

Nepal's claim on Lipulekh neither justified nor based on historical facts, says MEA

NEW DELHI, Aug 21 (PTI)

INDIA on Wednesday categorically rejected Nepal's objection to a decision by New Delhi and Beijing to resume border trade through Lipulekh pass, saying Kathmandu's claims on the territory are not justified.

India and China on Tuesday agreed to resume border trade through Lipulekh pass and two other trading points.

The Nepalese Foreign Ministry on Wednesday objected to the move to resume border trade through Lipulekh pass saying the territory is an inseparable part of Nepal. In 2020, Nepal triggered

a border row by issuing a political map that showed Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh as part of the country. India had strongly trashed the claims.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal rejected Nepal's territorial claims.

"We have noted the comments of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal related to resumption of border trade between India and China through the Lipulekh pass," he said.

"Our position in this regard has been consistent and clear. Border trade between India and China through Lipulekh pass had commenced in 1954 and has

been going on for decades," he added.

Jaiswal said the trade had been disrupted in recent years due to COVID-19 pandemic and other developments, and both sides have now agreed to resume it.

"As regards territorial claims, our position remains that such claims are neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence. Any unilateral artificial enlargement of territorial claims is untenable," he said.

"India remains open to constructive interaction with Nepal on resolving agreed outstanding boundary issues through dialogue and diplomacy," he added.

China, Pakistan Foreign Ministers discuss CPEC 2.0, trade, economic relations

■ By Sajjad Hussain

ISLAMABAD, Aug 21 (PTI)

PAKISTAN'S Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday held strategic consultations during which they reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral ties and discussed important regional and global issues. "We held fruitful and substantive discussions today covering diverse areas of mutual interest," Dar said while addressing a joint press conference with Wang.

During the 6th round of the Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in Islamabad, the two leaders exchanged in-depth views on multiple facets of bilateral cooperation, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor 2.0, trade and economic relations, multilateral cooperation, and people-to-people ties, the Foreign Office said. The "two sides reviewed the entire gamut of



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar (L) and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during a meeting on Thursday. (AP)

Pakistan-China relations and discussed important regional and global issues," it said. Underlining the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China, Dar and Wang agreed that Pak-China friendship is significant for maintaining regional peace and stability and also indispensable for the progress and prosperity of the two countries, the Foreign Office said.

'ISRO completed double missions in 2015-2025 than in 2005-2015'

NEW DELHI, Aug 21 (ANI)

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched almost double the number of missions between 2015 to 2025 than the ones launched between 2005 to 2015, Chairman V Narayanan said while giving updates on the "phenomenal and exponential" performance of the organisation in Delhi. The ISRO Chairman also praised Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla for being the first Indian to return from the international Space Station (ISS).

"In last 10 years, the progress is phenomenal, exponential. With respect to missions, between 2015 and 2025 the number of missions were almost doubled compared to 2005-2015. During the last six months, three important missions were completed. Axiom 4 mission is a very prestigious mission, successfully accomplished. First Indian to be brought back safely from the international Space Station (ISS), we have the Gaganyaatri Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla," Narayanan said during the confer-



ISRO Chairman V Narayanan

ence. Narayanan addressed the press conference in Delhi, along with Union Minister Jitendra Singh, and Gaganyaan astronauts Group Captain Shubanshu Shukla and Group Captain Prasanth Nair.

Giving an update on the future missions of ISRO, the Chairman mentioned that in the next 2-3 months, another NASA-ISRO mission will be launched, with India's launch vehicle set to carry a 6,500 kg satellite into orbit.

"In 2-3 months, around 6,500 kg communication satellites of USA are going to be launched using our launch using our launch vehicle. Until today, 433 satellites of 34 countries are done from India," he added.

'SpaceX probably took leak in Axiom-4 rocket lightly'

NEW DELHI, Aug 21 (PTI)

SPACE X had probably taken "lightly" the liquid oxygen leak in the Falcon-9 rocket that launched the Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station, putting at risk the lives for 4 astronauts, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said.

Narayanan said it was at the insistence of ISRO engineers that SpaceX examined the leak detected in the oxidiser lines that carry liquid oxygen to the rocket engines and discovered a crack that could have proved fatal.

"If with the crack the rocket lifts off, with the vibrations, it will give way the moment it lifts off. Once it gives way, it is a catastrophic situation, nothing else," Narayanan said here.

Devastated after Op Sindoor

Pak-based JeM launches massive fundraising drive

JAMMU, Aug 21 (PTI)

AFTER suffering severe setbacks during Operation Sindoor, Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror outfit has launched a massive fundraising drive in that country under the garb of building over 300 mosques to replicate Lashkar-e-Taiba's decentralisation policy, security officials said.

The JeM has come out with a new mechanism with the support of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to collect funds. It is using digital wallets like 'EasyPaisa' and 'Sadapay' controlled by its founder and most wanted terrorist Masood Azhar's family members to bypass scrutiny by global agencies like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the officials said citing inputs from across the border. The Rs 3.91 billion fundraising drive would secure JeM's operational and weapons financing for at least a decade, they said.

