



Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

International Relations:

1. Restore April status along LAC: India
2. 'China's internal pressures are driving Xi's tough stance on border'
3. Japan not to condemn Beijing over Hong Kong law
4. WHO Foundation created to tap new funding sources
5. 'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG) initiative proposed by India



Restore April status along LAC: India

- India has firmly conveyed its demand to China for restoring the status quo as existed in April along the border during the senior military commander talks.

Face-to-face

A timeline of the ongoing standoff between India and China along the Line of Actual Control

May 5/6: Indian and Chinese troops scuffle at Pangong Tso in Ladakh, resulting in injuries in large numbers on both sides

May 9: Clashes erupt between troops at Naku La in north Sikkim

May 14: Army chief makes statement on clashes, says there was "aggressive behaviour" on both sides

May 18: China accuses India of "trespass", alleges "illegal" infra work on LAC

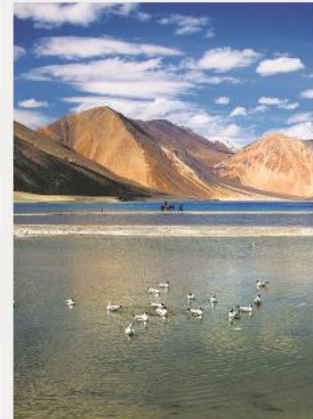
May 21: MEA says Chinese troops "hindering normal patrols"

May 27: China says situation "stable and controllable"

June 2: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh says Chinese troops present at LAC "in large numbers"

June 5: MEA Jt. Secy holds videoconference with Chinese MFA Director General

June 6: Military commanders talk on Chinese side of LAC



A file photo of the Pangong Tso area in Ladakh

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the talks were held in a "cordial and positive" atmosphere, and both sides will continue the military and diplomatic engagements to "resolve the situation".

Value Added Information

What's the issue?

- The incidents took place in the **Naku La sector** and in a contested area near **Pangong Tso**, a lake in Ladakh.
- But the Army played down the two incidents as "**temporary and short-duration face-offs**" that were resolved by "local commanders as per mutually-accepted protocols" through dialogue and flag meetings. These kinds of incidents do occur as boundaries are not resolved.

Where is Naku La?

- **Naku La sector** is a pass at a height of more than 5,000 metres above Mean Sea Level (MSL) in the state of Sikkim.
- It is located ahead of **Muguthang** or **Cho Lhamu** (source of River Teesta).
- The other passes located in the state of Sikkim are **Nathu La Pass** and **Jelep La Pass**.

Pangong Tso lake:

- It is a 135-km long lake, located in the Himalayas at the height of approximately 4,350 m, stretches out from India to China.



- **One-third of water body, its 45 km stretch, is in Indian control** while the rest of the 90 km is under Chinese control.
- It is formed from **Tethys geosyncline**.
- It is a **salt water lake**.
- **Strategic significance:** By itself, the lake does not have major tactical significance. But it lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.



India- China Border:

- India and China share a 3,488 km long boundary. Unfortunately, the entire boundary is disputed. The line, which delineates the boundary between the two countries, is popularly called the **McMahon line**, after its author Sir Henry McMahon.
- In 1913, the British-India government had called a **tripartite conference**, in which the boundary between India and Tibet was formalized after a discussion between the Indian and the Tibetans. A Convention was adopted, which resulted in the delimitation of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. **This boundary is, however, disputed by China which terms it as illegal.**
- In 1957, **China occupied Aksai Chin and built a road through it.** This episode was followed by intermittent clashes along the border, which finally culminated in the border war of 1962. The boundary, which came into existence after the war, came to be known as **Line of Actual Control (LAC). It is a military held line.**

'China's internal pressures are driving Xi's tough stance on border'

Excerpts from the interview with Jayadeva Ranade, a former Additional Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, and President, Centre for China Analysis and Strategy, who has been tracking China for three decades.

How unusual is the current situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), given the number and scale of stand-offs since last month?

- The situation is certainly different. Firstly, these have occurred at multiple points along the LAC, from Ladakh to Naku La in Sikkim. I also associate the activation of a new diplomatic front by Nepal against us as a part of this. It is a new kind of activity that the Chinese have created on our northern borders. Since Xi Jinping has taken over, the nature and kind of



intrusions that we have been seeing have altered. They have become more firm, and appear to have been premeditated and planned.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has attributed the tensions to differing perceptions of the Line of Actual Control. Do you share that view?

