

Mallya Declared 'Absconder' Gokhale New Foreign Secretary

NEW DELHI: A New Delhi court on Thursday declared India's flamboyant tycoon Vijay Mallya a "proclaimed offender" for failing to appear to answer allegations of money laundering by flouting foreign currency laws.

The order paves the way for the government to take over Mallya's businesses and real estate holdings.

Mallya is currently in London where a court is hearing whether he should be extradited as sought by India.

Mallya was once hailed as India's version of British tycoon Richard Branson for his investments in a brewing and liquor company, an airline, a Formula One team and an Indian Premier League cricket club.

Investigators have accused the



61-year-old of paying \$200,000 to a British firm for displaying his company Kingfisher's logo during the Formula One World Championships in London and some European countries in the 1990s.

The Enforcement Directorate

claimed that the money was paid without prior approval of India's federal bank. Mallya denies any wrongdoing.

The Indian government seeks the entrepreneur's extradition to face money-laundering and conspiracy allegations. He is fighting to remain in Britain - which he calls his second home - and will be able to appeal if the judge rules against him.

Mallya was once one of the wealthiest people in India with control of Kingfisher Airlines and other major businesses. He was also a prominent member of parliament before he resigned when he was about to be expelled.

The government says he borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars he knew he would never be able to repay.

NEW DELHI: Vijay Gokhale, who as envoy in Beijing played a key role in the resolution of the Doklam stand-off with China, was on Monday named the new Foreign Secretary to replace S. Jaishankar who retires this month.

The appointment of Gokhale, currently Secretary (Economic Relations), was cleared by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, an official statement said.

The 1981-batch Indian Foreign Service officer is widely believed to have played a key role as then Indian ambassador to China when he led the negotiations to resolve the over 70-day Doklam crisis.

Gokhale along with Jaishankar led India's diplomatic outreach to the US and Japan in explaining to them New Delhi's stand on the issue and winning their support that



built up the pressure on China.

Gokhale has served Indian embassies in Germany and Malaysia and missions in Hong Kong, Hanoi and New York.

He will take over from Jaishankar who was appointed Foreign Secretary on January 29, 2015. Jaishankar retires on January 28.

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