Indian Armed Forces carried out missile strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and PoK in the early hours of May 7 in retaliation to the Pahalgam terror attack. Pakistan retaliated and the intense border skirmishes continued till May 10 before the two countries reached an understanding to end the hostilities. The officials said the JeM's headquarters 'Markaz Subhanallah', along with four other training camps -- Markaz Bilal, Markaz Abbas, Mahmona Joya, and the Sargal training camp -- were destroyed during the Operation Sindoor.

While Pakistan's Government has announced funding to rebuild these destroyed facilities, the JeM has launched an online fundraising campaign through digital wallets to collect Rs 3.91 billion for constructing 313 new markaz buildings under the garb of constructing mosques across Pakistan, the officials said.

On social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, JeM-linked proxy accounts and those used by JeM commanders have posted posters, videos, and a letter from Masood Azhar, urging supporters to donate wholeheartedly as each mosque requires Rs 12.5 million for construction and smooth running, they said. According to the officials, several of the digital wallet accounts were found linked to the mobile number of Azhar's brother Talha Al Saif.

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Modi holds phone talks with Macron



NEW DELHI, Aug 21 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron focusing on resolution of the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia.

Modi described the conversation as “very good”.

Macron was among the European leaders who accompanied Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his talks with US President Donald Trump this week.

“Had a very good conversation with my friend President Macron.

Exchanged views on efforts for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Ukraine and in West Asia,” Modi said.

“Reaffirmed our commitment to further strengthen the India-France strategic partnership,” he said.

Trump’s meeting with Zelenskyy came days after he held summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on the Ukraine conflict.

India-Russia ties **AMONG STEADIEST** in world after WWII: Jaishankar

EAM Jaishankar meets Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov

MOSCOW, Aug 21 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to discuss bilateral relations and prepare for the annual summit at the end

of the year. "Today's meeting gives us an occasion to discuss our political relationship as well, but also to review our bilateral ties. So, I look forward to an exchange of views on politics, on trade, on economic investment, (Contd on page 3)



MOSCOW, Aug 21 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met Russian President Vladimir Putin and is understood to have discussed ways to further expand India-Russia ties.

The meeting came hours after Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that largely focused on expanding

the trade ties between the two countries.

"We believe that relations between India and Russia have been among the steadiest of the major relationships in the world after the Second World War," Jaishankar said at a joint media briefing with Lavrov.

"Geo-political convergence, leadership contacts and popular sentiment remain its key drivers," he said.



Sergey Lavrov, right, and S Jaishankar enter a hall for their talks at Zinaida Morozova's Mansion in Moscow, Russia on Thursday. (PTI)

Pak-US crypto dreams

A deal with Trump family's crypto firm for money laundering, terror-funding

NEW DELHI, Aug 21 (IANS)

THE United States has been steadily warming up to Pakistan over the last few months, and this engagement goes far beyond routine diplomacy.

At the centre of the shift lies a crypto deal - an arrangement that appears less like economic cooperation and more like a financial pact between the Trump family's crypto venture and Pakistan's military-linked funds, with a chain of controversial actors involved, according to a thread report posted by DisInfo Lab.

One of the key figures is Bilal bin Saqib, a British-Pakistani entrepreneur who

now serves as CEO of Pakistan's newly formed Crypto Council (PCC) as well as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Blockchain.

The connection worth noting is that Bilal is also an advisor to World Liberty Financial (WLF), the Trump family's crypto enterprise.

WLF is no ordinary crypto company. Eric Trump, Donald

TOP STORY

Trump Jr., and Jared Kushner together hold a 40 per cent stake, while Donald Trump himself is listed as "co-founder emeritus".

The Pakistan-WLF deal was signed on April 26 amid



Donald Trump



Bilal bin Saqib

Since the crypto pact between Pak and Trump's firm was formalised in May 2025, Washington and Islamabad have seen a visible upswing in ties. Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir visited the US twice within two months, a string of new bilateral agreements was signed

heightened tensions between India and Pakistan. Just days earlier, on April 15, WLF had appointed Bilal as an advisor, and by May, he was also installed as CEO of the PCC.

This dual role places him at the heart of the arrangement, representing Islamabad's crypto vision while simultaneously serving the Trump family's interests in Washington, the report suggests.

By June, Bilal had already met with a wide range of American political leaders and influencers, including Senator Cynthia Lummis, co-sponsor of the Bitcoin Act, Senator Bill Hagerty of the Banking Committee, White House advisers, and New York

City Mayor Eric Adams. During these meetings, he pitched Pakistan's "crypto vision", all the while maintaining his advisory position with WLF.

The DisInfo Lab report also alleged that the crypto deal between Pakistan and WLF "opened avenues for money laundering and is even giving impetus to terror-funding", with Binance providing the perfect incubator. Binance, a major global crypto trading platform, has long been surrounded by allegations of facilitating illicit financing.

Despite claiming to have cut ties with China, evidence continues to show Binance's connections there.

(Contd on page 3)