preservation of historical documents.

He was replying to a question by lawmaker Sita Thapaliya, who sought clarification on the meaning of this phrase, asking which decisions of previous governments constituted "baggage," whether the decision to incorporate the map of Nepal - including Lipulekh,



Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura - into the Constitution was considered "old baggage," and what errors had been made in the foreign policies of past governments. Responding to these questions, the foreign minister reiterated the government's full commitment to adopting a foreign policy keeping in focus Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national security, and long-term national interests.

Noting that Nepal has always accorded high priority to relations with neighbouring and friendly nations, the minister expressed his belief

that high-level visits play a crucial role in further strengthening bilateral ties with these countries.

Khanal said that Nepal's political map incorporating Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura and the Parliament's unanimous decision to amend the Constitution to endorse it represents the shared national resolve of the entire Nepali people.

"This is our constitutional and sovereign document, which cannot be viewed as a 'burden' in any context," he clarified.

Nepal and India have had

an old boundary dispute over Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani, with both countries claiming the areas.

India maintains that the territories are part of Uttarakhand and has said the issue should be addressed through bilateral dialogue.

Nepal's K P Sharma Oli-led government in May 2020 included the territories, including Kalapani and Lipulekh, as its inseparable parts in its official map.

Khanal underscored that upholding the nation's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity, autonomy, border security, and dignity is the paramount and enduring responsibility of any government.

He said that the current government seeks to steer relations with neighbouring and friendly countries in a transformative direction based on mutual respect, equality, trust, and economic partnership.

India-US joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' gets underway

NEW DELHI, SEP 16: A joint military exercise -- 'Yudh Abhyas' -- involving the troops of Indian and US armies, which seeks to bolster interoperability among the two forces and address emerging challenges while further strengthening the bilateral defence partnership, kicked off on Tuesday.

The opening ceremony of the 22nd edition of the exercise was held at Auli Foreign Training Node in Uttarakhand. The exercise is simultaneously being conducted at Auli and Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan, the Indian defence ministry said.

"The exercise is aimed at enhancing the joint military capability of both armies for employment of Integrated Battle Groups in mountainous and semi-mountainous terrain, with emphasis on infantry-dominated operations. It will strengthen interoperability, facilitate exchanges of best operational practices and strengthen joint planning and execution," it said in a statement.

Maj Gen Amaresh Gunjan, General Officer Commanding, 14 Infantry Division and Col Benjamin Jackman,



Commander, 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 11th Airborne Division, US Army, addressed the participating contingents comprising 600 personnel from each side, the ministry said.

Technology infusion will form a key focus area. The training will include the employment of drones and autonomous systems for surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as demonstration of contemporary weapon systems, which will be undertaken at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, officials said. "Subject matter experts from both the armies

will also exchange views on emerging technologies and developments in multi-domain warfare," it said.

The exercise provides an opportunity for both the armies to share tactics, techniques and procedures; and enhance their ability to undertake coordinated military operations across varied terrain and operational environment. The US Embassy in India, in a post on X on Tuesday, said, "The 22nd edition of Exercise Yudh Abhyas is underway! Over the next two weeks, US and Indian soldiers will train together, sharing skills, building readi-

ness, and improving collaboration between our forces. Through field training, live-fire exercises, and the exchange of expertise and experiences, Yudh Abhyas 2026 aims to strengthen interoperability among our forces and address emerging challenges while further strengthening the US-India defense partnership."

Ambassador Sergio Gor sharing the post, said, "Over the next two weeks, US and Indian soldiers will train together, sharing skills, building readiness, and improving collaboration between our forces." (PTI)

'Narendra's Ongoing Trump Appeasement': Cong's Dig At PM On UPI Move

NEW DELHI, SEP 16: The Congress on Wednesday accused the government of giving into a US demand to get rid of zero MDR and charge for UPI, and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "redefined NOTA - Narendra's Ongoing Trump Appeasement".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also asked whether the government move on Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) was done to enable US card companies to compete with UPI.

