

INDIA, CHINA HOLD MILITARY TALKS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

An IAF fighter jet flying over Leh on January 15. PTI

The ninth round of Corps Commander-level talks between India and China were under way on Sunday at the Moldo border personnel meeting point on the Chinese side opposite Chushul in Eastern Ladakh as both sides attempt to work out a phased disengagement and de-escalation plan to end the nine-month stand-off.

A defence official said the talks began at 10 a.m. Talks were still on at the time of going to print.

Disengagement plan

Officials said a broad disengagement plan had been worked out but it was held up over some issues. Both sides would attempt to work that out at the talks, a second official said. This was the reason for the delay in scheduling the ninth round of talks. The eighth round was held in November last year.

It has to be a comprehensive disengagement plan beginning with all friction points in Eastern Ladakh and then de-escalation along the Line of Actual Control, the second official said, referring to China's insistence on discussions centred on the South Bank of Pangong Tso first and taking up other friction areas later.

The Indian delegation is led by Lt. Gen. PGK Menon, General Officer Commanding of the 14 Corps, and includes Naveen Srivastava, Additional Secretary (East Asia) from the External Affairs Ministry. A Ministry representative has been part of the previous few rounds of talks as well. The delegation includes two Major Generals and two Brigadiers, and Deepam Seth, Inspector-General, North West Frontier, Indo-Tibetan Border Police.

Officials have stated on several occasions that any withdrawal will be phased and will take time, given the large number of troops and equipment deployed by both sides and also verify compliance on the ground by the Chinese side at each step.

The talks are guided by the five-point-plan for disengagement and de-escalation agreed to by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Moscow on September 10 last year. After the sixth round of talks on September 21, both sides for the first time issued a joint statement agreeing to "stop sending more troops to the frontline" and "refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground".

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