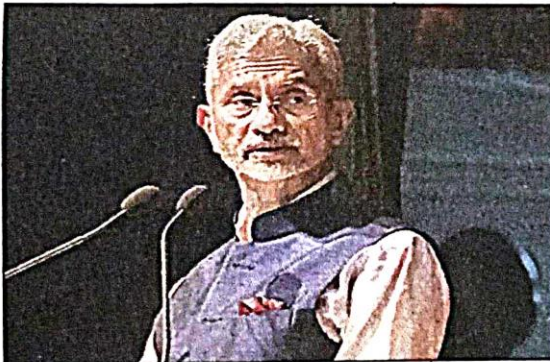


'It's important to put nat'l interest first'

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Kolkata: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday emphasised on the need to put national interest first.

"It is important to put national interest first. Politics of the day should not hamper the larger interest of the nation. All politicians should have that



External affairs minister S Jaishankar delivers a lecture at IIM-C on Wednesday

approach in the first place. But it is easier said than done," said Jaishankar, speaking at Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta on Wednesday evening. "Article 370 was nothing more than the politics of the day, it (the politics) was the reason for a temporary provision to continue for so long and several nations to take advantage of that provision."

Jaishankar listed India's handling of the Covid challenge, the digital delivery of social services, the growing economic stature with rising FTIs and

multiple new start-ups, an independent foreign policy, innovative diplomacy without using the veto on others, a resolute border policy, the willingness to look out for others, carrying out international rescue missions, like that in Ukraine and Afghanistan, and India's rising prominence in the world order as indications of India's rising global prominence. Pointing out India had multiple reasons to be taken more seriously, he said there was a growing realization that big issues could not be resolved without her.

"Indians are much more conscious about national security since it has been so often challenged in the past 75 years. We need to apply ourselves to the hard task of securing our borders effectively without allowing systemic flaws to dilute them," he stated.

The Union minister stressed the need for Indians to appreciate India's work internationally during the pandemic, especially among countries in the Pacific region and Africa. "There is tremendous goodwill about India's postures. At a time when many nations brought sanctions, India thought of giving it to others as providers of experiences of best practices. "The foreign ministers (whom he met in New York in September) told me that we had given them the first vaccines at a time we were still vaccinating our own people," he said.

Replying to a question, Jasishankar said: "It is not the job of the government to create an Opposition. But we are a very diverse and pluralistic country. The country has its democracy."