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Building the floor

Moves by the U.S., China to stabilise their rocky relations hold lessons for India

This week's summit meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco is unlikely to resolve any of the major differences that plague relations between the world's two biggest powers. It has, however, offered the promise of much needed respite for the world by stabilising a relationship that has recently been in free fall and brought growing concern. The summit, on the sidelines of APEC, yielded two significant takeaways. The first involved several concrete agreements, including to restart military-to-military direct dialogue and to discuss risk and safety issues involved with artificial intelligence. The second is what both sides have described as establishing a floor to the relationship. That was the goal when the two leaders last met in Bali in 2022. The Bali consensus was, however, blown away by the "spy balloon" incident. This time there is cautious optimism that this attempt at stabilisation has been built on more solid ground. But how long it will last remains an open question, especially with two potentially disruptive political events looming on the horizon. In January next year, Taiwan goes to the polls, and the outcomes could see a further ratcheting up of tensions across the strait. On Taiwan, both sides reiterated their stands, with China cautioning against interference, and the U.S. saying it opposed any change in the status quo. Meanwhile, the U.S. will, next year, go into election mode ahead of polls in November 2024, and campaign season inevitably brings heated rhetoric on China.

A longer term concern – and one that underlines the limits of this modest stabilisation – is a basic point of difference in how they see the future of their relations. As Mr. Xi put it, "the number one question" was whether they were "adversaries or partners". He criticised U.S. framing of the relationship as being fundamentally competitive, saying it would lead to "misinformed policy making, misguided actions, and unwanted results", and asked it to "refrain from flip-flopping, ... and crossing the lines" on issues including Taiwan and export controls. Mr. Biden, however, "emphasised that the U.S. and China are in competition" and described the immediate challenge as how to "manage it responsibly". These differences aside, one crucial point of agreement is the apparent realisation that high-level engagement and open channels are key in preventing competition from sliding into conflict. This offers clear lessons to the India-China relationship, as the crisis along the Line of Actual Control enters its fourth winter. Dialogue in and of itself is not a concession, and as the U.S. and China have realised, building a floor, when ties between major powers are at the risk of free fall, is the first step.

PM 'strongly condemns' civilian casualties in Israel-Hamas conflict

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday "strongly condemned" the civilian casualties in the ongoing violence in Gaza Strip.

Delivering the inaugural speech at the virtual Voice of Global South Summit, he reiterated his condemnation of the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and said the Global South should speak in one voice on critical matters.

"We are all seeing that developments in West Asia are giving birth to new challenges. India has condemned the dastardly terror attack on Israel on October 7. We urged for restrained response along with dialogue and diplomacy. We strongly condemn the death of civilians in Israel-Hamas conflict," he said.

Briefing the media later in the evening, Foreign Se-



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Prime Minister

cretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said several participating leaders raised the ongoing violence in Gaza as well as concern about international terrorism.

The first Voice of Global South Summit in January was dominated by the commodities crisis triggered by the Ukraine war but the eruption of crisis in Gaza Strip in the first week of October has shifted focus considerably from Ukraine to West Asia.

India has initiated the operation to evacuate nationals from Israel while

Mr. Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar have been holding talks with regional stakeholders in West Asia, which is home to around six million expatriate workers.

"After speaking to President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, India sent relief material to the Palestinians," Mr. Modi said highlighting India's commitment to find a solution to the crisis.

Espousing Global South
Friday's summit also witnessed the launch of

DAKSHIN - Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative - Global South Centre for Excellence. This initiative was announced during the first virtual summit in January and was realised on Friday.

In his remarks at the summit, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted the attention that India has extended to the Global South during its Presidency of G20 and said it was necessary to extend attention of G20 to the "pressing needs" of the Global South that were disturbed by the pandemic and conflicts.

Besides, Prime Minister Modi announced that India was set to host a global partnership summit on Artificial Intelligence (AI) next month that would promote responsible use of technology and reduce the gap between the developed and developing economies.

'India has a critical role in Dubai climate conference'

Majid Al-Suwaidi, Director-General, CoP-28, denies any conflict of interest in UAE, an oil producer, hosting the event; he says it's the CoP for Asia and if it works for India it will work for many others

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Criticism that the UAE's leadership this year of the annual UN climate talks conflicted with its position as one of the world's biggest producers of oil is "surprising" and "unfounded", a senior leader of the CoP Presidency told *The Hindu* in an interview on Friday.

