

INDIA SAYS CHINESE TROOPS TRIED TO CHANGE STATUS QUO

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Accusing the Chinese troops of “attempting to unilaterally change the *status quo*” in the Galwan valley, the Ministry of External Affairs said the casualties “could have been avoided” had agreements made by military commanders over the past week been followed by the Chinese side.

In a statement on Tuesday night, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the violence that claimed Indian soldiers’ lives in the Galwan valley, including that of a Commanding Officer of Colonel rank, had come despite a series of ground-level discussions on de-escalation of the month-long standoff between the two armies.

According to the statement, the talks on June 6, had been “productive” and meetings had been held “to implement the consensus reached at a higher level” on de-escalation and de-induction of troops.

Five points

At least five points in Ladakh including the Galwan Valley patrolling points, Hostsprings area and Pangong Tso (lake) have been identified as flashpoints, and India’s demands had included a return to *status quo ante*, and the retreat of Chinese troops occupying Indian patrol areas, along with tents, vehicles and equipment. “While it was our expectation that this would unfold smoothly, the Chinese side departed from the consensus to respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Galwan Valley,” the MEA said. “On the late evening and night of 15th June 2020 a violent face-off happened as a result of an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the *status quo* there. Both sides suffered casualties that could have been avoided had the agreement at the higher level been scrupulously followed by the Chinese side,” it added. The MEW also said that all Indian activities were on its side of the LAC, and it expected “the same of China.” While talks were held at the area of the Galwan valley clash to defuse tensions on Tuesday, it is unclear if further diplomatic talks are planned in the aftermath of the violent incident, where the casualty figures are expected to rise. While External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is due to attend a meeting of Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China (RIC grouping) on Monday, MEA officials would not confirm if the meeting will go ahead.

Speaking about talks, the MEA said India remains “firmly convinced of the need for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas and the resolution of differences through dialogue.” “At the same time, we are also strongly committed to ensuring India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” the Ministry added.

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