

A Terrorist is a Terrorist in Any Language: EAM Jaishankar in Singapore



Singapore: During an interaction with the Indian community in Singapore on Sunday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that a "terrorist is a terrorist" in any language and one should not permit terrorism to be excused or permitted because of a different language or explanation. This statement came as part of a response to a question on how Indian officials approach sensitive and linguistically different topics with global counterparts. "It's also natural that there will be different viewpoints. And what diplomacy is about is to find a way of reconciling it and coming to some kind of agreement," he responded. EAM Jaishankar noted, however, that there are certain issues where there is no room for ambiguity and

interpretation. To illustrate this point, he gave the example of terrorism, saying: "You can take it in any language, but a terrorist is a terrorist in any language." "Never allow something like terrorism to be excused or defended because they're using a different language or a different explanation," he said, without referring to any country. He said there can be issues where two nations genuinely can have different viewpoints and there "will be issues when they are used as a cover as an excuse as a justification." He said one should be able to spot the difference and figure out a way how to deal with it. In his address, Jaishankar recapped India-Singapore relations dating back to the independence struggling days when Subhas Chandra Bose established the Indian National Army and made the 'Delhi Chalo' call. "He (Neta ji) remains a visible inspiration for our entire nation," Jaishankar said as he joined some 1,500 Indian diaspora members at the screening of the Singapore-made short film on Netaji. As India has globalised, the two countries' relations that began as Look East policy and then on Act East policy... has gone on to India be-

ing in the Indo-Pacific - the story in many ways actually began in Singapore, Jaishankar shared with the business-focused Indian community here. The more India globalises, every aspect of that will be reflected in the intensity and quality of relationships with Singapore, Jaishankar underscored. "Singapore has been our partner in the globalisation of India and that role and companionship is something that we value," said Jaishankar, who is on a three-day visit to the Asian financial hub. Jaishankar also updated the Singapore-based Indian community on the accelerated pace of infrastructure development in India and highlighted "Bharat being a global friend". "This is India which will not be pressured, which will state its mind. If it has to make a choice, we will make a choice for the welfare of our citizens ... So, the idea is of much stronger, more capable India and willing to take the tough course," he said. Jaishankar assured that this is an India which looks after its citizens and people of Indian origins. "As more and more Indians settle in different parts of the world, it is our responsibility to secure

them, to ensure their wellbeing if they are in a difficult stage, to bring them home," he said. Ukraine and Sudan were cited as examples of where Indians were caught between the wars among others. "The capable India, the diplomatic India, the reformed India, the protective India... in many ways the innovative India," he stressed, pointing to the global respect won by the Chandrayan landing on the Moon. There is also India, which is a friend of the world. "Friendships begets more friendship," he said, pointing to the supply of vaccines to nearly 100 countries during Covid-19. "And we step forward at times of difficulties," said Jaishankar, adding that India gave a package of USD 4.5 billion to Sri Lanka during the island state's economic crisis. "Across the Indian Ocean today, if there is a problem, and the very difficult situation in the Red Sea, we have 21 ships fighting piracy and boarding and searching vessels. "We have done in the last three months more than 1,000 search missions," Jaishankar told Non-resident Indians on the level of global service being provided by India. These are examples of responsible India."

Doubts shroud delivery of first LCA Mk-1A jet to IAF

NEW DELHI (ROYAL JOURNALISM): A question mark hangs over the delivery of the first light combat aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A jet to the Indian Air Force by state-run plane maker Hindustan Aeronautics Limited by the approaching deadline of March 31 as it is yet to make its maiden flight and some key certifications are still not done, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday. IAF ordered 83 Mk-1A fighters for ₹48,000 crore in February 2021, and plans to buy 97 more Mk-1As at a cost of around ₹67,000 crore. "HAL is trying its level best to carry out the first flight as early as possible. But there are some software iterations that need to get cleared. Sticking to the March 31 deadline seems a bit difficult right now, though efforts are still on," said one of the officials cited above, asking not to be named. LCA Mk-1A is an advanced variant of the LCA Mk-1, which has already been inducted by IAF. The Mk-1A will come with digital radar warning receivers, external self-protection jammer pods, superior radar, advanced beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missiles and significantly improved maintainability. "The Mk-1A is a totally new aircraft with new systems, software and weapons. Some key certifications are going on right now, with different agencies involved including the Aeronautical Development Agency, Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification, and foreign OEMs (original equipment manufacturers). All this must fall in place before the first aircraft can be delivered," said a second official, who also asked not to be named. The aircraft is in good shape, he said. The delivery of the 83 jets already ordered



