

Chinese army delegation on 5-day India visit seeks to strengthen ties

HT Correspondent

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A high-level Chinese army delegation is on a five-day visit to India, the first military visit after last year's Doklam standoff near Sikkim, to strengthen defence ties between the two neighbours.

Led by Lieutenant General Liu Xiaowu, deputy commander of Western Theatre Command, the 10-member Chinese delegation met army vice chief Lieutenant General Sarath Chand on Monday, and is also scheduled to meet the military leadership at the Kolkata-based Eastern Com-

mand, responsible for guarding India's border with China in the eastern sector.

The People's Liberation Army's Western Theatre Command is one of the Chinese army's five theatre commands and looks exclusively at India. The delegation has travelled to India after holding talks with top Pakistani officials in Islamabad.

India and China endorsed the need to resume military ties when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping for an "informal" summit at Wuhan on April 28-29.

"This (Chinese delegation) visit is seen as a major initiative

to strengthen the relationship between the militaries of both nations," an army spokesperson said on Tuesday. The delegation arrived at Sukna-based HQs 33 Corps on Monday to hold delegation-level talks with Indian counterparts led by Lieutenant General PM Bali.

"This visit... to local military headquarters is a significant step forward towards increasing interactions at military commander's level and implementation of various agreements to maintain peace and tranquility on the borders," the spokesperson said. The delegation will leave for Kolkata on July 5.