

SITUATION IN LADAKH 'VERY SERIOUS', SAYS EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR

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New Delhi: Ahead of his expected talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Moscow, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said the state of the border with China cannot be de-linked from the state of the overall relationship with the neighbouring country.

The external affairs minister also described the situation in eastern Ladakh as "very serious" which he said calls for "very very deep conversation" between the two sides at a political level.

[Jaishankar](#) was speaking at an interactive session by The Indian Express newspaper.

"The state of the border cannot be de-linked from the state of the relationship. I wrote it before that unfortunate incident happened in Galwan," Jaishankar said referring to his newly published book 'The India Way'.

Tensions escalated manifold along the [Line of Actual Control](#) (LAC) in eastern Ladakh after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the [Chinese side](#) was 35.

"If peace and tranquility on the border is not a given, then it cannot be that the rest of the relationship continues on the same basis, because clearly peace and tranquility is the basis for the relationship," the External Affairs Minister said.

Jaishankar is set to meet Wang on September 10 in Moscow on the sidelines of the meeting of the foreign ministers of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

"Exactly what I will tell him, obviously I am not going to tell you," Jaishankar said when asked what message he will deliver to his Chinese counterpart.

He, however, said the broad principle around which his position would be constructed would be about the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility along the border for the overall development of ties which has been reflected in the last 30 years of the relationship.

The minister also talked about the number of pacts between the two countries on the border management since 1993, saying they clearly stipulate keeping forces at a minimum level along the border and largely shaped the behaviour of the armed forces.

"If these are not observed, then it raises very very important questions.... I note that this very serious situation has been going on since the beginning of May, this calls for very very deep conversation between the two sides at a political level," he added.

Jaishankar said there were problems left over from history as well. "We have problems left over from history which continue to be an overhang on the relationship," he said, calling the current standoff as of "a very different order".

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