

India attaches top priority to relations with Maldives: EAM

MALE, Aug 10 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday met Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu and other top leaders and assured them that New Delhi attached top priority to its multifaceted relationship with Male and was determined to further its developmental cooperation with the country.

Jaishankar's visit to the Maldives is the first high-level trip from New Delhi after the island nation's pro-China President, Muizzu, assumed office in November last year.

"This visit is an opportunity to take stock of what our countries have achieved together as well as to chart out an aspirational blueprint for the coming years of what we are confident, will be a truly multifaceted partnership, Jaishankar said after talks with his Maldivian counterpart Moosa Zameer.

"The bedrock of our partnership is the mutual benefit of our peoples," he said, noting that this is manifested in



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calls on Maldives President Dr Mohamed Muizzu. (PTI)

diverse sectors of our cooperation—health, education, large infrastructure development, defence, maritime, agriculture, banking and adapting for climate resilience.

"It is our endeavour to expand this list as we move forward and harness our multifaceted partnership to realise the aspirations of our peoples," Jaishankar said in the presence of President Muizzu at the vir-

tual inauguration and handing over of the water and sanitation projects in 28 islands, commissioned under the Indian Line of Credit.

India's development partnership is driven by the needs and priorities of the people and the Government of Maldives and is a judicious mix of grants, loans, budgetary support, capacity building and training assistance, he said.

MEA and NSIL sign MoU to assist launch of Nepalese Munal satellite

NEW DELHI, Aug 10 (PTI)

THE Ministry of External Affairs and ISRO's commercial arm NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) signed an agreement on Saturday to grant assistance for the launching of the Nepal-built Munal satellite, according to an official statement.

Munal is an indigenous satellite developed in Nepal under the aegis of the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), the MEA said.

Antarikhya Pratishan Nepal (APN), a Nepalese space startup, has assisted Nepalese students in the design and fabrication of this satellite.

The satellite aims to build a vegetation density database of the earth's surface, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in the statement.

The MoU was signed by Anurag Srivastava, Joint Secretary (North) from MEA and Arunachalam A, Director from NSIL.

Rabindra Prasad Dhakal, Secretary, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), Surendra Thapa, Chargé d'affaires of Nepali Embassy and Abhas Maskey, Founder, Antarikhya Pratishan Nepal (APN) were also present on the occasion.

IAS officer T V Somanathan is new Cabinet Secretary

NEW DELHI, Aug 10 (PTI)

THE Centre on Saturday named Finance Secretary T V Somanathan as the new Cabinet Secretary for a tenure of two years. He will succeed incumbent Rajeev Gauba, who completes his five-year term on the top bureaucratic post this month-end.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved Somanathan's appointment as the cabinet secretary with a tenure of two years from August 30, 2024, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

The ACC-led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also approved his appointment as Officer on Special Duty



(OSD) in the Cabinet Secretariat "from the date he joins the assignment till he takes over as Cabinet Secretary", it said.

Somanathan, a 1987 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, served as the Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) under Modi for a little over two years between 2015 and 2017.

'No national disaster status for natural calamities'



A view of the landslide-hit areas in Wayanad district on Saturday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Aug 10 (IANS)

AMID the repeated demands by Congress leaders led by Rahul Gandhi and the Kerala Government to declare the Wayanad landslides a national disaster, it has emerged that there exists no such legal provision to declare the same, as per Central Government rules. The same was outlined by the Congress-led UPA Government in 2013.

The then Minister of State for Home Mullappally

Ramachandran, in a reply to a similar question in Lok Sabha, said, "There is no provision to declare a natural disaster as a national disaster."

Despite the rules in place, the Congress party has been repeatedly demanding national disaster status for the Wayanad tragedy. Rahul Gandhi, who is MP from the constituency, also shared a post ahead of PM Modi's visit to the region to take stock of relief measures.

"Thank you, Modi ji, for vis-

iting Wayanad to personally take stock of the terrible tragedy. This is a good decision. I am confident that once the Prime Minister sees the extent of the devastation firsthand, he will declare it a national disaster," Rahul said on X.

