



AIR Discussions (February 2nd Week)

AIR SPOTLIGHT 12 FEBRUARY 2021

INDIA CHINA DISGANGEMENT IN EASTERN LADAKH

CONTEXT:

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced the **disengagement of Indian and Chinese troops to end the nine-month-long stand-off in eastern Ladakh**. The agreement to finally disengage from the Pangong Tso area was reached in the ninth round of the senior commander talks.

BACKGROUND:

- Pangong Tso has been an area of constant friction between India and China.
- Pangong in Ladakhi language means extensive concavity and Tso means lake in Tibetan.
- India holds one third of the **135-km-long boomerang-shaped lake** located at an altitude of more than 14,000 feet.
- The lake, a **glacial melt**, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting out, referred to as "Fingers", and the brackish water freezes in winter.
- India has always held till Finger 4, while it claims till Finger 8**, which is where the Indian perception of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) lies.
- The north bank, which has much higher differences in perception of the LAC than the south bank, had been the initial site of clashes in early May last year.
- The Indian Army has a permanent position near Finger 3. The Chinese have a base east of Finger 8.**



Face-offs in lake

- The Indian Army sends patrols from Finger 3 to Finger 8 on foot, while the Chinese have built a road for their vehicular movement.
- Both sides also patrol the water on speed boats which also results in face-offs.
- However, the face-offs are usually resolved as per the protocols agreed to for maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border.
- The south bank of Pangong leads to the Kailash range and to the Chushul sector.** The Chushul sector is critical as it lends room for tank manoeuvres owing to its flat terrain.
- Over the years, India has strengthened its defences on the south bank in addition to deployment of tanks.** For India, Pangong is critical to maintain hold on the Chushul Valley.



- The PLA has built extensive defences between Finger 8 and Finger 4 and also mounted gun positions on the ridgelines of Finger 4, overlooking Indian positions. The Army gained tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in August by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962, gaining a dominating view of the Moldeo area.
- On the north bank too, Indian troops set up posts facing PLA positions on the ridgelines of Finger 4.
- Both sides are now in the process of clearing these positions, and the process is being jointly monitored.
- Last September, shots were fired in the air on the south bank, the first time since 1975 on the LAC.



What is the new disengagement plan in eastern Ladakh?

- As per the current agreement, both sides will cease their forward deployments in a “phased, coordinated and verified manner” and will move back to their permanent bases. A similar action would be taken in the south bank area by both sides.
- These are mutual and reciprocal steps and any structures that had been built by both sides since April 2020 in both north and south bank area will be removed and the landforms will be restored.
- Both sides have also been agreed to a “temporary moratorium” on military activities on the north bank, including patrolling to the traditional areas, which will be resumed only when an agreement is reached in diplomatic and military talks between the two countries.
- While Pangong has emerged as the focal point of the stand-off, the disengagement here is the first step in a long process.
- There are outstanding problems to be addressed, including at “Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang”. The outstanding issues are to be taken up within 48 hours of the completion of the Pangong Tso disengagement.

Why has this taken so long?

- Since September, China has insisted that India first pull its troops back from the south bank of Pangong Tso, and the Chushul sub-sector.
- However, India has been demanding that any disengagement process should include the entire region, and troops should go back to their April 2020 positions.
- India wants a solution to the issue on the basis of three principles:
 1. LAC should be accepted and respected by both the parties.
 2. Neither party should attempt to change the status quo unilaterally.
 3. All agreements should be fully adhered to by both parties.



KEY MEETINGS

BETWEEN SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS

JUNE 6: Indian side led by Lt Gen Harinder Singh	Srivastava (Additional Secretary, MEA) part of meeting
JUNE 22: Led by Lt Gen Singh	OCTOBER 12: Led by Lt Gen Singh, Lt Gen Menon and Srivastava part of meeting
JUNE 30: Led by Lt Gen Singh	NOVEMBER 6: Led by Lt Gen Menon; Srivastava part of the meeting.
JULY 14: Led by Lt Gen Singh	JANUARY 24: Led by Lt Gen Menon; Srivastava part of the meeting.
AUGUST 2: Led by Lt Gen Singh	
SEPTEMBER 22: Led by Lt Gen Singh; Lt Gen PG K Menon and Naveen	

BETWEEN MINISTERS

SEPTEMBER 4, MOSCOW: Between Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and General Wei Fenghe, State Councillor and Defence Minister of China	SEPTEMBER 10, MOSCOW: Between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China
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Is the standoff is resolved?

