

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION****What China aims to achieve by building a second, bigger bridge on Pangong Tso**

- The Ministry of External Affairs has confirmed that China is building a second bridge on the Pangong Tso lake, not far from the site of one of the most intense friction points in the border standoff that began in May 2020.
- The second bridge, which is still under construction, is a permanent structure. A previous bridge, which came up around January, seemed to have been built to facilitate work on the new one. After completion, this second bridge will allow swift movement of armoured vehicles between the north and the south banks of Pangong Tso.

**Where are these bridges located?**

- After building the first bridge – about 400 metres long and 8 metres wide on the Pangong Tso close to the friction areas on the north bank of the lake and the Chushul sub-sector on the south bank, China started constructing a broader bridge next to it a few months back.
- The site of the bridge is around 20 km east of Finger 8 on the lake's north bank – which is where the Line of Actual Control (LAC) passes, according to India.
- However, the actual distance by road is more than 35 km between the bridge site and Finger 8.
- The construction site is just east of an old ruin called Khurnak Fort, where China has major frontier defence bases.
- China calls it Rutong Country.
- It has a frontier defence company at the Khurnak Fort, and further east, a water squadron deployed at Banmozhang.
- Although it is being built in territory that is under China's control since 1958, the exact point is just west of India's claim line, which means India considers it its own territory.
- The Ministry of External Affairs last stated that it considers the area as illegally occupied by China.
- Pangong Tso is a 135-km long landlocked lake. India has around 45 km of Pangong Tso under its control, while China has more than two-thirds. The site of the new bridge is near the halfway mark of the boomerang-shaped lake.

**How will these constructions help China?**

- The main objective of the bridges is faster movement of troops, including mechanised forces, heavy weapons, and military vehicles. The bridges are at one of the narrowest points on the lake, close to the LAC.
- The constructions are a direct outcome of the ongoing standoff that began in May 2020, which catalysed the construction of infrastructure by both sides across the entire 3,488-km long LAC.

**Why this location, though?**

- The location has to do with an operation by the Indian Army in August 2020, which allowed India to gain some leverage in negotiations to resolve the standoff. Indian troops outmanoeuvred the People's Liberation Army to occupy the heights of Kailash Range in the Chushul sub-sector on the south bank of Pangong Tso.
- The positions allowed India to dominate the strategically significant Spanggur Gap, which could be used to launch an offensive as China had done in 1962. Also, India got a direct view of China's Moldo Garrison. This was a cause of immense concern for the Chinese.
- After this operation, the Indian Army also readjusted on the lake's north bank to position themselves above Chinese positions. The north bank was one of the first friction points to have come up in May 2020.
- During this jostling, warning shots were fired for the first time by both sides, a first in over four decades. Also at certain areas on the south bank, troops and tanks were positioned just a few hundred metres apart, creating a dangerous eyeball-to-eyeball standoff.
- The two sides finally agreed to pull back troops from these areas in February last year after spending a harsh winter on those heights.
- China is building these bridges close to the theatre of action. Sources suggest that the new bridge will allow Chinese troops to slash travel time from around 12 hours at the moment to around four hours.

**What has been India's response?**

- Officially, India's response is that the site of the bridge is under illegal occupation of China, and that it is monitoring all Chinese activity closely.
- According to MEA it have seen reports of a bridge being constructed by China on Pangong Lake alongside its earlier bridge. Both these bridges are in areas that have continued to be under the illegal occupation of China since the 1960s. India never accepted such illegal occupation of its territory, nor have it accepted the unjustified Chinese claim or such construction activities.

- In 2021, over 100 projects were completed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in the border areas, most of which were close to the China border. India is also improving surveillance along the LAC, apart from building new airstrips and landing areas.

**What is the current situation in the standoff?**

- While several friction points have been resolved, discussions are on regarding three remaining areas.
- India and China pulled their troops back from Patrolling Point (PP) 14 in Galwan Valley in June 2020, after the fatal clashes.
- Then they disengaged from the north and south banks of Pangong Tso in February 2021, and from PP17A near Gogra Post in August. But negotiations have been stuck since then.
- The Corps Commanders from both sides have met 15 times since the standoff began, and the last meeting was in March.
- The dates for the next round of talks are still awaited.
- China has a Platoon-sized strength of PLA troops on the Indian side of the LAC at PP15 in the Hot Springs area. Also, some so-called “Chinese civilians” have pitched tents on the Indian side of the Charding Nalla, which marks the LAC in Demchok.
- Further north, closer to the Karakoram Pass, Chinese troops continue to block Indian soldiers in an area called the Bottleneck in Depsang Plain, disallowing them to access India’s traditional patrolling limits at PP10, PP11, PP11a, PP12 and PP13.
- Both sides have over 50,000 troops each in the region, in the depth areas, along with additional air defence assets, artillery, tanks and other weapons.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM****Terminator tank support system**

