

CHINA SWEARS BY CONSENSUS ON AZHAR

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Hours after blocking a UN ban on Masood Azhar, China made it plain that it would consider shifting its position on designating the head of the Jaish-e-Mohammed as an international terrorist only after reaching a consensus between Beijing, New Delhi and Islamabad.

Responding to a question, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lu Kang signalled that Beijing was ready to back a triangular formula that would involve Pakistan on designating Azhar as a global terrorist in the UN Security Council's 1267 committee. "I said earlier that only a solution that is acceptable to all sides could be fundamentally providing a chance of lasting solution," he said.

The spokesperson said there would be no lag in diplomatic efforts to get all three countries on board.

"China is ready to communicate and coordinate with all sides including India to properly handle this issue," he observed.

Mr. Lu's remarks follow Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi's assertion on Friday stating Beijing's intent to engage in "mediation efforts" to lower tensions between India and Pakistan, following the February 14 Pulwama suicide bombing, in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

Subsequently, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou visited Islamabad to discuss Indo-Pak tensions, which escalated following India's air strike on JeM's Balakot training camp on February 26.

"China will continue to adopt a constructive and responsible attitude and communicate and coordinate with all sides relevant to properly handle this issue," Mr. Lu observed.

Needs more time

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing decided to place a "technical hold" on Azhar's designation at the 1267 committee on Wednesday, as it needed more time for deliberations on this issue. "The UNSC 1267 committee has clear standards and procedures for designating terrorist organisations and individuals. China conducts thorough and in- depth assessment of this application, and we still need time. That is why we put forward the technical hold," Mr. Lu said.

He added: "This is in line with the rules of the committee and China sincerely hopes that relevant action taken by this committee will help relevant countries to engage in dialogue and consultation and prevent adding more complicated factors into regional peace and stability."

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