

## **China denies incursions along LAC; dodges reports of PLA presence in PoK**

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**Beijing:** China has dodged a direct response to reports of presence of PLA troops at a forward post in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and said it regretted that the media keeps popping up stories of incursions into the Indian side of the LAC.

"I have not heard about the incident you mentioned," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kong said at a media briefing here on Monday, replying to a question about the presence of People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops at a forward post opposite Nowgam sector in the PoK.

In response to another question on reports of recent incursions of PLA troops on the Indian side in the Ladakh sector, Kong said, "There is no such thing as going beyond the border".

"We deeply regret that the media keeps popping up the relevant issue. The bilateral relationship (between India and China) has maintained sound momentum of development. Friendly cooperation is the mainstream of the bilateral relationship. We hope that the relevant media would report objectively about China-India relations and do more to improve the friendly relationship between the two sides," he said.

At the same time Lu reiterated Beijing's stand on the Kashmir issue, saying that "China's position on Kashmir issue is consistent". "We believe that the relevant issue was left over by history between India and Pakistan. We maintain that the two countries should properly resolve it through negotiations and consultations," he added.

Asked whether presence of PLA troops is connected to the work related to the USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, over which India has conveyed its protest, Lu merely reiterated China's stand on the Kashmir issue.

India has conveyed its protest to China on the corridor connecting China's Xinjiang province with Pakistan's Gwadar port as it goes through PoK along the Karakoram Highway.

China in the past maintained that the corridor which is part of its Silk Road initiative is aimed at improving the people's livelihoods and in no way affects status of the Kashmir issue.

Both the sides have established Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to discuss the issue of incursions and aggressive border patrols by their troops along the 3,488-km long disputed border.

- PTI