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Era of expansionism over: Modi in Ladakh

PM doesn't mention China, pays tributes to soldiers martyred in Galwan Valley

4/7/20

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday made a surprise visit to Ladakh — the icy heights where India-China border tensions are playing out — and told a gathering of Army and ITBP soldiers that the “era of expansionism is over” without naming China even once in his speech.

The PM's sudden trip comes after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Leh on Friday was cancelled at the eleventh hour.

“The age of expansionism is over. This is the age of development. History is witness that expansionist forces have either lost or were forced to turn back. India's commitment to peace should not be seen as India's weakness,” the Prime Minister said interacting with soldiers at the Line of Actual Control.

Accompanied by Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and Army Chief Gen M M Naravane, Modi reached Leh early morning and was subsequently flown to Nimu, which is situated at an altitude of 11,000 ft on the banks of the Indus, by a chopper.

He was given a briefing on the LAC situation by Lt Gen Harinder Singh, Commander of the 14 Corps, inside a camouflage tent.

Remembering the sacrifices made by soldiers killed in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the Indian troops at Nimu in Ladakh on Friday. PTI

Japan backs India

Japan on Friday backed India in the border stand-off with China, saying it was against any unilateral change in the status quo on the disputed boundary in eastern Ladakh.

“Japan opposes any unilateral attempts to change the status quo,” Satoshi Suzuki, Tokyo's envoy to New Delhi, tweeted on Friday after meeting with Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla at South Block in New Delhi. Page 11

China warns India

Following PM Modi's remarks in Ladakh, China on Friday warned India against any “strategic miscalculation” while dismissing as “groundless” Modi's tacit jibe at the communist country. “India should avoid a strategic miscalculation with regard to China,” Zhao Lijian, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, said in Beijing, adding that “neither side should make any move that may complicate the border situation”. Page 5

the Galwan clash, Modi said, “Be it Leh-Ladakh, Kargil or the Siachen Glacier, be it the high mountains or the icy cold water that flows in the rivers, these are testimony to the gallantry of India's armed forces. The enemies of India have seen the fire and fury of our forces.”

Incidentally, Leh-based 14 Corps of the Indian Army that guards the LAC is also known as the Fire and Fury Corps.

Modi said the country believed in its soldiers to keep it

“strong and safe.”

“Every single Indian across the world, especially in India, has the belief that you all can deliver and keep the nation strong and safe,” said the Prime Minister. “Your courage is higher than the heights where you are stationed. Your arms are as strong as the mountains that surround you. Your confidence, determination and belief are as atal (immovable) as the peaks here.”

“The weak can never ac-

Pak continues to flout ceasefire along LoC

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

There have been over 2,400 instances of ceasefire violation by Pakistan in the first six months of the year, killing 14 Indians.

The continuous breaches along the Line of Control (LoC) by the soldiers of the neighbouring country come at a time when India is engaged in a military stand-off with China in Ladakh.

Pakistan army personnel and border guards have flouted ceasefire along the LoC and the undisputed stretch of border between the two nations 2,432 times so far this year, a source in New Delhi said.

India has lodged a strong protest with Pakistan over unprovoked violation of the 2003 ceasefire agreement. New Delhi also conveyed to Islamabad “strong concerns” over its continued support to terrorists.

“To accomplish peace, the brave do,” Modi asserted.

For more than two months, Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a tense face-off at multiple locations in eastern Ladakh.

The two sides discussed disengagement plans three times but troop presence in east Ladakh has not thinned so far. On the contrary, both nations have increased their men, firepower and wherewithal on either side of the LAC.