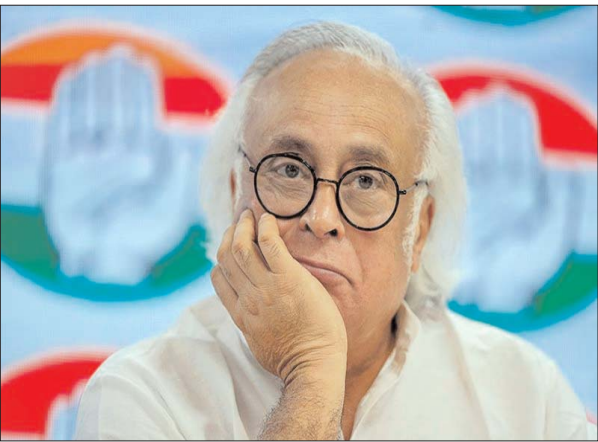
He said that tomorrow, the US House of Representatives votes on a Bill that introduces 100% tariffs on India.

The US Senate has already approved this draconian law, he pointed out.

The Trump regime has also been cracking down on Indian immigrants and making tougher laws against them, Ramesh said on X.

H-1B visa costs have been increased and such holders could soon be deported immediately when out of a job, he said, adding such holders are mostly IT professionals.

Here, the Modi government has given into a US de-



mand to get rid of zero MDR and charge for UPI. The U.S. Trade Representative earlier this year criticized UPI for being free and having driven out Visa and Mastercard," Ramesh said.

"Why 0.4% MDR? Is it because debit card MDR is also 0.4%? Is this being done to enable US card companies to compete with UPI?" he said.

Is this going to make UPI "sustainable" as the government claims, the Congress leader asked.

Noting that the estimated cost of running the entire UPI ecosystem is around Rs 20,000 crore annually, Ramesh said this is less than 10% of what the RBI has

been transferring to the Union government in the past few years so as to show healthy public finances for the Modi government.

"The PM has redefined NOTA - Narendra's Ongoing Trump Appeasement," Ramesh said.

His remarks come a day after the government introduced a 0.4 per cent fee on transfers worth more than Rs 2,000 made to merchants through the platform from October 15 while explicitly ring-fencing everyday person-to-person transactions as well as small payments from any charge.

"Customers will not be required to pay any charge

when making such payments through UPI," the finance ministry said in a statement, adding, "MDR is a charge within the merchant payment ecosystem. It is not a charge on customers making UPI payments."

Also, individuals will continue to have "unlimited free usage, with no monthly quotas, volume restrictions or tiered caps on free UPI transactions", it said.

The carefully calibrated move signalled the end of an era for the world's largest real-time payments system even as the government tried to avoid alarming the hundreds of millions of daily users.

The move has invited sharp criticism from the opposition parties.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the levy was "once again surrender" by a "compromised" Prime Minister Narendra Modi to American pressure. The BJP hit back, accusing the Congress of spreading "fake news", saying the government had made it absolutely clear that MDR charges would not be levied on consumers. (Agencies)

CJP protest: SC refuses reconstitution of panel to probe 'police excesses', says allegations mere conjecture

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: The Supreme Court has refused to reconstitute a five-member high-powered committee set up to examine alleged police excesses against student protesters in Delhi, underlining that allegations against the panel were conjectures and preconceived notions.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said the committee has been constituted to assist it with the highest standards of fairness and transparency and with a dispassionate approach.

The High-Powered Enquiry Committee (HPEC) is not created to espouse the causes of one or the other party before the court, the bench said in the order dated September 10 that was uploaded online on Tuesday.

"We are not inclined to effect any alteration in the constitution of the Committee, particularly where the prayer for such reconstitution proceeds on nothing more than conjecture and preconceived notions, articulated even before the HPEC has embarked upon its enquiry," the bench said.

The top court asked the HPEC to proceed with its enquiry into issues pertaining to the use of pellet guns, targeted violence and harassment of female protesters, as well as the issue of excessive



violence and destruction of property occasioned on either side.

"With respect to the concerns voiced over the treatment of witnesses and of those who may wish to come forward before the HPEC to furnish their account and voice their grievances, we request the HPEC that such vulnerable witnesses be extended due protection and their identities be kept confidential and undisclosed," it said.

