

LAC must be respected:

Jaishankar to Chinese counterpart

ASTANA, July 4 (PTI)

INDIA and China on Thursday agreed to step up efforts to resolve the remaining issues in eastern Ladakh at the earliest even as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at a meeting that the Line of Actual Control (LAC) must be respected and ensuring peace along the border is essential.

In talks he held with Wang on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in this Kazakh capital city, Jaishankar reaffirmed India's persistent view that the relations between the two sides must be based on mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity.

The External Affairs Minister highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve "complete disengagement" from the remaining areas in eastern Ladakh and restore peace and tranquillity to remove obstacles towards the return of normalcy in the ties.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the two Ministers "had an in-depth exchange of views on finding an early resolution of the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh to stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations."

Jaishankar also underlined the need for fully abiding by the relevant bilateral pacts and protocols reached between the



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar holds a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council meeting, in Astana. (PTI)

two sides in the past for management of the border.

"Met with CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi in Astana this morning. Discussed early resolution of remaining issues in border areas. Agreed to redouble efforts through diplomatic and military channels to that end," Jaishankar said on 'X'.

"Respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential. The three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest - will guide our bilateral ties," he said.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

"Both Ministers agreed to continue and step up meetings of the diplomatic and military officials of the two sides

to take forward their discussions to resolve the remaining issues at the earliest," the MEA said.

"To that end, they agreed that the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) should hold an early meeting," it said.

It said the two ministers agreed that the "prolongation" of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side.

"The External Affairs Minister highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve complete disengagement from the remaining areas in eastern Ladakh and restore border peace and tranquillity in order to remove obstacles towards return of normalcy in bilateral relations," the MEA said.

Assam flood situation deteriorates, 16.50 lakh people hit in 29 districts

GUWAHATI, July 4 (PTI)

THE flood situation in Assam further deteriorated with over 16.50 lakh population affected in 29 districts with the major rivers flowing above the danger level across the State on Thursday, an official bulletin said.

An alert has been sounded in Kamrup (Metro) district with the Brahmaputra, Digaru and Kollong rivers flowing above the red mark with vast tracts of land inundated.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is scheduled to visit flood-affected areas in Maligaon, Pandu Port and Temple Ghat areas in Guwahati Metropolitan area on Thursday to take stock of the situation.

Sarma chaired a meeting on the flood situation with all District Commissioners late on Wednesday night and directed them to be liberal in granting relief as per norms, complete all rehabilitation claims as per norms before August 15 and provide accurate information to the headquarters so



Indian Army carries out flood relief operations in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the villages of Sivaguri (Dhemaji District, Assam) and Village Mer (East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh) in the Pasighat Region. (ANI)

that adequate relief can be ensured.

17 ANIMALS DROWN, 72 RESCUED IN KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK: Seventeen animals have died so far due to drowning while 72 others rescued from flood waters inside the famed Kaziranga

National Park, an official said on Thursday. The animal mortality includes 11 hog deer due to drowning in the park and five during treatment.

The forest officials rescued 63 hog deer, two each of otter, sambar and a scop owl and one each of a rhino calf, Indian hare and a jungle cat.

Currently, 26 animals are under treatment while 29 others have been released after treatment, the official said.

Eleven animals had died due to drowning while 65 others had been rescued from flood waters in the Kaziranga National Park till Wednesday. **LANDSLIDES SNAP SURFACE COMMUNICATION IN 7 ARUNACHAL DISTRICTS:** Landslides triggered by rain have snapped surface communication in at least seven districts of Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday, officials said.

The districts affected by landslides are Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang, Shi Yomi, Leparada and Upper Subansiri.

India developing Chabahar Port holds 'great value': PM Modi

ASTANA, July 4 (PTI)

THE progress made by India in developing Iran's Chabahar Port not only holds "great value" to landlocked Central Asian states but also "de-risks" commerce between India and Eurasia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is in Astana to attend the SCO Summit, delivered Modi's remarks at the extended format meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State here in the Kazakh capital. He also said, "While standing resolute on challenges, it is equally important to actively

and collaboratively explore avenues of progress. The current global debate is focused on creating new connectivity linkages that would better serve a rebalanced world."

"If this is to gather serious momentum, it requires the joint efforts of many. It must also be respectful of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and be built on the foundation of non-discriminatory trade and transit rights to neighbours."

"For the SCO extended family, we flag the progress made on Chabahar port recently through a long-term agreement between India and Iran. This not only holds great value to

landlocked Central Asian states but also de-risks commerce between India and Eurasia," he said.

'MAKE IN INDIA INITIATIVE CAN ADD TO ENGINES OF GLOBAL GROWTH': PRIME Minister Narendra Modi said the 'Make in India' initiative can add to engines of global growth and help democratise the global economy, and highlighted the importance of creating multiple, reliable and resilient supply chains. Modi said that India has contributed significantly to enhancing the economic agenda of the SCO grouping with institutionalised mechanisms such as the SCO Startup Forum and others.

Hezbollah fires over 200 rockets into Israel

BEIRUT, July 4 (AP)

THE Lebanese Hezbollah group said it launched over 200 rockets on Thursday at several military bases in Israel in retaliation for a strike that killed one of its senior commanders.

