

QUAD JOINT STATEMENT SLAMS CHINA

'No country should dominate others'

▶ CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER SOUTH CHINA SEA TENSION | ▶ TERRORISM, EXTREMISM CONDEMNED

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In a loud and clear message to China, the Quad on Monday reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, vowing to work towards a region where no country dominates others and each state is free from coercion in all its forms.

At a meeting here, the foreign ministers of the Quad countries called for upholding the free and open rules-based international order and respecting the principle of freedom, human rights, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

Without directly naming China, the four foreign ministers expressed serious concern over the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterated the Quad's strong opposition to any "unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion." The meeting was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Australia's Penny Wong.

"All countries have a role in contributing to regional peace, stability, and prosperity while seeking a region in which no country dominates and no country is dominated, competition is managed responsibly, and each country is free from coercion in all its forms and can exercise its agency to determine its own future," the ministers said in the statement.

The ministers also referred to increasing Chinese manoeuvres in the South China Sea, especially the "dangerous use" of coast guard and maritime militia vessels.



(From left) India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Japan's Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Japan Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) ministerial meeting in Tokyo, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

"We continue to express our serious concern about the militarisation of disputed features, and coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea," the joint statement said.

"We also express our serious concern about the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels, the increasing use of various kinds of dangerous manoeuvres, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," it said.

The ministers emphasised the importance of adherence to interna-

tional law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to address challenges to the global maritime rules-based order, including in the South and East China Seas.

The ministers also "unequivocally" condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms including cross-border terrorism.

China accuses Quad of stirring up conflicts

China on other hand accused the Quad nations, including the US and India, of "artificially creating ten-

sion" and "inciting confrontation" to "contain" the development of other countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Beijing's statement came hours after the foreign ministers of the Quad countries in a meeting in Tokyo vow to work towards a region where no country dominates others and each state is free from coercion in all its forms.

The Quad was "artificially creating tension, inciting confrontation and containing the development of other countries", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a press briefing.

Quad working for free Indo-Pacific, says Jaishankar

The Quad is working for a free and open Indo-Pacific and rules-based order that by itself is a powerful stabilising factor in an uncertain and volatile world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

In his remarks at the Quad Foreign Ministers press conference, Jaishankar said the Quad grouping is not a talk shop but a platform that generates practical outcomes.

Australia, India, Japan, and the United States are members of the Quad grouping.

"For example, our Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief conversations are reflected in understandings and SOPs between our Navies. The Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative that came out of Quad today links information fusion centres. The Open-RAN network, which we have spoken about so much, is being deployed in Palau. A space-based climate warning system will be launched soon in Mauritius. Off-grid solar projects are actually happening in the Indo-Pacific islands," he said.

"The overall messaging is that our four countries – all democratic polities, pluralistic societies and market economies – are working together for a free and open Indo-Pacific, for a rules-based order and for global good. That by itself is a powerful stabilising factor in an uncertain and volatile world," he said.

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