

'CHINA CLAIMS ON ARUNACHAL PRADESH OUTRAGEOUS'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Phillip Ackerman

China's claims on Arunachal Pradesh are "outrageous" and its transgressions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India are a "violation of the international order", said Germany's new Ambassador to India, drawing parallels between Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's "infringement" on India's border.

In remarks that are a first for any diplomat or dignitary speaking about the India-China tensions since April 2020, German envoy Phillip Ackerman said that India should understand that both Russian and Chinese actions are clear violations of international law, adding however, that they differ in "dimension" as, unlike Russia, he said China has not "destroyed" Indian villages and towns.

"We should not forget that China claims that Arunachal Pradesh is part of China, which is outrageous in a way, and we see very clearly that the infringement at the border is extremely difficult and should not be accepted," Mr. Ackerman told journalists at his first briefing in Delhi since he presented his credentials to President Droupadi Murmu last week.

"But it should also be noted that what happens at the border with China has nothing to do with what happens with Ukraine. China doesn't hold 20% of Indian territory, China has not been systematically destroying every village, every town [as Russia has]. By dimension, it is completely different although at an abstract level, they are both [violations of international law]. If you transgress the border, it is against the rule of international law," the Ambassador added.

When asked by *The Hindu* whether the German government had accepted the differences over New Delhi's refusal at the United Nations to criticise Russia's actions, and India's move to increase its imports of cheaper Russian oil (an estimated increase of 50 times), Mr. Ackerman said that Germany had wished that India had been more "outspoken" on certain issues, but welcomed India's decision last week to vote against Russia at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's virtual address, calling it "progress" in India's position.

"I think the Indian side well recognises this problem of international law violation. Basically, this is also an Indian problem — you have it on your northern border, and you have been experiencing this every couple of years. ...So, while we don't agree on methods or measures, we do have an understanding of the problem [in Ukraine]," he added.

The comments by the German Ambassador are particularly unusual given that the Modi government itself has thus far not referred to China's actions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as transgressions, and has maintained that Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces have "amassed troops" along the LAC, and only that they had "attempted transgressions".

After the Galwan killings in June 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had affirmed that "no one has entered Indian territory, nor was anyone inside Indian territory".

In a veiled reference to China and LAC tensions on Monday, Mr. Jaishankar had said that

“adherence to laws, norms and rules” was imperative for unity in Asia.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to requests for a response to the German envoy’s comments.

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