

India, China to have new defence MoU

SUSHANT SINGH
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NEARLY A YEAR after the disengagement at Doklam, India and China have agreed to work towards full implementation of ongoing confidence building measures along the disputed border, besides drafting a new bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence exchanges and cooperation between the

two countries.

The two countries also agreed to handle Doklam-like incidents with sensitivity and resolve them through greater interaction at lower levels in the military. This was decided on Thursday during bilateral consultations between the visiting Chinese delegation led by Chinese State Councilor and Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe and Defence Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that the two sides agreed that Doklam-like incidents should be handled with sensitivity, and handled with restraint, rationality and maturity. These incidents, the two ministers were said to have agreed, must be resolved by mutual discussion and interaction at all levels between the two armies. Both sides referred to the strategic

communications issued to the two militaries following the informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Wuhan in April.

“It was decided to expand the engagement between the armed forces relating to training, joint exercises and other professional interactions. Both sides also decided to work towards a new bilateral Memorandum of Understanding

(MoU) on defence exchanges and cooperation to replace the MoU signed in 2006,” ministry of defence said in a statement about the bilateral meeting.

In order to ensure peace and tranquillity on the border, both ministers agreed on greater interactions at the working level, including operationalisation of the hotline between the relevant departments of the armed forces, the statement said.

Sources said that the long-pending issue of a military hotline continues to hang fire as India wants a hotline between the DGMO at Army Headquarters in Delhi with the Chinese army headquarters whereas China wants more than one hotline, which connects the military commands concerned on both sides. The matter has now been left for the officials to resolve among themselves, sources said.