Ladakh drill with Indian Army not against any 'third country', says China

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Beijing: China has clarified that the first-ever Sino-Indian joint military exercise in eastern Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir earlier this was not targeted against any â€˜third countryâ€™ nor it had â€˜anything to doâ€™ with its stance on Kashmir issue.

Indian and Chinese soldiers participate in a drill in Ladakh

â€œI would like to point out that this activity is simply a normal exchange between the frontier troops of China and India to properly deal with border affairs,â€• Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters here on Friday.

â€œIt does not target any third country nor have anything to do with China's position on the Kashmir issue,â€• Hua added.

Hua said border troops of China and India have maintained close exchanges and cooperation for a long time in order to maintain peace and tranquility of the border area.

"On October 19, border troops of the two countries jointly held a small routine tactical exercise in the Chushul region of the western section of the China-India border close to the Line of Actual Control," she said.

"The two sides also held a similar exercise in this region in February. This exercise focuses on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief under a scenario of earthquakes in the border area, with a purpose to enhance exchanges and cooperation between the two troops and better safeguard peace and tranquility of the border area," she added.

The joint army exercise was held in eastern Ladakh on October 19 amid tensions between India and Pakistan after the Uri terror attack and the surgical strikes by the Indian Army in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The exercise was the first military cooperation of New Delhi and Beijing in Jammu and Kashmir. The two nations have conducted exercises at other locations in the country.

It was also held amid hectic diplomatic maneuvering between India and China over Beijing blocking India's bid for NSG membership and impose a UN ban on Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Masood Azhar.

- With PTI Inputs