

## **China expresses 'concern' over Kashmir clashes, calls for peaceful settlement**

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**Beijing:** China has expressed concern over the recent casualties in Kashmir and called upon India and Pakistan to resolve the issue through dialogue.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday said that the Kashmir-issue was a "left-over from history".

Beijing also said that it hoped that the situation will be "handled properly" and "relevant parties" will address the issue peacefully through dialogue.

"China has taken note of relevant reports. We are equally concerned about the casualties in the clash, and hope that relevant incident will be handled properly," Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said in his remarks posted on the Foreign Ministry website.

"The Kashmir issue is left over from history. China holds a consistent stance and hopes relevant parties will address the issue peacefully through dialogue," he said in response to a question on the recent Kashmir unrest.

Lu's comments come as a surprise to observers in Beijing as it is rare for China to comment on the developments relating to Jammu and Kashmir.

The standard line followed by China in recent years on issues relating to Kashmir was that it is an issue between India and Pakistan and should be properly handled by the two sides through dialogue and consultation.

The rare comments on the situation in Kashmir came in the wake of the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani. Kashmir has seen violent protests since Wani's killing; 45 people have died and over 2000 have been injured.

Sharply reacting to Pakistan's statement on Burhan Wani's killing and Kashmir, India has said that Islamabad should stop interfering in New Delhi's internal matter and anyone trying to interfere will not change that reality.

"Our internal affairs are solely ours to handle, anyone trying to interfere will not change that reality," MEA spokesperson Vikas Swarup had said.

Swarup added that India has never shied away from dialogue with Pakistan, but "talks and terror cannot go hand in hand."

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