BJP leaders have accused Congress of politicising the tragedy and scoring political points. BJP leader Anil Antony said that Rahul has been a Parliamentarian for many years and is also the Leader of the Opposition but is bent on taking political mileage over a tragedy that claimed more than 200 lives. Ramachandran, a former State Congress president, further stated in his reply, "Government of India adjudges a calamity of severe nature on case-to-case basis taking into account inter-alia the intensity and magnitude of the calamity, level of relief assistance, the capacity of the State Government to tackle the problem, the alternatives and flexibility available within the plan to provide succour and relief etc. The priority is immediate relief and response assistance in the context of a natural calamity.

Yunus condemns 'heinous' attacks on B'desh minorities

DHAKA, Aug 10 (PTI)

BANGLADESH'S interim leader Muhammad Yunus on Saturday condemned attacks on the minority communities in the violence-hit nation, terming them as "heinous", and urged the youth to protect all Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist families from harm.

Members of minority communities in Bangladesh faced at least 205 incidents of attacks in 52 districts since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5, according to two Hindu organisations -- Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council and the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad -- in the country.

Thousands of Bangladeshi Hindus have been trying to flee to neighbouring India to escape the violence. Reaching out to students who are at the forefront of the protests, Yunus, a Nobel laureate, cautioned them not to let their efforts be sabotaged by those seeking to undermine their progress, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. "There are many standing by to make your efforts futile. Don't fail this time," he said while addressing the students at the Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur city.

Yunus unequivocally condemned the attacks on minority communities in the country, calling the acts "heinous".

He urged the students to protect all Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist families from harm.

"Are they not the people of this country? You have been able to save the country; can't you save some families?... You must say — no one can harm



Bangladesh Hindu community members participate in a protest and block the Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Saturday. Thousands of members of the country's minority Hindu community blocked the Shahbagh intersection to protest attacks on Hindu homes, temples, shops. (EPA/PTI)

Eternally grateful to PM Modi: Hasina's son

WASHINGTON DC, Aug 10 (ANI)

SON of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Sajeeb Wazed Joy has expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his Government's quick action following the developments in the neighbouring country which led to her departure.

Sheikh Hasina's son also dismissed media reports of a revocation of her visa stating that no one has revoked the visa of the Awami League leader and neither has she applied for political asylum anywhere.

them. They are my brothers; we fought together, and we will stay together," he asserted, underscoring the need for national unity.

Stressing the importance of youth leadership, Yunus said, "This Bangladesh, is now in your hands. You have the power to take it wherever you want. This isn't a matter of research — it's a power within you."

He also urged the people of Bangladesh to emulate the way student activist Abu Sayed stood valiantly during the anti-government demonstrations that led to the toppling of the Sheikh Hasina government. Sayed, 25, of Rangpur's Begum Rokeya University, was among the first protesters to be killed in police firing on July 16 during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement. Yunus met with Sayed's family in Rangpur's Pirganj upazila, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

Influx from Bangladesh cause for concern: Manipur CM Biren Singh

IMPHAL, Aug 10 (PTI)

MANIPUR Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said the influx of people from Bangladesh in the wake of unrest in the neighbouring country is a cause for concern, and his Government has imposed night curfew in some districts to check infiltration. "I am in touch with the external affairs ministry. As for our security, we have imposed night curfew in Pherzawl and Jiribam districts to check the influx," Singh told reporters here.

The Chief Minister was speaking at a function to mark the Centre's 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative.

Assam CM slams Cong for its 'silence' over 'attacks' on Hindus in B'desh

RANCHI, Aug 10 (PTI)

ASSAM Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday criticised the Congress for its "silence" regarding the "attacks" on Hindus in Bangladesh, alleging that the party is more concerned about Gaza. Sarma, who is BJP's election co-in-charge for Jharkhand, participated in party's organisational programme in Ranchi and discussed strategies for the 'Yuva Aakrosh Rally', to be organised by the party's youth wing on August 23.

Expressing concern over the instability in Bangladesh, Sarma remarked that the situation there is dire and beyond words.

Fringe group attacks shanty-dweller in UP calling them infiltrators

GHAZIABAD, Aug 10 (PTI)

MEMBERS of a Hindu right wing outfit assaulted a group of people living near a railway station here and destroyed their shanties, claiming that they were Bangladeshi infiltrators, police said on Saturday. Officials said an FIR has been lodged against the leader of the outfit and 20 others for rioting, hurting religious feelings and other offences and stressed that those attacked are not Bangladeshis.

Some of the residents were injured in the incident that occurred around 7.30 pm on Friday. Ghaziabad Police Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mishra told PTI, "Those living in the shanties are from Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh), not Bangladesh."