- The Terminator or the Boyevaya Mashina Podderzhki Tankov (BMPT), is a tank support fighting vehicle developed by Russia.
- The tank support vehicles are designed to protect the Russian tanks against enemy infantry. They are basically a replacement for mechanised infantry troops in the urban battlefield.

**Where have the Russians deployed it?**

- Russia’s only operational company of BMP-T Terminator tank support vehicles has likely been deployed to the Severodonetsk axis of the Donbas offensive.
- According to the British appreciation of intelligence inputs and several independent sightings of the Terminators, their presence suggests that the Central Grouping of Forces (CGF) is involved in this attack – which is the only Russian army formation fielding this vehicle.

**What kind of weapons does the Terminator have?**

- The list of potent weaponry that Terminator is equipped with includes 4×130 mm Ataka-T GWS launchers, 2×30 mm 2A42 autocannons (850 rounds), 2×30 mm AG-17D or 2x AGS-30 grenade launchers (600 rounds), 1×7.62 mm PKTM machine gun (2,000 rounds).
- These weapons are capable of firing in multiple directions in quick succession, thus suppressing firepower to prevent any attempt to take out the tank columns being protected.
- The BMPT destroys targets such as infantry personnel carrying anti-tank weapons, as well as lightly and heavily armoured targets, like tanks. The BMPT can be put to alternate uses too and can provide protection to infantry or to convoys.

**Where are its other features?**

- The BMPT was first brought into public domain during the Russian Arms Expo held at Nizhny Tagil in 2013.
- Guerrilla warfare tactics used by the Chechen fighters in Grozny during the First Chechen War in 1995 led to the development of this weapon system as many Russian tanks were lost in the urban fighting.
- The Terminators, initial version BMP-T and the new version BMPT-72, are based on the chassis of the T-72 tank and are produced by the Russian company Uralvagonzavod.
- The Terminator’s latest upgrade is equipped with fragmenting ammunition which is essential to target the enemy infantry which lies in wait to destroy the tanks.
- A single Terminator can replace two conventional BMPs and an infantry platoon.

**Monkeypox**

- The monkeypox virus is an orthopoxvirus, which is a genus of viruses that also includes the variola virus, which causes smallpox, and vaccinia virus, which was used in the smallpox vaccine. Monkeypox causes symptoms similar to smallpox, although they are less severe.
- While vaccination eradicated smallpox worldwide in 1980, monkeypox continues to occur in a swathe of countries in Central and West Africa, and has on occasion showed up elsewhere.

- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), two distinct clade are identified: the West African clade and the Congo Basin clade, also known as the Central African clade.

**Zoonotic disease**

- Monkeypox is a zoonosis, that is, a disease that is transmitted from infected animals to humans.
- According to the WHO, cases occur close to tropical rainforests inhabited by animals that carry the virus.
- Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.
- Human-to-human transmission is, however, limited the longest documented chain of transmission is six generations, meaning the last person to be infected in this chain was six links away from the original sick person.
- Transmission, when it occurs, can be through contact with bodily fluids, lesions on the skin or on internal mucosal surfaces, such as in the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets and contaminated objects.

**Monkeypox disease: Symptoms and treatment**

- Monkeypox begins with a fever, headache, muscle aches, back ache, and exhaustion.
- It also causes the lymph nodes to swell (lymphadenopathy), which smallpox does not.
- The incubation period (time from infection to symptoms) for monkeypox is usually 7-14 days but can range from 5-21 days. Usually within a day to 3 days of the onset of fever, the patient develops a rash that begins on the face and spreads to other parts of the body.
- The skin eruption stage can last between 2 and 4 weeks, during which the lesions harden and become painful, fill up first with a clear fluid and then pus, and then develop scabs or crusts.
- According to the WHO, the proportion of patients who die has varied between 0 and 11% in documented cases, and has been higher among young children.
- There is no safe, proven treatment for monkeypox yet.