- **That's a clear no.** Defence Minister that "there are still some outstanding issues that remain regarding deployment and patrolling on LAC".
- Within 48 hours of complete disengagement from Pangong Lake, senior commanders level talks should be held and the remaining issues should be resolved.
- Chinese troops had crossed the LAC in four other parts last year. **Those were in Gogra Post, Hot Springs, Galwan Valley in which 20 Indian soldiers and an undeclared number of Chinese troops were killed, Depsang Plains, which is close to India's strategic Daulat Beg Oldie base, near the Karakoram Pass in the north.**

What are the hurdles?

- Lack of trust and no clarity on intent.
- Any permanent resolution will include first, disengagement of troops from the frontlines from all friction points, then de-escalation that will entail sending the troops from the depth areas to their original bases.

Timeline Of Recent Events:

MAY 5: Scuffle reported after Chinese mobilisation on the north bank of Pangong Tso, several soldiers injured

MAY 5-MAY 15: PLA transgressions, clashes with Army reported at Pangong, Galwan, Depsang, Sikkim, and other points on LAC

JUNE 6: Corps Commanders hold meeting, agree on disengagement plan. Four rounds held since

JUNE 15: Twenty Indian soldiers killed in clashes at the Galwan Valley, no word on Chinese casualties

JUNE 19: PM holds all-party meet, says 'no one has transgressed India's borders'

JULY 5: Ajit Doval and Wang Yi speak, agree to expedite disengagement process. Troop build-up continues

JUNE-AUGUST: Four meetings of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs

AUG. 29/30: Clashes on the south bank of Pangong; Indian troops dominate peaks

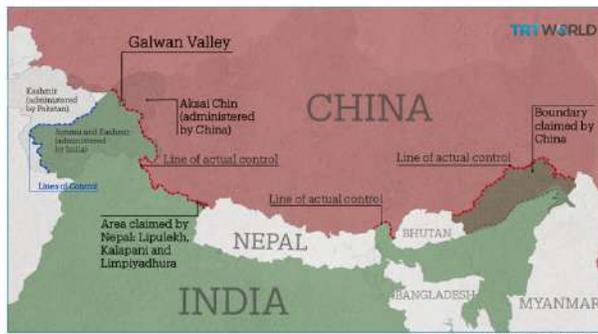
SEPT. 4: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets his Chinese counterpart in Moscow

SEPT. 7: Army says PLA fired gunshots; tensions escalate



INDIA CHINA BORDER:

- India has a land border of over 15,000 kms, which it shares with seven countries (Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Afghanistan). Further, it has a coastline of over 7,500 kms.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for management of international lands and coastal borders.
- The border between India and China is not clearly demarcated throughout and there is no mutually agreed Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. **India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese consider it to be only around 2,000 km.**
- LAC is divided into 3 sectors.



- The boundary dispute in the **Western Sector (Ladakh)** pertains to the Johnson Line (1860s) that extended up to the Kunlun Mountains and put Aksai Chin in Jammu and Kashmir.
- India used the Johnson Line and claimed Aksai Chin as its own. China, however, does not recognise it and instead accepts McDonald Line which puts Aksai Chin under its control.
- In the **Middle Sector (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand)**, the dispute is a minor one. Here LAC is the least controversial except for the precise alignment to be followed in the Barahoti plains. India and China have exchanged maps on which they broadly agree.
- The disputed boundary in the **Eastern Sector (Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim)** is over the McMahon Line (in Arunachal Pradesh) decided in 1914 in a meeting of Representatives of China, India, and Tibet in Shimla.

BORDER DISPUTE SETTLEMENT MECHANISM:

- 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the LAC
- 1996 Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the LAC
- 2005 Protocol on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the LAC
- 2012 Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs
- 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement

Reasons for Current standoff:

- Infrastructure Development along the LAC
- Shadow of Doklam Episode
- Reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir
- Global backlash against China for mishandling of COVID-19
- Signs of new Chinese aggressiveness: Hong Kong, South China Sea, Taiwan
- Growing India-US bonhomie
- China trying to divert its citizenry of domestic issues.

