

## Strategic Significance of Bridge China is building on Pangong Tso

### What is the issue?

The ongoing standoff in eastern Ladakh has led to one of the latest constructions of bridge being built by China on the Pangong Tso.

### Where is the bridge being built?

- China is building a 400 m long and 8 m wide bridge, close to the friction points on the north bank of the **Pangong Tso**, and the **Chushul** sub-sector on the south bank.
- The bridge is around 20 km east of Finger 8 on the north bank.
- In India's perception, the **Line of Actual Control** lies at Finger 8.
- The site of the bridge is within India's claim line, although the area has been under Chinese control since 1958.
- Pangong Tso is a 135-km-long landlocked lake with more than two-thirds under Chinese control.



### Why is this area important?

- **Frequent clashes-** The Fingers on the north bank have seen frequent clashes.
- Finger 4 was one of the first friction areas in the current standoff.
- **Sensitive friction points-** The banks of the lake were among the most sensitive friction

points in 2020.

- Troops and tanks faced each other just a few hundred metres apart in some places, until the disengagement in 2021.

## How does the bridge help China?

- **Quicker troop mobilisation-** The main objective of the bridge is quick mobilisation of PLA troops between the two banks.
- **Reach the Kailash Range-** The Kailash range is around 35 km west of the bridge site.
- The bridge will enable Chinese troops to simply cross over, slashing travel time to the Kailash range from about 12 hours to about 4 hours.
- **Strengthen the permanency-** The development of this bridge appears to strengthen the idea of permanency being established by Beijing in the region, committing to its territorial claims with India.

## What is India's response?

- The Indian government has said that the bridge is being constructed in areas that have been under the illegal occupation by China for around 60 years now.
- **Increase in budget-** The budget for development of border infrastructure has been significantly increased and more roads and bridges have been completed than ever before by India.
- **Border infrastructure-** Army Chief General M M Naravane said that India too is upgrading and developing infrastructure along the northern border in a holistic manner.
- In 2021, over 100 projects were completed by the Border Roads Organisation in the border areas, most of which were closer to the border with China.
- **Increased surveillance-** India is also improving surveillance along the border, along with building new airstrips and landing areas.
- **Additional troops-** Additional troops have been inducted, and infrastructure and billeting facilities created for 25,000 additional troops who had gone into these areas.

## What is the current status of the standoff?

- Several friction points have been resolved, with both sides disengaging from Patrolling Point (PP) 14 in Galwan Valley, north and south banks of Pangong Tso and PP17A near Gogra Post.
- The recent talks remain inconclusive in achieving a breakthrough for the remaining areas.
- China has been blocking Indian troops from accessing its five traditional patrolling points in **Depsang Plains**.
- In **Demchok**, some so-called civilians have pitched tents on the Indian side of the LAC, and have refused to vacate.
- Each side has over 50,000 troops in the region, along with additional air defence assets, artillery, tanks and other weapons.

## Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-strategic-significance-of-bridge-china-is-building-on-pangong-tso-7736021/>



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