**Is there any Vaccine ?**

- Vaccines for smallpox eradication also provide protection against monkeypox.
- Newer vaccines have been developed of which one has been approved for monkeypox.
- An antiviral agent developed for the treatment for small pox has also been licensed monkeypox.

**Occurrence of disease**

- The CDC's monkeypox overview says the infection was first discovered in 1958 following two outbreaks of a pox-like disease in colonies of monkeys kept for research — which led to the name 'monkeypox'.
- The first human case was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during a period of intensified effort to eliminate smallpox.
- According to the WHO, 15 countries on four continents have so far reported confirmed cases of monkeypox in humans.
- Locally acquired cases have been confirmed in the DRC (which has the largest incidence of the infection in the world), Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- Imported cases have been found in South Sudan and Benin in Africa, and in the United States, UK, Israel, and Singapore.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Q. How recommendation of 14<sup>th</sup> finance commission of India enable the states to improve their fiscal Position ?**

**Introduction**

The Fourteenth Finance Commission was constituted by the President under Article 280 of the Constitution in 2013 to make recommendations for the period 2015-20. Dr. Y. V. Reddy was appointed the Chairman of the Commission. Finance Commission is a constitutional body created to address issues of vertical and horizontal imbalances of federal finances in India.

**The 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission enabled the States to improve their fiscal position in the following ways:**

**Share in Centre's Divisible Pool:** The commission recommended an increase in the share of States in the Center's divisible tax pool to 42% from 32% at present. This will enhance the states autonomy in deciding their expenditure priorities.

**Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** The Commission also recommended eight centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) to be delinked from support from the Centre. Thus, States will be sharing a higher fiscal responsibility and autonomy to implement development initiatives.

**Taxation:** The Commission has recommended that tax devolution should be the primary source of transfer of funds to States. This would increase the flow of unconditional transfers and give States more flexibility in their spending.

**Grants:** Transfers were proposed including grants to rural and urban local bodies, a performance grant along with grants for disaster relief and revenue deficit. These transfers total to approximately 5.3 lakh crore for the period 2015-20.

**Compensation:** The commission recommended compensating States fully for three years in case of revenue loss after GST implementation. The Commission suggested that 100% compensation be paid to the States in the first, second and third years, 75% compensation in the fourth year and 50% compensation in the fifth and final year. It also recommended the creation of an autonomous and independent GST compensation fund through legislative actions

### Conclusion

The Finance Commission recommendations will reform the State finances which will assume greater significance for macroeconomic management as the fiscal deficit of State governments reached unsustainable levels. After the recommendations, States will get autonomy in deciding their expenditure priority, which will enhance the spirit of “balancing wheel of fiscal federalism”.

### DAILY QUIZ

- Consider the following statements with reference to Monkey pox disease
  - Vaccines for smallpox eradication also provide protection against monkey pox.
  - It occurs primarily in tropical rainforest areas of Central and West Africa and is occasionally found in other regions.

Choose the correct statement using the codes given below

a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      c) **Both**                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Examine the following statements and choose the incorrect statement/s with reference to recent forest assessment report of India
  - There has been a net increase in the mangrove cover of the country as compared to 2019 assessment
  - Maharashtra and Odisha show a significant increase in Mangrove cover mainly due to natural regeneration

Select the correct answer using the codes Given below

a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      c) Both 1 and 2                      d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
- In its latest Monetary policy, the RBI has decided to introduce Standing deposit Facility (SDF), Which of the following committee had recommended to introduce Standing Deposit Facility?
  - Urjit Patel committee**
  - Raghuram Rajan committee
  - Rajesh Verma committee
  - Raja Chelleya committee
- Consider the following statement about MUDRA yojna
  - MUDRA loans are collateral based.
  - Both Individuals and Companies are eligible borrowers
  - Jan Dhan accounts which are Over drafted of up to Rs 5000 , such are also classified as MUDRA Loans.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

a) 1 only                      b) **2 and 3 only**                      c) 1 and 3 only                      d) 2 only
- Which of the following are the beneficiary of PM DAKSHA yojna
  - Schedule caste
  - De-notified tribes
  - Safai karmachari including waste pickers

Choose the correct answer using the codes

a) 1 and 2 only                      b) 2 and 3 only                      c) 1 and 3 only                      d) **All of the above**
- “Yadadri Model” of Environment Management is related to
  - Sea beach clean
  - Degraded soil restoration
  - Afforestation**
  - Plastic Waste Management