The 28th edition of the Conference of Parties (CoP) will be held over two weeks in Dubai next month. Heads of states, business delegations and climate and energy think tanks from over 190 countries converge annually for the conference to negotiate responsibility for keeping global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius. This time, it has stirred a unique controversy centred on its president, Sultan Al-Jaber. His position as head of one of the world's largest oil companies, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, has drawn criticism – primarily from the West – that he would as CoP President be less inclined to push the world away from fossil fuels.

"We were quite surprised," Majid Al-Suwaidi,



All net-zero projections for 2050 do account for a limited amount of fossil fuels. We need to make sure that the mix is the right one to achieve the 1.5 degrees Celsius target

MAJID AL-SUWAIDI
Director-General, CoP-28

Director-General, CoP-28, told *The Hindu*. "This isn't the first time that a CoP President comes from a fossil fuel-producing country and such criticism has never been raised before. We have for decades followed a path of development that minimises wastage. We were once an economy that relied on pearl-diving that was destroyed once the Japanese invented the artificial pearl. We have always known that the development of a new technology can take away [an economy based on a natural resource]. We are not shy of the fact that we are an oil-and-gas producing country. That's something that has built our country. But we need to transition to a future economy and we have started this many years ago. Our economy is

today 70% not-oil-and-gas. People criticised us when we built our tourism economy, when we made Masdar (renewable energy company). We are used to criticism but we act and deliver. Our President [of the UAE] has asked us to celebrate the day we deliver our last barrel of oil."

'Practical solutions'

Mr. Al-Suwaidi said the world had to think of ways to deliver "practical solutions" on how to transition people in developing countries to new jobs without compromising on development. Business and economies have to know what they are getting rather than "what is being taken away" and "how we can protect biodiversity, the rights of indigenous peoples and ensure jobs for women and children in the future", he

added. The CoP Presidency's role in the negotiations would be to get all countries to do more than what they have committed to as the current trajectory suggested 43% more emissions (by 2030 over 2019 levels) than what is necessary to keep temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"Our presidency is not about preferring one ideology to the other. It is about the science. We need to address the 22 gigatons [billion tonnes] of carbon dioxide and that is by decarbonising while building a new economy. All of the net-zero projections for 2050 do account for a limited amount of fossil fuels. We need to make sure that the mix is the right one to achieve the 1.5 degrees Celsius target."

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to visit Dubai for the CoP, Mr. Al-Suwaidi said the conference would be the "most high profile" in terms of attendance. "India has a critical role and that is why it is the country we first visited and visited the most [in the run-up to CoP-28]. This is the CoP for Asia and if it works for India it will work for many [countries]," he said.

Modi warns against deepfakes, asks media to be on guard

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Friday that the misuse of artificial intelligence for creating deepfakes was problematic, and asked the media to educate people about such activities. He was speaking to presspersons at a Diwali *Milan* organised by the BJP at its national headquarters here.

He said many deepfakes generated with AI assistance appeared real, and the consequent disinformation could lead to much harm. "A new crisis is emerging due to deepfakes produced through artificial intelligence. There is a very big section of society which does not have a parallel verification system," he said. Just as products such as cigarettes came with health warnings, deepfakes should carry disclosures.

The media, he said, should be on its guard against this potential danger and educate others of the same.

On a lighter note, the Prime Minister said that he had himself been inserted into a deepfake video of a Garba event during the Navratri season.

"Many friends forwarded it to me as well," he said



Narendra Modi

with a laugh adding that while he did play Garba in school, he had not done so since.

Mr. Modi's remarks come against the backdrop of a viral deepfake video of actor Rashmika Mandanna following which the Information Technology Ministry issued an advisory. The Ministry warned platforms to take such content down within 36 hours, a requirement outlined in the IT Rules, 2021, and instructed that "due diligence be exercised and reasonable efforts made to identify misinformation and deepfakes".

Mr. Modi said the "vocal for local" idea had received support from the people.

Pointing to the economy and other sectors, he said India's achievements during the pandemic had created confidence in people that the country "is not going to stop now".

'India targets \$40-bn in technical textiles'

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

India's market for technical textiles is targeted to touch \$40 billion by 2030 from the current \$23 billion, said Rajeev Saxena, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, here on Friday.

Speaking at a conference organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Department of Textiles, Tamil Nadu, he said the export of technical-textile products was expected to touch \$10 billion from the current \$2.5 billion in seven years.

The National Technical Textile Mission, unveiled three years ago, has been extended till 2026. "We do not have high-perfor-



mance fibre. We import our needs," he said.

The government allocated ₹1,000 crore under the Mission for research and development and so far, 126 projects, with a total value of ₹371 crore, have been approved.

A portal for start-ups in technical textiles segment to submit applications for support under the Mission would be unveiled soon.