

China positive on Putin's India visit; calls for stronger trilateral cooperation

■ By K J M Varma

BEIJING, Dec 8 (PTI)

CHINA on Monday reacted positively to Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India, framing the three countries as an important part of the Global South and said sound trilateral ties are conducive to regional and global peace and stability, besides their own national interests.

"China, Russia and India are emerging economies and important members of the Global South," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here, reacting for the first time to Putin's high-pro-

China stands ready to work with Russia and India to continue promoting the devpt of bilateral relations, said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun

file visit to New Delhi last week and his interactions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Guo said that the three countries maintaining sound relations

are not only in line with their own interests but also conducive to regional and global peace, security, stability and prosperity.

Putin's visit was watched here closely, considering Beijing's close and strong ties with Moscow.

Responding to a question about Putin's comments about New Delhi and Beijing ahead of his visit, Guo said that China stands ready to work with Russia and India to continue promoting the development of bilateral relations. In an interview ahead of his visit, Putin had said, "India and China are our closest friends - we treasure that relationship deeply."

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India free to buy oil from sources it considers beneficial: Kremlin

■ By Vinay Shukla

MOSCOW, Dec 8 (PTI)

INDIA, a sovereign nation, is free to buy oil from sources it considers beneficial, the Kremlin said on Monday, while expressing confidence that New Delhi will stick to the policy of ensuring its economic interests.

On August 6, the US imposed additional 25 per cent tariffs on India for its purchase of oil and petroleum products from Russia. At



the end of August, US tariffs on imports of Indian goods and services were increased to 50 per cent.

“India, being and remain-

ing a sovereign nation, carries out foreign trade operations and purchases energy resources where it is beneficial for itself,” the Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters in the wake of last Friday’s Summit talks between President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

Speaking after his talks with Prime Minister Modi, the Russian leader assured that Moscow will remain India’s reliable energy supplier.

Thailand launches airstrikes along border with Cambodia

BANGKOK, Dec 8 (AP)

THAILAND launched airstrikes along the disputed border with Cambodia on Monday as both sides accused the other of breaking a ceasefire that halted fighting earlier this year.

Longstanding border disputes erupted into five days of combat in July that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians. US President Donald Trump pushed the South-east Asian neighbours to sign a truce agreement in October, but tensions have continued to simmer.

The Thai Ministry of Defence said that more than 35,000 people have left areas near the border for shelters and more are believed to have fled to stay with



An injured Thai soldier being transferred to a hospital after a clash between Thai and Cambodian troops over the border dispute at Si Sa Ket province, Thailand.

relatives elsewhere, while Cambodia's Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said that residents of several villages near the border have been evacuated. Fighting follows exchange of fire on Sunday.

The ceasefire was strained in early November after Thai troops were injured by land mines, leading Thailand to announce that it would indefinitely suspend implementation of the agreement. Both sides continue to trade accusations over responsibility, even as they are supposed to be cooperating in getting rid of the mines.

Trump said in mid-November that he'd intervened to preserve the ceasefire as tensions simmered between the

two countries.

But another brief episode of fighting took place along the border Sunday, after which both sides said the other fired first. The Thai army said Cambodian fire injured two Thai soldiers and Thai troops retaliated, resulting in an exchange of fire that lasted around 20 minutes. Cambodia said that the Thai side fired first and that its own troops did not retaliate.

On Monday, Thai Army spokesperson Maj. Gen. Winthai Suvaree said the Cambodian troops fired first into Thai territory in multiple areas. He said one Thai soldier was killed and four other soldiers were wounded, and civilians were being evacuated from the affected areas.

India sends more naval ships to Sri Lanka with relief supplies

NEW DELHI, Dec 8 (ANI)

INDIA has expanded its humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the recent cyclone, with four more naval ships deployed to deliver essential relief material as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu, the Indian Navy said on Monday.

According to the Navy, INS Gharial, LCU 54, LCU 51 and LCU 57 have been tasked with transporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) stores to affected regions across Sri Lanka.

Three of the ships, LCU 54, LCU 51 and LCU 57, reached Colombo on the morning of December 7 and handed over critical supplies to local authorities.

INS Gharial is expected to arrive in Trincomalee on December 8 to continue the relief operations.

The latest deployment follows earlier assistance delivered by



Indian Navy deployed four more ships INS Gharial, LCU 54, LCU 51 and LCU 57 with relief materials as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu in Sri Lanka. (PTI)

INS Vikrant, INS Udaygiri and INS Sukanya, which carried out relief missions and helicopter-borne search and rescue operations under the ongoing effort.

With 1,000 tonnes of relief sup-

plies onboard, this mission reinforces the strong people-to-people ties between India and Sri Lanka and reflects the Indian Navy's commitment to providing timely humanitarian support

to our Indian Ocean Region neighbours, as per the statement.

Another statement added that the initiative aligns with the Government of India's vision of 'Mahasagar', aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring rapid assistance during crises.

The relief operation comes as Sri Lanka continues to recover from the cyclone's impact, with India stepping up support through sustained maritime assistance.

As India continues to support Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan MP Namal Rajapaksa met Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha and expressed gratitude for India's continued relief and rescue assistance under Operation Sagar Bandhu.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner reiterated that India would continue to support the people of Sri Lanka in their rebuilding and recovery efforts.

Tata-Lockheed Martin launch C-130J Super Hercules MRO centre



NEW DELHI, Dec 8 (PTI)

DEFENCE major Tata Advanced Systems on Monday kick-started the setting up of a defence maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility in India to support Lockheed Martin's C-130J Super Hercules heavy-lift military transport aircraft.

The groundbreaking of the facility in Bengaluru came as Tata Advanced Systems and Lockheed Martin are partnering to pitch the C-130J Super Hercules as the best aircraft in the race to win a mega deal to supply around 80 heavy-lift transport aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The IAF currently operates 12 C-130Js. It is a leading tactical airlift, serving 28 operators in 23 nations. To date, more than 560 C-130Js have been delivered and certified by over 20 airworthiness authorities, with the Super Hercules global fleet surpassing three million flight hours.

The groundbreaking ceremony brought together senior officials from the Indian Air Force (IAF), Government dignitaries, industry leaders and senior executives from Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems.

The construction of the MRO is expected to be completed by the end of 2026, and it is set to receive the first C-130 for MRO operations in early 2027, officials said. "Today's groundbreaking reflects how far our collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems and India has come, and where we're headed together," said Lockheed Martin's Chief Operating Officer Frank St. John.

"For more than seven decades, we've grown alongside India's expanding aerospace and defence industrial base. This new C-130 MRO facility strengthens that foundation," he said.

John said the facility will bring world-class sustainment capability into India, improve readiness for the Indian Air Force and create opportunities that will support regional and global C-130 operators.

"We remain committed to building capability for India and from India for decades to come."

Sukaran Singh, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Tata Advanced Systems, said that the milestone represents India's growing confidence and capability in shaping its own defence future.