is expected to be completed by 2028. LCA is set to emerge as the cornerstone of IAF's combat power in the coming decade and beyond. IAF, the world's fourth largest air force, is expected to operate around 350 LCAs (Mk-1, Mk-1A and Mk-2 versions), with a third of those already ordered, some inducted, and the rest figuring prominently on the air force's modernisation roadmap and expected to be contracted in the coming years. In October 2023, HAL handed over the first trainer version of LCA Mk-1 to IAF chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari in Bengaluru, with the twin seater set to fill a key training role and double as a fighter if needed. The aircraft was part of an earlier order for 40 Mk-1 jets in the initial operational clearance (IOC) and the more advanced final operational clearance (FOC) configurations --- the first variants of LCA. Of the 40 Mk-1s, IAF inducted 32 single seater jets and raised two LCA squadrons. The remaining eight aircraft are trainers and all of them will be delivered to IAF soon. One of the 32 LCA Mk-1s inducted crashed near Jaisalmer on March 12, minutes after taking part in a tri-services exercise that sought to demonstrate the strides India has made towards self-reliance in the defence manufacturing sector. That was the first LCA crash. The aircraft had flown during

the tri-services Bharat Shakti exercise at the Pokhran firing range near Jaisalmer along with another LCA jet before it went down. Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed the integrated tri-services 'live fire and manoeuvre' exercise, which sought to display how the Indian military plans to leverage its indigenous capabilities for dominating the battlefield and crushing any threat to the country's security. In November 2023, Modi flew in the LCA in Bengaluru and described the experience as "incredibly enriching" while also heaping praise on the country's indigenous military capabilities. His sortie in an LCA Mk-1 fighter jet was seen as a significant endorsement of the LCA programme, and turned the spotlight on the locally produced fighter jet that IAF is looking at inducting in big numbers and India is also seeking to export. The newer variants, Mk-1A and Mk-2, will come with significantly improved features and technologies over the current Mk-1 aircraft. IAF will deploy some LCAs at forward air bases in the western sector to bolster its combat readiness against Pakistan and fill the gap left by the gradual phasing out of the Soviet-era MiG-21 fighter jets. Timely delivery is a top priority for IAF, which is grappling with a shortage of fighter squadrons. IAF's leadership firmly backs the LCA programme. In a review last year, Chaudhari described the fighter aircraft as the flag-bearer of IAF's efforts towards the indigenisation of its combat fleet. IAF could order more than 100 Mk-2s, and the aircraft will be ready for production in five years. The world's leading aircraft engine maker GE Aerospace and HAL signed a memo-

randum of understanding in Washington in June 2023 to produce F-414 engines in the country for LCA Mk-2, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first state visit to the US. F-414 has evolved from the F-404 engine that powers the existing LCA variants. The production of the engines in India will result in the new fighter jet having an indigenous content of around 75% compared to 55%-60% in LCA Mk-1A and 50% in the existing Mk-1 variant. The LCA project was sanctioned in 1983 as a replacement for MiG-21s. IAF raised its first LCA squadron in Sullur with two aircraft in July 2016. While the existing Mk-1 and Mk-1A variants will replace MiG-21 fighters, the Mk-2 aircraft is planned as a replacement for the air force's MiG-29s, Mirage-2000s and Jaguar fighters that will start retiring in the coming decade. The LCA Mk-2 fighter will be equipped with the more powerful GE-414 engine, better avionics and electronics, and will be capable of carrying a higher weapons payload. It will have improved range, enhanced survivability, better situational awareness for pilots, network centric capabilities, and the ability to quickly switch from one role to another. The 17.5-tonne Mk-2 fighter will have a maximum speed of 1.8 Mach, compared to the 13.5-tonne Mk-1A that has a top speed of 1.6 Mach. The new aircraft will come with a payload capacity of 6.5 tonne (compared to 3.5 tonne for the Mk-1A) and it will carry a mix of weapons including BVR air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, heavy precision guided weapons and conventional bombs. The other features of the LCA Mk-2 include enhanced fuel capacity,

