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Should focus on development, not expansionism, says Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also said India has consistently supported the unity and centrality of ASEAN.

Written by **Divya A** [Follow](#)

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Thailand Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in Vientiane, Laos, Friday. (PTI Photo)

Calling for the restoration of peace and stability in Eurasia and West Asia at the earliest, PM Narendra Modi Friday noted that the most negatively affected countries due to ongoing conflicts in various parts of the world are those from the Global South. Delivering his remarks at the 19th East Asia Summit in Laos on Friday, Modi reiterated that solutions to problems cannot come from the battlefield.

In a veiled reference to China whose assertiveness in the South China Sea has triggered geopolitical tensions, Modi said, “Our approach should focus on development and not expansionism. A free, open, inclusive, prosperous, and rules-based Indo-Pacific is crucial for the peace and progress of the entire region,” he said, adding, “The peace, security, and stability in the South China Sea are in the interest of the entire Indo-Pacific region.”

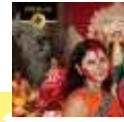
“We believe that maritime activities should be conducted in accordance with UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea). Ensuring freedom of navigation and airspace is essential. A robust and effective Code of Conduct should be developed. And, it should not impose restrictions on the foreign policies of regional countries,” the PM noted.

On the raging conflicts in different parts of the world, including the Israel-Hamas war that is now expanding to other parts of West Asia, and the Russian-Ukraine war

going on for more than two years, he said, “There is a collective desire for the restoration of peace and stability in regions such as Eurasia and West Asia as soon as possible.”

“I come from the land of Buddha, and I have repeatedly stated that this is not an era of war. Solutions to problems cannot come from the battlefield... It is essential to respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international laws. With a humanitarian perspective, we must place a strong emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy,” he said.

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In fulfilling its responsibilities as a ‘Vishwabandhu’, India will continue to make every effort to contribute in this direction, he noted. The PM had recently visited both Russia and Ukraine and held talks with the respective leaders, condemning violence and asserting that solutions cannot come from the battlefield.

Also mentioning that terrorism poses “a serious challenge to global peace and security”, Modi said that in order “to combat it, forces that believe in humanity must come together and work in tandem”. He said, “We must strengthen mutual cooperation in the areas of cyber, maritime, and space.”

At the start of his address, the PM expressed his condolences to those affected by “Typhoon Yagi”, which impacted Southeast Asia and South China in September this year. “During this challenging time, we have provided humanitarian assistance through Operation Sadbhav,” he said.

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Modi also said India has consistently supported the unity and centrality of ASEAN. ASEAN is also pivotal to India's Indo-Pacific vision and Quad cooperation, he said. "We endorse ASEAN's approach to the situation in Myanmar and support the Five-Point Consensus," he said, adding India believes that "Myanmar should be engaged rather than isolated in this process".



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Later, in a post on X, Modi said, "Our Act East Policy has led to substantial gains and has contributed to a better planet. At the same time, we wish to work towards an Indo-Pacific which is rules-based, free, inclusive and open."

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