Other contentious issues between the two countries:

- Arunachal Pradesh and Staped Visa
- The Dalai Lama and Tibet
- Trade imbalance
- Concerns over RCEP
- Chinese Initiatives: Belt and Road Initiative, String of pearls
- Proximity with US
- River Water Dispute: China has been building dams (Jiexu, Zangmu and Jiacha) in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra. India has objected to it but there has been no formal treaty over sharing of the Brahmaputra water.
- China has been critical of India's role in and its relationship with Bhutan and Nepal



INDIA-CHINA BILATERAL RELATIONS

Historical relations:

- **Buddhism** was transferred from India to China.
- There was trade through **silk route**.
- **Cholas** maintained cordial relations with the Chinese.
- Many **monks, scholars** travelled from India to china and vice versa.

Political relations:

- On 1 April, 1950, India became the **first non-socialist bloc country to establish diplomatic relations** with the People's Republic of China.
- Relations were based on **Panchsheel agreement** and '**Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai**' resounded throughout the two countries.
- Prime Minister Nehru visited China in October 1954.
- Though the border conflict in 1962 was a setback to ties, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's landmark visit in 1988 marked the beginning of improvement in bilateral relations.
- In 1993, the signing of an **Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility** along the Line of Actual Control on the India-China Border Areas during Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit reflected the growing stability in bilateral ties.
- The cumulative outcomes of the exchange of high-level visits have added value and substance to our ties.
- During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit in 2003, India and China signed the **Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation** and also mutually decided to appoint **Special Representatives (SRs)** to explore the framework of a boundary settlement.
- During the 2005 visit of Premier Wen Jiabao, the two sides established a **Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity**.
- During the visit of President Xi Jinping to India in 2014, the two sides forged a Closer Developmental Partnership that forms the core of our bilateral relationship.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China in 2015.
- In 2018 Prime Minister Modi and President Xi held the first **Informal Summit in Wuhan** to exchange views on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance and elaborated upon their respective visions and priorities for national development.
- **Mamallapuram informal summit** took place in 2019.
- The two leaders agreed to significantly enhance efforts to build on the convergences through the established mechanisms in order to create the broadest possible platform for the relationship.
- The dialogue helped in forging a common understanding of the future direction of India-China relations built upon mutual respect for each other's developmental aspirations and prudent management of differences with mutual sensitivity.
- Both countries engage on various for a like **WTO, BRICS, SCO, G20, IMF, AIIB, world bank etc.**
- India and China have established **more than thirty dialogue mechanisms** at various levels, covering bilateral political, economic, consular matters as well as dialogues on regional and global issues.

Commercial and Economic relations:

- In 2018, **bilateral trade reached an all-time high of US\$ 95.54 billion**. Of the total bilateral trade, India's exports were **US\$ 18.84 billion**.
- India was the **7th largest export destination** for Chinese products, and the **27th largest exporter** to China.



- India's major export items included cotton, copper and diamonds/ natural gems. Major Chinese exports include machinery, telecom and power-related equipment, organic chemicals, and fertilizers.
- While India-China trade has grown exponentially, it has also led to the **biggest single trade deficit India is running with any country**. In 2018, the widening trade deficit reached to US \$57.86 billion.
- The issue of trade imbalance and greater market access for Indian pharmaceuticals, IT services, engineering, and agricultural products including rice, sugar, various fruits and vegetables, oil-based meals, meat products as well as cotton yarn and fabric has been taken up by India.
- Over the years, presence of Indian Banks in China has shrunk to two.
- Chinese investment in India till the end of December 2017 amount to US\$4.747 billion. Chinese investment in Indian start-ups has grown over the years.

Cultural relations:

- India-China cultural exchanges date back to many centuries and there is some evidence that conceptual and linguistic exchanges existed in 1500- 1000 B.C. between the Shang-Zhou civilization and the ancient Vedic civilization.
- India constructed a **Buddhist temple in Luoyang**, Henan Province.
- Indian **Bollywood movies** are popular in China.
- **Yoga** is becoming increasingly popular in China. China was one of the co-sponsors to the UN resolution designating June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

Education Relations:

- India and China signed **Education Exchange Programme (EEP)** in 2006, which is an umbrella agreement for educational cooperation between the two countries.
- The **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC)** of Embassy of India, Beijing was inaugurated in 2018.

Indian Community:

- Present estimates put the strength of the Indian community in China at around 30,000, a major portion of which comprises of students.
- A number of Indians and PIOs are also working as professionals with various multinational and Indian companies.