It goes without saying that utmost confidentiality shall be maintained in respect of any statements given or evidence submitted by such vulnerable witnesses to the HPEC. In furtherance thereof, a separate online portal may be created to facilitate such witnesses and other requisite stakeholders to submit their documents and evidence," it added.

The bench directed that Senior Advocate Monika Gulsain, along with advocate C

Solomon, shall assist it as a representative of the HPEC, and shall further act as an independent arbiter between the parties.

"Similarly, we also request the HPEC to appoint a member secretary at the earliest, so as to facilitate any such logistical or other secretarial assistance as the HPEC may require in the discharge of its functions," the bench said.

Earlier, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners seeking reconstitution of the HPEC, submitted that one of the members of the panel who was a former DGP of a north-eastern state was under a "conflict of interest" as he was a close friend of a high functionary who was likely to be under investigation.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan had echoed Bhushan's views.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had opposed the submissions and asked the apex court to ignore such allega-

tions.

The Supreme Court formed the HPEC, headed by former top court judge R Subhash Reddy, to examine allegations of police excesses against student protesters during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led protest march on July 20 in Delhi and violence against police personnel.

It had said the committee would comprise former Punjab and Haryana High Court chief justice Ravi Shankar Jha, former Delhi High Court judge Shalinder Kaur, former CBI director Rishi Kumar Shukla and retired Meghalaya DGP L Bishnoi. "This HPEC has been constituted bearing in mind a wide variety of considerations, including the individual expertise and experience of each of its members, as well as the diversity of the committee, among other factors."

"We are confident that the recommendations of the HPEC will be of invaluable assistance to this court, and the committee will be able to undertake a comprehensive assessment of all such issues as merit due contemplation," the bench had said.

The CJP-led march to Parliament saw clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and teargas shells to disperse crowds.

Gurugram hit-and-run case: Biker Sia says Bainsla's arrest not enough, demands strict action

GURUGRAM, Sep 16: Biker Shivani Chauhan, alias Sia, the victim of an on-camera hit-and-run in Gurugram, said the arrest of accused Kalyan Bainsla was not enough and demanded strict action against him and others who were allegedly present in the car at the time of the incident, as an attempt was made on her life.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday night after recording her statement in the district court, Chauhan also hit back at comments made by Bainsla's cousin Kamal, who claimed that she was playing the victim card.

The 27-year-old biker further said that if Bainsla secures bail in three days, it cannot be considered strict action.

"There were two other people in the car. They should be arrested as well. They must be punished. If they aren't, such incidents will continue to happen," she said.

Bainsla, 33, and his cousin Lavneesh, 34, who was in the car with him, were arrested on Tuesday by Gurugram police from Rajgarh in Rajasthan, a short distance from Gurugram, following a two-day search.

Earlier, Kamal said that his cousin Bainsla was innocent.

The girl is playing the victim card. Kalyan is innocent. They are influencing people to ride bikes at high speed", he said.

Responding to Kamal's remarks, Chauhan said, "His followers are saying that I am playing the victim card and doing all this for the sake of followers."

"I contested the municipal election from Kalkaji, Delhi, in 2022. I was the youngest candidate. Everyone in Delhi knows me. After the incident, I didn't want to reveal my identity, but now it has been revealed. I will stand firm for myself. I don't care what their



followers are saying. Their mentality is simply flawed," she said. Chauhan said that she told the court

about the incident, that an attempt was made on her life and how she could have even died.

claimed that Bainsla hurled a slur at her before the incident and tried to kill her.

"It can be clearly seen that he deliberately hit (the biker) from the side after an argument ... the intent was to kill the victim. The victim has also told the police that the intention was to kill her," he said.

Gurugram Police Commissioner Sibash Kabiraj said he was booked under an attempt-to-murder charge after a scrutiny of Instagram videos and CCTV footage.

Earlier, after giving an interview to the media, Bainsla switched off his mobile phone and absconded. Three teams constituted to track him nabbed him in Rajasthan.

According to the police, on September 14, a female biker shared a video on Instagram showing that she had been struck by a car on Golf Course Road the previous morning.