

China reaffirms its territorial claims over Shaksgam Valley after India's objections

■ **By K J M Varma**

BEIJING, Jan 12 (PTI)

CHINA on Monday reaffirmed its territorial claims over the Shaksgam Valley against the backdrop of India's objections, stressing that the Chinese infrastructure projects in the area are "beyond reproach".

India last Friday criticised China's infrastructure development projects in the Shaksgam Valley, saying it reserves the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests as it is an Indian territory. Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq km of Indian terri-

tory in the Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 from areas illegally occupied by it.

"Shaksgam Valley is Indian territory. We have never recognised the so-called China-Pakistan 'boundary agreement' signed in 1963. We have consistently maintained that the agreement is illegal and invalid," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Reacting to Jaiswal's comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that "first of all, the territory you mentioned is part of China's territory".

DRDO tests man portable anti-tank guided missile

NEW DELHI, Jan 12 (PTI)

A NEW version of a man portable anti-tank guided missile was successfully test-fired at a firing range in Maharashtra's Ahilya Nagar. The Defence Ministry said the weapon system with "top attack capability" was tested against a moving target.

"The third generation fire and forget man portable anti-tank guided missile (MPATGM) with top attack capability was flight-tested successfully against a moving target in KK Ranges, Ahilya Nagar," it said. The test-firing was carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Sunday.

The warhead is capable of defeating modern main battle tanks, the Ministry said.

India, Germany decide to expand strategic ties

AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI, Jan 12 (PTI)

INDIA and Germany on Monday unveiled measures to boost cooperation in areas of defence, trade, critical minerals and semi-conductors, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chancellor Friedrich Merz vowing to bolster overall bilateral ties to jointly navigate challenges arising out of geopolitical upheaval.

Following talks between Modi and Merz, the two sides inked 19 pacts, including a roadmap for defence industrial collaboration and another on expanding cooperation in the higher education sector. A separate pact was inked on engagement in the telecommunications sector.

The two leaders also pitched for early finalisation of the India-European Union (EU) free trade agreement to expand the overall trade basket. A visa-free transit for Indian passport holders for transiting through Germany was also announced to boost people-to-people ties.

"The growing cooperation in defence and security is a symbol



PM Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz participate in the International Kite Festival at Sabarmati Riverfront, flying kites together, in Ahmedabad, on Monday. (PTI)

of our mutual trust and shared vision. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Chancellor Merz for simplifying the processes related to defence trade," Modi said in his media statement.

"We will also work on a roadmap to enhance cooperation between our defence industries, which will open up new opportunities for co-development and co-production," he added.

In the talks, Modi and Merz

reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, respect for international law including UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), and announced a new bilateral Indo-Pacific consultation mechanism. The move comes amid China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

Modi and Merz also reaffirmed their strong support for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic

Corridor (IMEC), emphasising its transformational potential in reshaping and promoting global commerce, connectivity and prosperity. In his comments, the Prime Minister also said that both sides are jointly advancing new projects in areas such as climate, energy, urban development, and urban mobility.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR PAYS TRIBUTES TO MAHATMA GANDHI: GERMAN Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad and paid rich tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, saying the teachings of India's Independence movement here are more needed today than ever.

On his maiden India tour, Merz, who later flew kites with PM Modi, who accompanied the visiting leader to the historic ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati river, noted that Mahatma Gandhi's legacy unites Indians and Germans as friends. Modi and Merz visited the Sabarmati Ashram in the morning and paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi, later inaugurated Gujarat's famous kite festival.

ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket deviates from flight path

SRIHARIKOTA, Jan 12 (PTI)

ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket carrying 16 satellites, including a foreign Earth Observation satellite, "encountered an anomaly", the space agency said on Monday, signalling the failure of the mission.

Disturbances in the rocket and later deviation from flight path was observed when strap-on motors were providing thrust during the flight's third stage to propel the vehicle to the intended altitude, space agency chairman V Narayanan said adding a detailed analysis has been initiated to identify the cause.

The mission of placing the satellites in the intended orbit could not be achieved and all the 16 satellites were lost in space, ISRO sources told PTI adding this was the second consecutive PSLV mission failure during the third stage.