Two new ECs appointed, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury raises dissent

Two former bureaucrats who held key posts under BJP governments were appointed election commissioners on Thursday, with the Opposition member on the selection panel complaining he was kept in the dark about the candidates' credentials. Former Union cooperation secretary Gyanesh Kumar and former Lokpal secretary Sukhbir Sandhu join the poll panel when it is poised to announce the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress's leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, submitted a dissent note to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led selection committee saying he was not given dossiers on the candidates, and not even the shortlist, before Thursday's meeting. "I gave a dissent note because I was given

212 names at midnight. When I go to the meeting I see six names. How is it possible for me to know about these people?" he told reporters. Gyanesh Kumar was a joint secretary in the Jammu and Kashmir division of the Union home ministry when the then state was stripped of its special status and bifurcated into two Union Territories. He was later additional secretary of the desk that handled the outcome of the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict and the formation of a trust to build a Ram temple at the spot where the Babri Masjid was razed in 1992. He retired in January. Just as chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar was resident commissioner of Jharkhand, Gyanesh Kumar was resident commis-

sioner of Kerala. He drew flak for stopping the sale of buffalo meat in the Kerala House canteen in 2014 - a decision rescinded on the orders of then chief minister Oommen Chandy after protests by patrons. Sandhu was appointed Uttarakhand chief secretary by BJP chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami as soon as he came to power in 2021. Before that, Sandhu was chairman of the National Highways Authority of India. A qualified doctor and a lawyer, he was given an extension until January this year, after which he was appointed secretary to the Lokpal. The three-member Election Commission of India found itself with two vacancies in the run-up to the general election with Anup Pandey retiring last month and

Arun Goel quitting for unexplained reasons last week.

Under a new law, a search committee headed by the law minister shortlists five names for each vacancy. The selection is done by a committee of the Prime Minister, a minister nominated by the PM - it was reportedly home minister Amit Shah on Thursday - and the leader of the Opposition or largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha. Chowdhury said he was given a long list of eligible bureaucrats when he arrived in Delhi around midnight. "It is known that the government can choose who it wants, but no procedure was followed even in that," he told reporters after the meeting, which had started around noon.

Lok Sabha elections: PM Modi to visit Kerala today, hold public meeting



Lok Sabha elections 2024: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (March 15) will embark on a visit to

Kerala's Pathanamthitta to campaign for the candidates of the BJP-led NDA in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. PM Modi will arrive in the town at around 10.30 am and will address a public meeting. According to the party sources, one lakh people will be present at the venue. The prime minister will be received by BJP state chief K Surendran, Kerala in-charge of the party Prakash Javadekar, state General Secretary George Kurian and Pathanamthitta district President V A Sooraj. The meeting will be attended by NDA's Lok Sabha candidates V

Muraleedharan (Attingal), Anil K Antony (Pathanamthitta), Sobha Surendran (Alappuzha), and Baiju Kalasala (Mavelikkara), the sources said. Other leaders including Padmaja Venugopal, who recently joined the BJP after quitting the Congress, and state and local party leaders will attend the meeting, they added. The police have put a ban on the flying of drones and comparable devices within a radius of 3 km of the Municipal Stadium and Pramadam Indoor Stadium in Pathanamthitta under Section 39 of the Kerala Police

Act to ensure the Prime Minister's security. Change of plan Earlier, the BJP had said that the Prime Minister would visit Pathanamthitta on March 17 to campaign for the NDA's candidates and Palakkad on March 15, however, the plan was changed later. Sources said that he will now visit Palakkad on March 19 where he is likely to hold a roadshow. The official social media pages of the BJP's Palakkad and Pathanamthitta district committees have announced PM Modi's fourth and fifth visits to the state within a span of three months.

