

Women troops will deal with female protesters: Army chief

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DEHRADUN: Indian army chief General Bipin Rawat suggested on Saturday that the force could deploy its first women combatants for operations in regions such as Kashmir, where soldiers are facing pushback from stone-pelting female protesters.

Rawat's comments came days after he said the army will open combat roles to women, and the process will begin with them initially recruited in the military police.

"Sometimes we have to face women in the front during counter-insurgencies. They could be tackled easily if we have enough strength of women officers and sizable other rank and file cadre," Rawat said at the passing-out parade of the latest batch of soldiers at the Indian Military Academy (IMA). Women are currently



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GENERAL BIPIN RAWAT, Army chief

recruited into selective areas of the army such as medical, legal, educational and engineering wings.

His statement came in reply to a question from reporters on how the army planned to tackle rising incidents of stone pelting by women in Kashmir.

The General said a social media campaign in Kashmir was misleading youth and spreading hate against security forces.

Kashmir has been on the boil

since last July when Hizbul Mujahideen militant Burhan Wani was killed by security forces. In the months since, more than a 100 civilians have died in clashes with the army and police during counter-insurgency operations.

Rawat also played down the issue of Chinese incursions into Indian territory, saying they were matter of "perceptions" by the two countries.

CONTINUED ON P 6

MILITANT KILLED IN J&K » P 8

Army chief

“A disinformation campaign against India and Indian security forces is being run in valley among every section of the society in general and youth in particular via social media but it will not be allowed to succeed” he said.

On China, he stressed on the need to improve relations with the Communist giant. “Counter intrusions take place from both the sides of LAC. We also fly our helicopters on the space that may be considered intrusion by the other side,” Rawat said.

He was referring to the recent incident of a suspected Chinese helicopter violating Indian airspace by hovering over Uttarakhand’s Chamoli area along the border. He denied that these cross overs were attempts by Beijing to intrude into Indian Territory.

Incidents of Chinese troops crossing over to the Indian side of the border often spark fear in the bordering areas and at times even lead to standoffs between the two countries.

Sources said that such violation of the Indian airspace in Chamoli and other areas of the state from the Chinese side have occurred in the past as well.

In July 2016, some members of the People’s Liberation Army of China entered into Indian Territory in the state’s Chamoli area, triggering a nationwide outrage. The intruders even shooed away Chamoli district administration officials who had gone to investigate the matter.