

Brics diplomacy gathers pace, busy weeks ahead



ARCHIS MOHAN

New Delhi, 13 August

Amid a flurry of engagement between the Brics' founding members following US President Donald Trump's latest round of tariffs, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will meet his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow on August 21. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is also expected in India next week for talks on the boundary dispute with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, under the special representatives' mechanism between the neighbours.

India has yet to officially confirm either visit. However, on Wednesday afternoon the Russian foreign ministry announced the Jaishankar-Lavrov meeting, saying it would cover bilateral relations and "aspects of cooperation within international frameworks". The two are also expected to finalise dates for Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India later this year.

WANG YI'S INDIA VISIT AND JAISHANKAR-LAVROV TALKS NEXT WEEK COULD SET THE STAGE FOR PM NARENDRA MODI'S BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH XI JINPING AND VLADIMIR PUTIN, ON THE SIDELINES OF THE SCO SUMMIT

■ Op Sindoor, Swadeshi may be focus of PM's I-Day speech 9►

Turn to Page 6 ►

Brics diplomacy gathers pace, busy weeks ahead

Government sources in New Delhi said Wang’s trip, possibly as early as August 18, had been in the works. Alongside efforts to advance de-escalation between the two militaries, the meeting could pave the way for a bilateral between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Tianjin from August 31 to September 1. It would be Modi’s first visit to China in seven years.

Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for boundary talks. Doval visited China in December last year for discussions with Wang, following a thaw agreed by Modi and Xi in Kazan on October 24, 2024.

New Delhi and Beijing are also exploring an early resumption of flights between the two countries. In a further sign of easing tensions, China has also reportedly relaxed restrictions on urea shipments to India.

The Jaishankar-Lavrov meeting would also help India understand Moscow’s assessment of the Trump-Putin’s summit in Alaska on Friday. It is likely that Modi could meet Putin in Tianjin as the Russian president is also slated to attend the SCO Summit.

Members of the parliamentary panel on external affairs were told on Monday that the Trump-Putin meeting on the Ukraine conflict could help persuade the White House to lift the additional 25 per cent

penalty imposed on India for purchasing Russian crude. According to sources, officials said India’s engagement with the US remains strong in most areas except trade, where a communication deadlock exists at the highest levels of both governments.

That could change in late September. Modi may travel to the US for the UN General Assembly in New York, with a possible meeting with Trump. The prime minister’s schedule is not yet finalised, but India’s “head of government” appears in a provisional list of speakers for the general debate on September 26. Modi and Trump last met in February in Washington. They couldn’t meet at the G7 summit in Canada on June 16-17 but spoke over phone.

Since the White House announced its tariffs and imposed one of the steepest rates (25 per cent) on India, besides the added 25 per cent levy for New Delhi’s purchase of Russian crude, Brics leaders have intensified their engagement. On August 7, Modi and Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva spoke by phone about bilateral trade; Lula has also spoken to Xi. A day after Trump’s penalty announcement, Putin and Modi held a call in which they pledged to deepen ties and discussed the Ukraine conflict. Modi has also spoken to Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who urged India to limit Russian oil imports and has said he hopes to meet Modi at the UNGA in September.

Last week, Doval was in Moscow for talks with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu and a meeting with Putin. Jaishankar is also expected to call on the Russian president during his Moscow visit next week.

BS SUDOKU

#4659

2								
			5			1		
	6					9		3
		2			6	3	5	
		9						
3				7		2		
1				2		5		