

World's largest airport terminal opens in Beijing

Beijing: World's largest airport terminal opened on Friday last week in the Chinese capital to meet the passenger surge during the Olympics in August.

Forty-two flights arrived or departed from the terminal on its first day, said Dong Zhiyi, general manager of the Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA).

With a floor space of 986,000 square metres, more than double the total area of the first terminal, the new building could be the largest of its kind in the world, said construction manager Fan Jun.

The dragon-shaped building built at a cost of \$3.6 billion was designed by British architect Norman Foster and construction started March 28, 2004.



The dragon-shaped, huge new \$3.6 billion airport terminal constructed in Beijing that was opened Friday last week.

It will give the airport a handling capacity of 76 million passengers a year, more than double the previous 36 million last year.

534 million passengers passed through the airport, putting it among the world's 10 busiest. The airport is expected to receive about 5.56 million people during the Olympics in August.

It has almost doubled the number of BCIA taxiways from 71 to 137 and

number of aircraft stands from 164 to 314. It can also receive the new Airbus A-380, the world's largest passenger aircraft.

Three highway roads are also under construction to connect the new terminal to the existing traffic system.

The new terminal will be used by six airlines initially, Sichuan Airlines, Shandong Airlines, Qatar Airways, British Airways and El Al Israel Airlines. A further 21 airlines will start using it March 29.

China is also upgrading several standby airports near Beijing for the Olympics by renovating terminals, enlarging tarmacs, lengthening runways and improving services.

Medvedev is new Russian leader

Putin's nominee scores a landslide win

Moscow: Dmitry Medvedev, President Vladimir Putin's hand-picked successor, won a landslide victory in Russian presidential polls on Sunday according to early results. His dominance changed the way the vote was rigged.

Medvedev had won 68.2 per cent of the vote, based on results from more than half of the country's polling stations, the election commission said.

Shortly before that official count was announced, Putin and Medvedev walked side by side onto Red Square where they joined a raucous celebration of what



Medvedev, Putin's hand-picked successor, won a landslide victory.

Medvedev, 42, used the occasion to reaffirm his commitment to pursuing the policy course set by his mentor.

"Whether we can continue the course set by President Putin... together we'll go further. Together we'll win. Forward!" declared

Medvedev, dressed in jeans and a leather jacket, to a roar of approval from supporters gathered in the driving sleet.

Putin congratulated Medvedev and wished him success and went on to defend the election as "strictly in accordance with the constitution."

The latest returns put Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov in second place with 18.5 per cent, the Central Elections Commission said.

Nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy got 10.5 per cent and the almost unknown Andrei Bogdanov 1.5 per cent. Medvedev's triumph

was a foregone conclusion given his backing from Putin, who has amassed huge powers in his eight-year presidency and as prime minister is expected to retain a key role in leading the world's top energy exporter.

Incomplete official figures showed turnout hit a healthy 65 per cent among the 109 million eligible voters.

Independent observers highlighted a stream of violations, however, saying the media was censored, people were pressured to vote, absentee ballots were abused, and monitors were refused access to polling stations.

Tatas gifts 65,000 books to poor US kids

Washington: The Tata Group North America has joined First Book, a non-profit organisation, in a programme to distribute 65,000 new books to children from low-income families across the US.

Second-hand stories from Dodge, Houghton Mifflin, Scholastic, Macmillan, and the US students to receive the brand new books are working with the support of the Tata.

The students participated in reading circles with Tata company representatives to celebrate First Book's mission to provide new books to disadvantaged children.

Kyle Zimmer, president of First Book, said, "First Book is tremendously grateful for the generous

support." The Tata Group had its own games, which will help to make the joy of reading and learning a part of each child's life. The Tata Group, through the First Book, has a long history of social responsibility.

First Book could open a world of new books to each American child. The Tata Group has a long heritage of generosity in education in the communities in which it operates. We believe that this good is doing good by new and this is a good example of how we use our resources constructively to invest in future generations.

The Tata Group is

proud that so many of our companies have pooled their resources and attention to make a difference in the education of so many children.

First Book, a non-profit organisation with the mission to give children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new books, has provided more than 50 million new books to children in need in thousands of communities in the US. With more than 60 years of experience in North America and a century of leadership in India, Tata Group companies have generated more than \$25 billion in annual revenues and employ more than a quarter million people across 85 countries and six continents.

Hindu groups take Pakistan govt to court

Karachi: A Hindu religious welfare organisation in this southern port city of Pakistan has taken the government to court to get back a heritage site. The Hindu Gymkhana site, which belonged to the minority community before the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, was taken over by the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA).

Following a petition filed by the Ratneshwari Maha Dev Welfare Sewa Mandali seeking the restoration of the site, a division bench of the Sindh High Court issued notices seeking responses

from the NAPA, Sindh cultural heritage department and others.

According to the plea, the Hindu Gymkhana was the property of the Hindus of Karachi since pre-partition days and the site was protected under the Sindh Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, the Daily Times reported on Thursday. The court was asked to direct the respondents to hand over the control and management of the Gymkhana to the association for the promotion of cultural and religious activities of the Hindu community.

Top Chinese comedian in HK is an Indian

Hong Kong: A funny thing happened to Vivek Mahbubani late last year in Hong Kong. The 25-year-old tech geek, who runs his one-person web design firm by night and sleeps by day, decided on a passing whim to audition for a stand-up comedy competition in Hong Kong. "I'd never done comedy before, although I've always been a fan of stand-up," Mahbubani recalls. "But I felt that if I didn't seize the moment and try it out, I'd regret it for the rest of my life."

Just being on stage, getting a few laughs with his hilarious observations about Hong Kong's many quirks, would have been a heady experience for him, he says. But Mansukhani sailed along on a sea of

laughter to become a finalist in the English-language section of the first Hong Kong Comedy Festival. But he did even better in the Chinese-language section and was adjudged the funniest Chinese comedian in Hong Kong. Not bad, he reckons, for an Indian...

That's because few Indians, even among those who have been in Hong Kong for generations, can speak more than a smattering of Cantonese, the nine-tonal Chinese-variant language that's spoken on the streets of Hong Kong. "But when I was young, my parents enrolled me in a local government school because they wanted me to learn the language," says Mahbubani.

Ms Chotalia receives 'QC' award in Canada



Mr Nilkanth Chotalia (husband) Ms Shirish Chotalia and Mr Pandit at the honour ceremony in Canada

Ms Shirish P Chotalia, a lawyer with Pundit & Chotalia and practices in the areas of immigration, human rights, employment and general civil litigation will be honoured with the Queen's Counsel, the highest honour bestowed on outstanding lawyers. The tradition of honouring with Queen's Council was started 404 years ago in England.

Ms Chotalia has been an instructor at the University of Alberta's

Law Faculty since 1995 and was an adjudicator with the Canadian Human Rights Commission from 1999 to 2005. She was a commissioner with the Alberta Human Rights Commission from 1989 to 1993. Ms Chotalia obtained her Bachelor of Arts in 1983, her Bachelor of Laws in 1986 and her Master of Laws in 1991 from the University of Alberta. She was admitted to the Bar of Alberta in 1987.