

INDO-PACIFIC POLICY STATEMENT IN CITY-STATE PM takes special care to deal with issues raised by Russian Prez in Sochi during their informal summit

Modi Addresses Putin's Quad Concerns in S'pore

Russian Prez is believed to have also underlined Chinese concerns at India's inclusion

New Delhi: When Prime Minister Narendra Modi made India's first major Indo-Pacific policy statement at Singapore on Sunday, he took special care in addressing Russian concerns that President Vladimir Putin had brought up in Sochi during their informal summit.

Those familiar with the details told ET that Putin had specifically raised concerns arising from the proposed Quadrilateral grouping comprising India, US, Japan and Australia. He is believed to have also underlined Chinese concerns at India's inclusion.

Modi made it clear to Putin that India's meetings under various formats should not be construed as alliances, an aspect he assured would be clearer after his speech in Singapore. And this was done with a firm assurance that New Delhi does not ascribe to alliances of containment.



Modi told Putin that India will pitch for a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific

"It is normal to have partnerships on the basis of shared values and interests. India, too, has many in the region and beyond. We will work with them, individually or in formats of three or more, for a stable and peaceful region.

But our friendships are not alliances of containment," said Modi.

He went on to add: "We choose the side of principles and values, of peace and progress, not one side of a divide or the other."

On the question of China, however, Modi told Putin that India will pitch for a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. In this context, India made it clear that Russia will have to distinguish its interests from that of China because Beijing has indeed destabilised the existing order in the Indo-Pacific.

"We should all have equal access as a right under international law to the use of common spaces on sea and in the air that would require freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law," Modi said on Sunday.

As for Russia-specific concerns, Modi told Vladimir Putin he should view India as its partner to safeguard its interests in the Indo-Pacific just like India views Russia as its key partner in central Asia.

The third specific concern, which had again arisen from the US-backed Quadrilateral idea, but conveyed this time by Asean countries, was whether the Quad would replace Asean as the core referral

point for the region.

On this score, Modi had assured both leaders of Indonesia and Malaysia that India had no intent to challenge Asean's centrality in the Indo-Pacific. This was articulated specifically as one of the policy principles in the PM's address.

"Southeast Asia is at its centre. And, Asean has been and will be central to its future. That is the vision that will always guide India, as we seek to cooperate for an architecture for peace and security in this region," he said.

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