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The article published in Financial Express June 5, 2020, is given below:

## India-China Lac Standoff: Top Military Commanders To Meet For Early Resolution

**By Lt. Gen. Vinod Bhatia (Retd.)**

On the positive side, India and China are talking to each other with the aim of reaching a just and mutually acceptable solution, to ensure peace and tranquillity along the vexed borders.



Four Brigadier and three Major General level Flag meetings at the borders have been unable to resolve the ongoing face-offs (File image)

In a first-ever unprecedented meeting at the Border Personnel Meeting Point at Maldo ( Chinese Side), opposite Chushul, two top military leaders will meet at around 7.30 AM IST to try and finally resolve the month-long ongoing simultaneous face-offs at Galwan Valley and North Bank Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh. The Indian delegation will be led by Lt Gen Harinder Sigh the Leh based Corps Commander, whereas China's Tibet Military District Commander Lt General Xu Yong as per available reports. The meeting is

expected to be candid, cordial, and constructive, with both sides stating their positions. Hopefully, the meeting will result in a just, mutually acceptable temporary resolution.

Four Brigadier and three Major General level Flag meetings at the borders have been unable to resolve the ongoing face-offs and ease the tensions between the two Asian giants, who account for one-third of humanity. Transgressions and face-offs are not uncommon along the 3488 km long-contested India China border. As there is no common understanding of the Line of Actual Control( LAC), which is based on perceptions, these frequent transgressions are managed based on the agreements of 1993, 1996, and the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of October 2013. Since the Depsang standoff of April – May 2013, there has been an increase in the frequency, scope, depth, and intensity of transgressions and face-offs. This is mainly the result of improved infrastructure, surveillance, and additional deployment of troops on the Indian Side.

The ongoing faceoffs both at Galwan and Pangong Tso are different in many ways and hence an imperative for an early resolution to ensure that this does not spiral out of control, a distinct possibility. There is apparently a hardening of positions from both sides and hence the need to raise the level. China indulges in the tried and tested ways of Military Coercion, however, China needs to realise that India will continue to stand firm in its stance of No Blinking, No Brinkmanship. There are a few causative factors for China's assertive behaviour bordering on aggression. China will do well to take a lesson from past standoffs including the 73-day Doklam standoff, wherein India stood firm both on the ground and diplomatic- politico domain. On the positive side, India and China are talking to each other with the aim of reaching a just and mutually acceptable solution, to ensure peace and tranquillity along the vexed borders. The Military talks at the high altitude border meeting point are backed by diplomatic parleys at Delhi and Beijing as also it is logical to assume that it will be monitored at the highest political levels by PM Modi and President Xi Jinping. The world is in turmoil, as all battle the Pandemic. No nation least of all China and India will like to divert focus, energy, and resources from the Pandemic by opening up an unwanted front. China is engaged on multiple fronts, the South China Sea, Taiwan, Hongkong, Korea, the economic exodus of industry from China as also the Common belief of spreading the Made in China Corona Virus. Hence, China too will seek an early acceptable end to the present situation. The outcomes of the first-ever Lieutenant General flag meeting, tomorrow is likely to be positive with both sides pulling back to their earlier dispositions on the ground, agreeing to a ' Status Quo Ante'. Once the present sensitive situation is resolved, it will be time for India and Indian military to take a hard look at the way ahead and be future-ready to meet such challenges, which are likely to be the new normal.

**(The author is Former DGMO. He is Director Centre For Joint Warfare Studies Views expressed are that of the author.)ry commanders to meet for early resolution**