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India, China troops clashed near LAC in Arunachal: Army

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hospital at Guwahati, a source said.

NEW DELHI: Several Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured in a major clash in the crucial Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh last week in a major escalation amid the continuing over 30-month military confrontation in eastern Ladakh that has seen China strengthen its military positions all across the frontier.

The extended physical clash between the rival soldiers took place at Yangtse in the morning on December 9 after around 300-400 soldiers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) intruded across the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which was "contested" by Indian soldiers deployed there "in a firm and resolute manner".

Troops from both sides sustained fractured limbs and other injuries in the clash. At least six wounded Indian soldiers were evacuated to the military

DEC 9 FACE-OFF BIGGEST SINCE GALWAN

> This is the **first major clash** between India and China **since the Galwan Valley incident**

in eastern Ladakh on June 15, 2020, which claimed 20 Indian lives

> Army said the face-off between the troops took place at Yangtse in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh on the morning of December 9



> Close to **300-400 soldiers from PLA intruded** across the Line of Actual Control (LAC)

> Indian soldiers **“contested in a firm and resolute manner”**

> Both the sides sustained **fractured limbs and other injuries**, said Army

> Indian commander, his PLA counterpart later held a **flag meeting to discuss** the issue

The Army, in a brief statement, said: “Both sides immediately disengaged from the area. As a follow-up of the incident, our commander in the area held a flag meeting with his (PLA) counterpart to discuss the issue in accordance with structured mechanisms to restore peace and tranquillity.”

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“In certain areas along the LAC in the Tawang sector in Arunachal, there are areas of differing perceptions, wherein both sides patrol the area up to their claim lines. This has been the trend since 2006,” it added.

India has deployed a large number of troops in Tawang, which China claims to be part of south Tibet, to thwart any misadventure by the PLA. Several times in the past, the PLA has intruded across the LAC in the sector to damage unoccupied bunkers and other infrastructure on the Indian side.

Army had foiled PLA bid to gain access to peak in Yangtse in 2021

Yangtse, in particular, has been witnessing frequent face-offs between the rival armies. In October 2021, for instance, the PLA had also tried to gain access to a 17,000-foot peak in Yangtse but were then thwarted by alert Indian soldiers deployed in the area.

While there have been several face-offs and minor skirmishes along the entire 3,488-km LAC stretching from eastern Ladakh to Arunachal over the last two years, last week's clash is the first such major one since the bloody Galwan Valley incident in eastern Ladakh on June 15, 2020.

Colonel Santosh Babu and 19 other Indian soldiers were killed in extended clashes with the numerically superior Chinese troops, armed with nail-studded rods and other sharp weapons, at that time. China has admitted the loss of only four soldiers, including the commanding officer, till now. It was the first time the two countries witnessed casualties in a border clash in 45 years.

The latest clash at Yangtse comes when India and China are yet to finalize the date for the 17th round of corps commander-level talks despite the last one being held in July.

Army chief General Manoj Pande last month had described the situation on the frontier with China as "stable but unpredictable", adding that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has neither reduced its forces on the LAC, nor let up in infrastructure development for faster troop mobility and connectivity.

Gen Pande had also warned against China's perfidy. "We all know what the Chinese say and what they do is quite different. It is also a part of deception, or their nature or their character," he said.

The Army chief had said attempts were in process to find a resolution for the two remaining "friction points" through talks.

China, however, has so far not shown any inclination to undertake troop disengagement at the two major face-offs at the strategically-located Depsang Plains as well as the Charding Ninglung Nallah (CNN) track junction at Demchok, as reported by TOI earlier.

Overall de-escalation, if it takes place, will involve the two countries moving back their over 50,000 troops each that have been forward deployed with heavy weapon systems along the eastern Ladakh frontier for the last 30 months.