



Infrastructure Developments Around Pangong Tso

For Prelims: [India-China Standoff](#), [Pangong Tso Lake](#), [Line of Actual Control](#)

For Mains: Infrastructure Developments along India-China border, Background of India-China Standoff.

Why in News?

Three years after the violent **clash between Indian and Chinese forces in Galwan**, there is significant infrastructure development taking place in the India-China border region.

- These infrastructure developments are occurring on both sides since the standoff even as the two await the **19th round of Corps Commander level talks** to find a resolution to their dispute in the region.

What are the Infrastructure Developments Around the Border Region?

- **China's Infrastructure Efforts:**
 - Construction of a **bridge across the Pangong Tso**, connecting the north and south banks, is in progress.
 - Large-scale construction activity, including road connectivity towards Shandong village, is observed on the Chinese side.
 - A 22 km-long tunnel is being constructed along the **G-0177 expressway, connecting to the vital G-216 highway in Tibet.**
- **India's Infrastructure Projects:**
 - India is building a black-topped road on the north bank of the Pangong Tso, **towards Finger 4.**
 - **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** is nearing completion of key infrastructure projects such as the **Sela, Nechipu, and Sela-Chhabrela tunnels**, enhancing all-weather connectivity along the LAC.
 - Construction work on an alternate axis to the critical **Darbuk-Skyok-Daulat Beg Oldie road** is advancing through the Saser La.
 - India-China Border Roads (ICBR) initiative was also started to improve the mobility of the Indian forces and the connectivity of the border areas. It has three phases: ICBR-I (73 roads), ICBR-II (104 roads) and ICBR-III (37 roads).
 - The capital budget of the BRO, which does most of the ICBR work, has increased by **43% to Rs 5,000 crore in 2023-24.**
 - Nearly **70% of these roads under ICBR-III would be built in Arunachal Pradesh.**
 - The **Sela Tunnel Road project** is the most prominent project to connect Arunachal Pradesh via a network of roads. It will be the **world's longest bi-lane tunnel** at altitude above 13,000 ft built.
 - The **Vibrant Villages Programme**, a **Centrally sponsored scheme**, was announced in the **Union Budget 2022-23.**
 - It aims to provide comprehensive development of villages on the border with China

and improve the quality of life of people living in identified border villages.

- The program will improve infrastructure in states like **Himachal Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh**. Under the program, residential and tourist centers will be constructed.

What is the Implication of These Infrastructure Developmental Projects?

▪ Positive:

- Enhanced border infrastructure **strengthens India's defense capabilities** and improves its **ability to patrol and secure the border**.
- Improved connectivity **benefits local communities**, boosts regional development, and generates economic opportunities.
- The improved infrastructure allows **India to maintain a stronger strategic position** in the region, potentially deterring any aggressive moves from China.

▪ Negative:

- Infrastructure developments may contribute to **ongoing border disputes** and heighten tensions.
- It raises **concerns within both India and China** about improved connectivity and defense capabilities in the region **of the other country**.
- Perception of India's (or China's) assertiveness could **influence bilateral negotiations and relations**.

Pangong Tso Lake:

▪ Characteristics:

- Pangong Tso is a 135-km long landlocked lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet i.e., 4350 m above sea level.
- The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jetting down, referred to as **fingers**.
 - It is one of the highest altitude lakes in the world that is filled with saline water.
 - However, even though it is a saline water lake, Pangong Tso freezes completely.
 - The brackish water of this region has very low micro-vegetation.
 - No aquatic life or fish, except crustaceans during winters are found.
- Pangong Tso is **popular for its changing colour** ability; its colour changes from shades of **blue to green to red**.

▪ The Fingers of Pangong Tso:

- The **Pangong Tso** is a lake located in eastern Ladakh, and it has a unique shape resembling a boomerang, stretching for about 135 kilometers.
 - The lake is characterized by **mountain spurs that protrude into the water, known as "fingers"**.
- The **fingers of Pangong Tso are numbered from 1 to 8**, with Finger 1 being the closest to the eastern end of the lake and Finger 8 the farthest.
- India and China have differing perceptions of the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, which serves as the de facto border between the two countries.



▪ **India and China's Share:**

- **Indian and China have around one-third and two-thirds** of Pangong Tso Lake respectively.
- **India has around 45 km** of Pangong Tso under its control. The eastern end of Pangong Tso lies in Tibet

▪ **Border Dispute at Pangong Tso:**

- **India claims control over the lake until Finger 4** but believes its territory **extends up to Finger 8**.
 - The north bank, where the fingers are located, has been the center of clashes and tensions between the two countries.
- Indian troops are stationed near Finger 3, while the Chinese have a **base east of Finger 8, claiming territory up to Finger 2**.

THE LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL AT PANGONG TSO

1 Located at an altitude of 13,900 feet, two-thirds of the 134km-long lake is controlled by China as it extends from Tibet to India

2 India physically controls till Finger-4 (has a post between F3 and F4) but for decades has been patrolling west to east till Finger-8, where it says the LAC runs north to south



3 China has posts and bases at Finger-8, claims territory up to Finger-2

4 Since early May, PLA has blocked all Indian patrols beyond Finger-4 by occupying the 8km stretch between Finger-4 and Finger-8 by building fortifications and bunkers

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