

NSG, Masood Azhar on agenda as Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar begins China visit

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Beijing: Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar will arrive here today for crucial talks with top Chinese officials amid differences over issues like India's NSG bid and China's blocking of efforts to get JeM chief Masood Azhar banned by the UN.

File pic - Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar begins China visit

Jaishankar, who served as the Indian envoy to China from 2009 to 2013, the longest tenure by an Indian diplomat in Beijing, will begin his visit by meeting State Councillor Yang Jiechi, Beijing's Special Representative for India-China border talks.

In the Chinese official hierarchy, the State Councillor of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) is regarded as the top diplomat functioning directly under the country's leadership.

Besides attending an upgraded strategic dialogue with China's Executive Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui on February 22, Jaishankar is also expected to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Underlining the significance of the strategic dialogue, which was upgraded during Wang's visit to New Delhi last year, Chinese side has deputed Zhang, who is also the head of the influential CPC committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Zhang, a former Chinese envoy to the US, mostly deals with issues related to China's tenuous ties with America as well as Taiwan related affairs -- both key areas of concern to Beijing.

Ahead of the talks, China appeared unrelenting in its opposition to efforts to get Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Azhar banned by the UN and ambivalent on India's membership to the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

Putting the onus on India to prove Azhar's involvement in the Pathankot terrorist attack, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters here last week that China will back the move to designate him as a terrorist only if there is "solid evidence" against him.

China last year put a technical hold twice on India's application to get Azhar banned by the UN.

This year, the US moved the proposal in the UNSC to designate Azhar as a terrorist. China once again has put a technical hold on the move.

Also, another issue weighing on the bilateral relationship is the USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) over which India has protested as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

China defends the project, saying that it is a development oriented project aimed at improving lives of the local people and it makes no difference to its stand that the Kashmir issue should be resolved by India and Pakistan bilaterally.

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