

11 Jul 2017 10:37PM



Asia Pacific

India, China can handle border differences, foreign secretary says

India and China can manage the differences that are likely to arise from time to time over their contested border, India's Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday, commenting on recent tension sparked by Chinese road-building.



A man walks inside a conference room used for meetings between military commanders of China and India, at the Indian side of the Indo-China border at Bumla, in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, November 11, 2009. REUTERS/Adnan Abidi/Files

SINGAPORE: India and China can manage the differences that are likely to arise from time to time over their contested border, India's Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday, commenting on recent tension sparked by Chinese road-building.

In early June, according to the Chinese interpretation of events, Indian guards crossed into China's Donglang region and obstructed work on a road on a plateau adjoining the mountainous Indian state of Sikkim.

Troops from the two sides then confronted each other close to a valley controlled by China that separates India from Bhutan - a close Indian ally - and gives China access to the so-called Chicken's Neck, a thin strip of land that connects India to its remote northeastern regions.

Delivering a lecture in Singapore, Jaishankar said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping reached consensus on two points at a meeting last month on the sidelines of a regional summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The two nuclear-armed Asian neighbours must not allow their differences to become disputes, and should ensure their relations were a factor of stability amid global uncertainty, Jaishankar said, summarising the two points.

"This consensus underlines the strategic maturity with which the two countries must continue to approach each other," he added at an event hosted by the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Asked specifically about the recent confrontation in the Himalayan region, Jaishankar said the neighbours had experience dealing with such situations.

"It is a long border," Jaishankar said. "As you know, no part of the border has been agreed upon. It is likely that from time to time there are differences."

He added, "It is not the first time that has happened. And when such situations arise, how we handle it...is a test of our maturity."

"I see no reason why, when having handled so many situations in the past, we would not be able to handle it."

During his lecture, Jaishankar described the evolving India-China relationship as having direct implications for Asia and perhaps the world.

Ties between China and India, which fought a brief border war in 1962, have long been frosty over territorial disputes, as well as Beijing's support of Pakistan, and Indian leaders declined to attend China's "Belt and Road" summit in May.

(Reporting by Simon Cameron-Moore; Editing by Clarence Fernandez)

Source: Reuters