

Ambassador Vikram Misri's Interview to PTI (26 June 2020)

India warns China that attempts to alter status quo will have 'ripples, repercussions'

(By K J M Varma)

Beijing, Jun 26 (PTI) India on Friday warned China that trying to alter the status quo on the ground by resorting to force will not just damage the peace that existed on the border areas but can also have "ripples and repercussions" in the broader bilateral relationship, and demanded that Beijing stop its activities in eastern Ladakh.

The only way to resolve the current military standoff along the LAC in eastern Ladakh was for Beijing to realise that trying to "change the status quo by resorting to force or coercion, is not the right way forward," India's ambassador to China Vikram Misri said in a hard-hitting interview to PTI.

Asserting that actions taken by the Chinese forces on the ground have damaged "considerable trust" in the bilateral relationship, the Indian ambassador added that it was entirely the responsibility of the Chinese side to take a careful view of the relations and to decide which direction the ties should move.

Noting that maintenance of peace and tranquillity "on the border is sine qua non for progress in the rest of bilateral relationship between India and China", Misri said: "The resolution of this issue is quite straight forward from our perspective. The Chinese side needs to stop creating obstruction and hindrances in the normal patrolling patterns of the Indian troops," he said. He also rubbished China's claim of sovereignty over Galwan Valley in Ladakh as "completely untenable", and asserted that these kinds of exaggerated claims are not going to help the situation. "Whatever activities we may be carrying on have always been on our side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), so the Chinese need to stop activities to alter the status quo. It is very surprising that they should attempt to do so in a sector which has never before been a sector of concern," he said. Emphasising that India is "very aware and very clear about the alignment of the LAC in the Galwan Valley," he said our troops have been patrolling up to these areas without any difficulty for a very very long period of time. Misri's strong comments came in response to the recent claims by the Chinese military and the foreign ministry of sovereignty over Galwan Valley. On the Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong's assertion on Thursday that the onus is on India to deescalate tensions, Misri said, "I think we have been very clear, and very consistent in pointing out that it has been Chinese actions over an extended period of time, that are responsible for the current situation".

"In fact beginning with the time frame of April and May, I would say there were a number of Chinese actions along the LAC in the Ladakh sector in the western sector that interfered with and hindered with the normal patrolling activities of our troops in that sector. This led obviously to a few face-off situations," he said.

During an interview with PTI, Sun refused to reply to questions about China's transgressions of the LAC. He was asked why China has not been allowing Indian patrols from Finger 4 to Finger 8 areas in Pangong Tso even though the areas belonged in the Indian side of LAC. He was also asked why

China has resorted to massive build up of troops in almost all areas of the 3500 km LAC. But Sun sidestepped the questions and remained mum.

Misri said he "would underline the remarks of our External Affairs Minister (S Jaishankar) when he spoke to Foreign Minister Wang Yi that these developments cannot but have an impact on the bilateral relationship." "The bilateral relationship is of great value to the two countries. It is important not just for us but also regionally important", he said. "So I think there should be a realisation on the Chinese side that there is no gain in trying to alter the status quo on the ground especially by resorting to force ... that will not just damage the peace and tranquillity that existed on the border but it can have ripples and repercussions in the broader bilateral relationship," Misri said. "We have no wish and desire for that. Therefore, it is entirely the responsibility of the Chinese side to take a careful view of our bilateral relations and to decide which direction the bilateral relationship to move forward", he said.

"To my mind there is only one answer, I do very much hope that the Chinese side will also see it in that way", he added. Noting that in the Galwan Valley especially there has never been any difference as to where the LAC lay, the Indian envoy said:"It is very surprising that they should have chosen to, in the context of these recent developments, to do this kind of thing in a sector which has never before been a sector of concern." "So for China to now voice these kinds of claims is completely untenable. These kinds of exaggerated claims are not going to help the situation. The kind of language that has been used is not helpful to the resolution of this situation," he said.

In the ongoing meetings including at the military level that are going on "we hope that the Chinese side will realise its responsibility in de-escalation and disengagement", he said.

"That would be a true resolution of this issue", he said.

Misri's comments came a day after the External Affairs Ministry said China has been amassing a large contingent of troops and armaments along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since early May, and warned that continuation of the current situation would only vitiate the atmosphere for the development of the relationship.