A similar, previous attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09)



The Indian Space Research Organisation's PSLV-C62 carrying the EOS-N1 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. (PTI)

also did not succeed due to "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the motor case.

As the 22.5-hour countdown concluded on Monday morning, the 44.4 metre tall four-stage rocket lifted off as scheduled at 10.18 am from the spaceport here. The mission was to deploy

a primary Earth Observation satellite and multiple co-passenger satellites into a 512 km Sun-Synchronous Orbit, after a flight journey of about 17 minutes.

The automatic launch sequence commenced following approval from the mission director. ISRO scientists provid-

ed real-time updates as the vehicle ascended. The initial phases of the flight proceeded according to plan.

However, after the announcement that the "third stage ignited", an uneasy calm took over the Mission Control Centre. In his address at the centre, Narayanan said, "The PSLV is a four-stage vehicle with two solid stages and two liquid stages. The performance of the vehicle up to the end of the third stage was expected. Close to the end of the third stage we are seeing more disturbance in the vehicle and subsequently, there was a deviation observed in the flight path." Confirming the mission's failure on its 'X' handle, ISRO said,

"The PSLV-C62 mission encountered an anomaly during the end of PS3 (third stage) of the vehicle. A detailed analysis has been initiated." However, the space agency did not provide more details.

PM to open Commonwealth speakers' conference

NEW DELHI, Jan 12 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday inaugurate the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), which is expected to witness participation from 42 of the 56 member nations.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Monday that the participation will be the highest ever in the history of the conference that will be attended by countries including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Birla said there will be no representation from Bangladesh as that country's Parliament is under suspension. Pakistan is also unlikely to send any representative, officials said.

A total of 61 speakers and presiding officers are expected to attend the event to be held at the Samvidhan Sadan here from January 14 to 16.

"It is a matter of pride that the 28th CSPOC being hosted in India

Pak, Bangladesh to stay away

will see the highest participation so far," Birla said.

The CSPOC will discuss shared parliamentary values, democratic governance and institutional cooperation. Birla said the work related to the conference has been done online and no paper has been used. The Speaker said an app has been developed to enable all aspects of conference coordination, facilitation and information dissemination.

The 27th edition of the CSPOC was hosted by Uganda in January 2024 where Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh, the leader of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation, assumed the baton as the host of the next edition of the conference. The Lok Sabha speaker will chair the meeting of the Standing Committee of the CSPOC at the Red Fort here on Wednesday.

The CSPOC was created in 1969 as an initiative of then speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, Lucien Lamoureux. Since its inception, Canada has provided the CSPOC with a secretariat to support its activities.

The stated aims of the CSPOC are to maintain, foster and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of speakers and presiding officers of Parliaments, promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and develop parliamentary institutions.

The conference will have workshop sessions on topics, such as "AI in Parliament: Balancing Innovation, Oversight and Adaptation", "Social Media and its Impact on Parliamentarians", "Innovative Strategies to Enhance Public Understanding of Parliament and Citizen's Participation Beyond Voting" and "Security, Health and Wellbeing of Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Officials".

Pro-Govt rallies in Iran

Donald Trump and his national security team have been weighing a range of potential responses against Iran, including cyber attacks and direct strikes by US or Israel



DUBAI, Jan 12 (AP)

IRAN drew tens of thousands of pro-Government demonstrators to head to the streets in support of the theocracy, a show of force after days of protests directly challenging the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state television aired chants from the crowd, which appeared to number in the tens of thousands, who shouted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

Others cried out: "Death to the enemies of God!" Iran's attorney general has said prosecutors will levy such charges

against protesters, which carry the death penalty.

It called the demonstration an "Iranian uprising against American-Zionist terrorism," without addressing the underlying anger in the country over the nation's ailing economy. That sparked the protests over two weeks ago.

State television aired images of such demonstrations around the country, trying to signal it had overcome the protests, as claimed by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi earlier in the day.

US President Donald Trump

said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its bloody crackdown on protesters, a move coming as activists said on Monday the death toll in the nationwide demonstrations rose to at least 544.

Iran had no direct reaction to Trump's comments, which came after the Foreign Minister of Oman — long an interlocutor between Washington and Tehran — travelled to Iran this weekend. It also remains unclear just what Iran could

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