

‘Pak pursues extremist agenda’

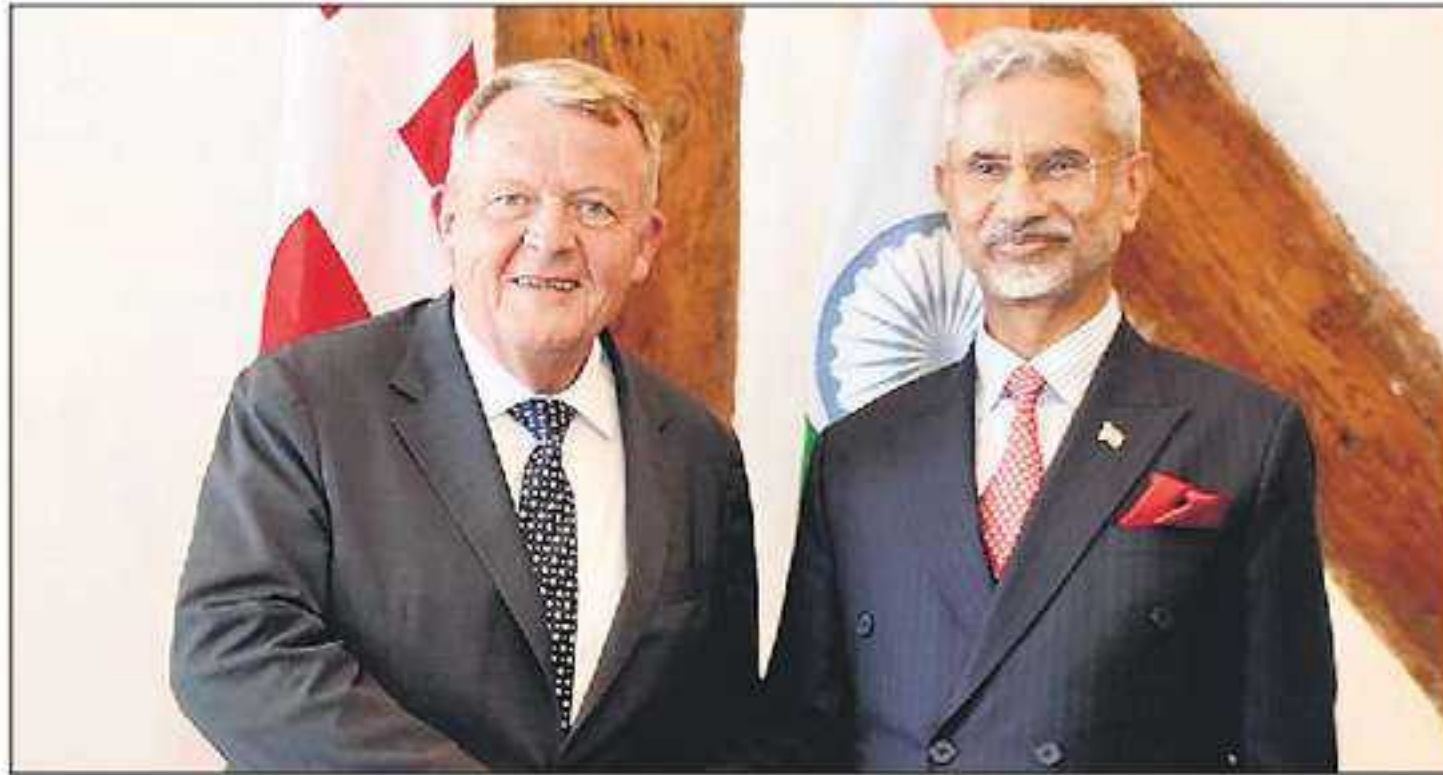
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NEW DELHI: Pakistan’s leadership, especially army chief Asim Munir who is “driven by an extreme religious outlook”, introduced an element of religion in the Pahalgam terror attack last month that killed 26 civilians, external affairs minister S Jaishankar has said.

India has also grappled with the Pakistani military fomenting unrest in Jammu and Kashmir since 1948, when regular Pakistani troops were sent into the region in the guise of tribal raiders, and their pursuit of an “extremist religious agenda”, Jaishankar reiterated during an interview with Dutch public broadcaster NOS.

Operation Sindoor, launched on May 7 to retaliate against the Pahalgam attack, is continuing because India will respond if there is another terror attack and hit terrorists operating from Pakistan, he said, while outlining New Delhi’s new approach to countering cross-border terror-



External affairs minister S Jaishankar with his Danish counterpart Lars Lokke Rasmussen in Copenhagen.

PTI

ism.

The fighting with Pakistan was “triggered by a very barbaric terrorist attack” in Jammu and Kashmir, where 26 people were “murdered in front of their families after ascertaining their faith”. The attack was intended to harm tourism, the mainstay of Kashmir’s economy, and to “create a religious discord”, Jaishankar said.

“Deliberately, an element of religion was introduced and to understand that you’ve got to see

that on the Pakistani side, you have a Pakistani leadership, especially the army chief, who’s very driven by an extreme religious outlook. There is clearly some connect between the views that were expressed and the behaviour that was done,” he said, referring to Munir’s remarks about the two-nation theory a week before the attack.

India has grappled with the Pakistani military’s efforts to foment unrest in Kashmir almost since the time of the

country’s independence in 1947, he said. Pakistan claimed the forces that intruded into Kashmir in 1948 were tribal raiders but it “turned out they were Pakistani military people, some of them in uniform”.

Jaishankar added, “They’ve also pursued a radical, I would say, extremist religious agenda...using terrorism across the border as a way of trying to pressure us. This has been their history.”

Jaishankar said the May 10 understanding on halting military actions was reached bilaterally by India and Pakistan after Indian strikes “compelled the Pakistani military to accept that we need to stop firing at each other”. He ruled out any US role in this understanding or in any possible talks with Pakistan.

“The operation continues because there is a clear message in that operation – that if there are acts of the kind we saw on April 22, there will be a response, that we will hit the terrorists,” Jaishankar said about Operation Sindoor.