

INDIA, CHINA TROOPS FACE OFF IN SIKKIM

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Indian and [Chinese troops](#) were engaged in a 'minor' face-off at Naku La in north Sikkim last week, the Indian Army said on Monday, adding that it was resolved by local commanders following established protocols.

"It is clarified that there was a minor face-off at Naku La area of North Sikkim on 20 January and the same was resolved by local commanders as per established protocols," the Indian Army said in a statement. Two people aware of the incident said Chinese troops had attempted to transgress into Indian territory but were stopped by the Indian Army. One of the two people cited above said a physical fight broke out injuring soldiers on both sides.

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Analysts in India, however, called the 20 January incident "provocative", coming just days ahead of a meeting between senior military commanders of the two countries.

Following the conclusion of the talks held at Moldo on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control ([LAC](#)), India and China said on Monday that they had "positive" and "constructive" discussions on reducing tensions as they agreed to work towards an "early disengagement" of tens of thousands of troops massed along their common border for months.

The long session of talks began Sunday morning and ended in the early hours of Monday. The Indian delegation was led by Lt. General P.G.K. Menon, general officer commanding of Leh-based 14 Corps, which oversees security in Ladakh. Both sides said the latest round of talks "further enhanced mutual trust and understanding". They termed the talks as "candid" and that it resulted in an "in-depth exchange of views on disengagement," according to a joint statement issued after the talks.

"The two sides agreed to push for an early disengagement of the frontline troops," the statement said adding that the delegations agreed to "hold the 10th round of the corps commander level meeting at an early date to jointly advance de-escalation."

"The two sides agreed to continue their effective efforts in ensuring the restraint of the frontline troops, stabilize and control the situation along the LAC in the western sector of the China-India border, and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity," it added.

Lt. General (retired) Deepender Singh Hooda, former head of the Indian Army's Northern Command, said the principles of disengagement have to be finalized at the diplomatic and political levels instead of military. "The military commanders then work out how it will play out on the ground," he said.

Tensions between India and China have been simmering since last May. Both sides have deployed tens of thousands of troops backed by artillery, missile batteries and fighter jets. In fact, following a serious clash between Indian and Chinese troops on 5 May 2020, along the banks of Pangong Tso in Ladakh, the troops were yet again involved in another serious clash at Naku La, which led to injuries on both sides. The incidents led India to mobilize troops to secure

its borders along the LAC.

Hooda said "the Chinese are attempting to establish permanence to their claims" in the disputed areas along the LAC. While one of the ways of doing this was to challenge Indian patrols along the Pangong Tso, another was by building a new village in an area in Arunachal Pradesh. The village was being built in an area that both countries recognize as disputed though under Chinese occupation since 1959, he said. "Knowing that there were military-level talks to take place, it was provocative".

Following the mobilization of troops in Ladakh last May, India strengthened its vigil along the 3,000-km border with China.

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