The attack by the Iran-backed militant group was one of the largest in the months-long conflict along the Lebanon-Israel border, with tensions escalating in recent weeks. The Israeli military said “numerous projectiles and suspicious aerial targets” had entered its territory from Lebanon, many of which it said were intercepted. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

It said about 200 “projectiles” were launched toward the occupied Syrian Golan Heights

and over 20 drones into Israeli territory, but that it had intercepted some of them.

Israel after Hezbollah's attack struck various towns in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military said it struck Hezbollah's “military structures” in the southern border towns of Ramyeh and Houla. Lebanon's News Agency reported an Israeli drone strike of Houla killed at least one person. Israeli jets also broke the sound barrier over the Lebanese capital and other areas in the country.

Israel acknowledged that it had killed Mohammad Naameh Nasser, who headed one of Hezbollah's three regional divisions, a day earlier. Hours after the killing, Hezbollah launched scores of Katyusha rockets and Falaq rockets with heavy warheads into northern

Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. It launched more rockets on Thursday and said it had also sent exploding drones into several bases. Nasser was of great importance to Hezbollah, which said he took part in battles in conflicts in Syria and Iraq from 2011 until 2016 and fought in the group's last war with Israel in 2006. Two other senior Hezbollah commanders have also been killed.

The US and France are continuing to scramble to prevent the skirmishes from spiraling into an all-out war, which they fear could spillover across the region. Washington in its shuttle diplomatic efforts initially hoped for calm along the Lebanon-Israel border in a deal that is not linked to the war in Gaza.

Millions vote in UK polls

LONDON, July 4 (PTI)

THE future of Rishi Sunak as Britain's first Prime Minister of Indian origin and the leader of the Conservative Party – fighting anti-incumbency of 14 years – hangs in the balance as millions of voters cast their ballots in a historic general election on Thursday.

The British Indian leader and the man who wants his job – Labour leader Keir Starmer were among the early voters from an estimated 46 million registered voters as around 40,000 polling booths opened across the country at 7 am local time.

Sunak and his wife Akshata

Murty walked hand-in-hand to their local polling booth on a sunny day in his constituency of Richmond and Northallerton in Yorkshire, northern England.

A little later, Starmer and wife Victoria were at their polling station in Camden, north London, sporting Labour red colours. "Today, Britain can begin a new chapter," Starmer told voters in a statement.

"We cannot afford five more years under the Conservatives. But change will only happen if you vote Labour," he said.

Sunak, meanwhile, took to social media to drive home his message: "Polls are open. It's time to stop the Labour super-

majority that would mean higher taxes for the rest of your life."

Sunak, 44, is up against voter angst towards the incumbent Tories after 14 years in power and has had to contend with trailing far behind 61-year-old Keir Starmer-led Labour Party throughout the six-week campaign.

Earlier, both leaders wrapped up their six-week-long campaign with contrasting messages – Sunak urging voters not to hand "tax-raising" Labour a "super-majority" and Starmer playing down the prospect of a landslide win for fear of a 1

'Isolate and expose' countries that harbour terrorists

India at SCO summit

ASTANA, July 4 (PTI)

INDIA on Thursday asked the international community to "isolate and expose" those countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone terrorism, saying that if left unchecked, terrorism can become a major threat to regional and global peace, in a veiled jibe at China and Pakistan.

Delivering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State Summit in the Kazakhstan capital Astana, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who was physically present at the meeting, recalled that one of the origi-



External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar delivering India's statement at the Summit of SCO Council of Heads of States on behalf of PM Modi, in Astana. (PTI)

nal goals of the SCO is to combat terrorism.

"Many of us have had our experiences, often originating

beyond our borders. Let us be clear that if left unchecked, it can become a major threat to

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Pakistan to invite India to SCO council meet in Oct

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: Pakistan foreign ministry's spokesperson said on Thursday that her country will host the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's council of heads of govt in Oct and invite all members, including India, to attend the gathering in person in Islamabad. "The year 2024 is an important milestone for Pakistan-SCO relations, as Pakistan holds the rotating chairmanship of the SCO council of heads of govt, which is the second highest decision-making forum of SCO," foreign office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said. Pakistan became an SCO member in June 2017, after holding observer status from 2005 to 2017.

Baloch said the Oct conference would be preceded by a ministerial meeting and several rounds of high-level official talks among SCO member states, focusing on financial, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. "The conference would be held as per the SCO procedures and in-person attendance of heads of govt. So, in our capacity as the chair, we will be

Terrorist killed, several injured in Gilgit-Baltistan

Pakistan's security forces have killed a high-profile militant commander involved in multiple terrorist attacks in the disputed northern region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in a shootout on Thursday, according to top govt functionaries, reports **Omer Farooq Khan**. Speaking to reporters, GB home minister Shams Lone said it was part of an intelligence-based operation. "Terrorist commander Shah Faisal was killed during an intelligence-based security operation in the Darel valley of GB's Diamer district, while his accomplice, Zahidullah, was injured," Lone said. He did not disclose the name of the outfit with which the slain commander was associated but stated he was the mastermind of the terrorist attack in Chilas region last Dec when militants shot up a bus on the Karakoram Highway, killing nine people and injuring 21.

extending invitations to all heads of govt of SCO member states," she said.