CM directs to speed up legal steps to acquire Palace Grounds

NEW DELHI (ROYAL JOURNALISM): Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday called for expediting the government's legal fight in the Supreme Court to acquire the Bangalore Palace and the surrounding spaces over which the Mysuru royal family has laid claim. Siddaramaiah's direction came at a Cabinet meeting and a day after the royal family's scion, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, got the BJP ticket for the Mysore-Kodagu Lok Sabha seat. The Bangalore Palace (Acquisition And Transfer) Act, 1996, was enacted by the Janata Parivar government in which Siddaramaiah was holding finance portfolio. CAA is political gimmick before Lok Sabha polls: Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah. The move didn't sit well with the Mysore royal family, which promptly went to the Karnataka High Court. When the

HC upheld the government's decision, the royal family knocked on the doors of the SC, which instructed the state government to maintain 'status quo'. Since then, the matter is awaiting a decision from the court. The issue surfaced again in 2015 during Siddaramaiah's first term as Chief Minister and the CM assured the Legislative Council that the government would expedite legal proceedings to take over the Palace Grounds. Speaking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the CM criticised the enormous delay over getting the status quo order evicted. "This is the original case. Unless this is resolved, confusion prevailing over Palace Grounds will continue to linger on. So, the CM has directed officials concerned to hire expert lawyers to expedite the case,"

he said. **TDR row :** Meanwhile, in the wake of the Supreme Court initiating contempt proceedings, Gowda said that the state government in principle agreed to acquire 15.39 acres of Bangalore Palace grounds for widening the Ballari Road by issuing Transferable Development Rights (TDR). He argued there is confusion over who owns the land as there is no khata registered in any private individual's name; besides, the 1996 Act is not fully void yet. "We will request the Supreme Court to guide the state government on who should hand over the TDR rights," he said. He added that the decision on road widening and acquiring Palace Grounds land was decided in 2006-07; in 2022, the previous government decided to relinquish the acquisition. "Based on this, the claimants (royal family) ap-



proached the Supreme Court and it (court) directed the Chief Secretary, Urban Development Additional Chief Secretary and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Commissioner to appear before it by initiating contempt proceedings. All three top bureaucrats will be appearing in person next week," he explained. The total value of the TDR, instead of the cash compensation, may be Rs 1,396 crore.

Uttar Pradesh To Change Names Of These 8 Railway Stations

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will change names of eight railway stations in the Amethi district. This development comes after the Union Home Ministry approved the state government's proposal to rename these prominent railway stations, as per media reports. Spearheaded by BJP Amethi Leader Smriti Irani, expressed her satisfaction with the move, stating, "Virasat bhi, Vikas bhi... I am happy to inform you that it has been decided to change the names of eight railway stations in the Amethi Lok Sabha con-



stituency. This decision will prove useful in preserving the cultural identity and heritage of Amethi. "The current names will be substituted with

those of temples, saints, idols and freedom fighters. The government initially forwarded the proposal suggesting renaming on February 12. The proposal suggests renaming Kasimpur halt as Jais City and renaming several intermediate stations like Jais as Guru Gorakhnath Dham, Bani as Swami Paramhans, Misrauli as Maa Kalikan Dham, Nihargarh as Maharaja Bijli Pasi, Akbarganj as Maa Ahorwa Bhawani Dham, Warisganj as Amar Shahid Bhale Sultan, and Fursatganj as Tapeswarnath Dham. District president of BJP's Amethi unit, Ram Prasad Mishra,

highlighted the 'long-standing demand' for renaming railway stations in Amethi after local entities. He further explained the ideas behind changing the names. Kasimpur Halt Railway Station, named after Kasimpur village, Mishra argued that it is distant from the station, considering this area's predominantly Muslim population, it should be renamed as Jais City. He further added, "The current Jais railway station is surrounded by ashrams, notably Guru Gorakhnath Dham ashram, hence the proposal to rename it after the ashram.