WAY FORWARD:

- The **importance of adhering to agreements** already reached, both in letter and spirit.
- The **LAC must be observed and respected**. Across the India-China border, the LAC cannot be changed unilaterally.
- **Peace and tranquility** in the border areas is the basis for the development of relations in all other aspects. After what happened in May last year, it cannot be business as usual. Delhi made this abundantly clear by banning 53 Chinese apps, including the hugely popular TikTok.
- **Multi-polar Asia:** While India and China are on the same page on working for a multi-polar world, the same applied to Asia. There should be a recognition that a multi-polar Asia is one of its essential constituents.



- **Sensitivity to each other's concerns:** While conceding that India and China will obviously have different interests, concerns and priorities, sensitivity to them cannot be one-sided. Reciprocity is essential in international relations.
- **Rising Powers with Different Aspirations:** both rising Asian powers will have their own set of aspirations and their pursuit too cannot be ignored.
- **Differences between nations are a reality:** There will always be divergences and differences but their management is essential to our ties.
- **Long-term view of ties:** Civilizational states like India and China must always take the long view of their relations and not be stuck by the here and now.
- **Three mutual:** mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interests are fundamental to the relationship.

Events of 2020 have put the relationship under exception stress and the ties between the two Asian neighbors is today truly at a crossroads. Choices that are made will have profound repercussions, not just for the two nations but for the entire world.

SOURCES:

- <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn>
- <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/india-china-ladakh-disengagement-pangong-tso-explained-7184040/>
- <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ArticleView>

PRELIMS SPECIAL: NEWS IN BRIEF

One Nation One Ration Card System Reform

- **Rajasthan and Punjab become the 12th and 13th State** to complete One Nation One Ration Card system reform.
- Its implementation ensures availability of ration to beneficiaries under National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes, especially the migrant workers and their families, at any Fair Price Shop (FPS) across the country.
- The reform also enables the States in better targeting of beneficiaries, elimination of bogus/duplicate/ineligible card holders resulting in enhanced welfare and reduced leakage.
- Further, to ensure seamless inter-state portability of a ration card, Aadhar seeding of all ration cards as well as biometric authentication of beneficiaries through automation of all Fair Price Shops (FPSs) with installation of electronic point of sale (e-PoS) devices are essential.

<http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=409535>



World Sustainable Development Summit 2021

- PM inaugurates World Sustainable Development Summit 2021.
- The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).
- Started in 2001, the Summit has become a focal point for leaders and stakeholders across the world to bridge thought and action for sustainable development.
- The WSDS 2021 is being held online with the theme, **“Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all”**.
- TERI is a leading think tank dedicated to conducting research for the sustainable development of India and the Global South.
- TERI was established in 1974 as an information centre on energy issues.

<http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=409470>

World Pulses Day

- **February 10** is observed as World Pulses Day.
- The UN General Assembly in 2019 decided to dedicate a day to Pulses to increase awareness and access to pulses globally known as World Pulses Day.
- On this Day, people make efforts in creating awareness about the importance of pulses in sustainable food production.
- World Pulses Day 2021 theme - **#LovePulses**

<http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=409787>

Unani Day 2021

- World Unani Day is observed on **February 11** annually.
- It is celebrated on the birth anniversary of great Unani scholar and social reformer Hakim Ajmal Khan (1868 - 1927). He was a Unani medical educationist and founder of scientific research in the Unani system of medicine.
- The Unani system of medicine was originated in Greece, however, its present form was saved by the Arabs
- It assumes the **four main elements - Fire, Water, Air and Earth** which corresponds to **four humours - Phlegm, Black bile, Blood, and Yellow bile** respectively.

World Radio Day

- The World Radio Day is observed on **13 February** annually.
- It was first proclaimed by UNESCO in 2011.
- World Radio Day 2021 theme: **“New World, New Radio”**.
- February 13 was chosen as the day to celebrate the medium because, on this day, the United Nations radio was established back in 1946.

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BL Lacertae

- Indian astronomers detect a huge optical flare in one of the oldest astronomical objects – BL Lacertae blazar.
- The analysis of the astronomers' report can help trace the source of emission and mass of the black hole.
- **Blazars, or feeding super massive black holes in far off galaxies, are known for their complicated emission mechanism.**
- Blazars are one of the most energetic and luminous objects in the Universe and they emit jets of charged particles travelling at nearly the speed of light.

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