- I would disagree with that, for the simple reason that in quite a few of these places, there have been no such intrusions and there has been no instance of a difference in perception of the LAC. Galwan Valley, which is one of the main points of confrontation, has not witnessed an intrusion for the last 15 to 20 years.

Why is China opening a new front in Galwan?

- The construction of the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldi road certainly would have been one of the factors together with the upgrading of our defence logistics infrastructure. These are points of concern for the Chinese. In addition to that, what has occurred in the recent past is growing Chinese stakes in the region, particularly with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- After the revocation of Articles 370 and 5(A) of our Constitution, the Chinese got more apprehensive. Of course, the Pakistanis would have egged them on, which is why we have seen the Chinese taking the Kashmir issue to the UN Security Council on four occasions so far. With their close ties with the Pakistanis, they may have decided that they need to safeguard their interests in these areas.

How do you see the current situation being resolved?

- If we show not only our determination to hold ground but also maybe apply pressure in some areas on China, it could cause a rethinking in Beijing to come to some kind of an understanding with us. But that is unlikely in my point of view.
- As far as the talks are concerned, they're not going to give in easily. Our position is we want status quo ante so that means everyone goes back to their earlier position. Which begs the question, why did the Chinese do this in the first place? Given the domestic political situation inside China, can Xi Jinping afford to go back or to disengage or to withdraw, now, once again, having done that earlier in Doklam [in 2017], and not find people who are critical of his action?

How do you assess President Xi's position internally after the pandemic?

- There are two factors that are causing concern. The first is the economic situation. The way the U.S.-China trade war is developing is aggravating that. Unless Mr. Xi is able to tackle that, domestic criticism will continue. Second, the sources of voiced discontent, the intellectuals, the academics and the students, I don't think they are reconciled to the situation. Neither are those Communist Party cadres, serving or retired, who don't want to return to one man rule.



- A lot depends on the level of discontent within the Communist Party, particularly its middle and higher echelons, and I don't know how much of that has really been sorted out. Look at the fact that he has created a new central small group under Guo Shengkun, who is Secretary to the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, his right hand man, to look at the political stability and political situation in China. These indicate that President Xi Jinping himself knows that there are problems ahead, and that his own position is not 100% secure.

Do these internal challenges influence China's external postures, whether on Taiwan or with India?

- I have no doubt that this tougher line has come about because of the perception domestically that the two centenary goals as they call it — the China Dream and catching up, if not surpassing, the U.S. by 2049, are slipping out of the grasp of the leadership. I think the perception among the Chinese people that the leadership didn't have a firm grip of the situation is one of the real key factors why Mr. Xi has opted for a much tougher line. The U.S.-China factor is another.
- So it has happened that with Hong Kong he has taken a tough line. With Taiwan, he is applying pressure. In the South China Sea, he has started sending PLA Navy warships there. I think what we are seeing on the borders with India is similar. So that does bring us to the question, can he afford to pull back and face criticism from within China, if he is doing this to shore up his credibility?

Japan not to condemn Beijing over Hong Kong law

- Japan has decided not join the United States, Britain and others in issuing a statement scolding China for imposing a new security law.
- The United Kingdom, the U.S., Australia and Canada condemned China on May 28 for imposing a law that they said would threaten freedom and breach a 1984 Sino-British agreement on the autonomy of the former colony.

Value Added Information

What's the main concern now?

- This time, the Chinese government will **not need a nod from local citizens or lawmakers**, as mainland Chinese authorities are running out of patience after months long anti-government protests, which have greatly tarnished Beijing's carefully managed international image.

What exactly is in the national security bill?

- The draft legislation would pave the way for Beijing to **set up national security institutions in Hong Kong**. It is largely seen as a replacement of the controversial national security law, **Article 23**, which was suspended after the massive protest in 2003.



- But unlike Article 23, which requires local legislation, **the new national security law proposal would bypass Hong Kong's Legislative Council**, the equivalent of the city's parliament. Instead, it will be included as **an annex to the Basic Law**, the city's mini-constitution.
- The new proposal **targets activities such as "splitting the country, subverting state power,"** as well as terrorism and foreign interference in Hong Kong. **Anti-government demonstrators in Hong Kong have been referred to as terrorists by some mainland officials.**

Why is the law being proposed now?

- Beijing's timing has raised questions among many in Hong Kong.
- Some say it was **chosen to minimize global attention as the world** — in particular the U.S. and Britain, the primary supporters of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement — is preoccupied with containing the coronavirus pandemic.
- Another factor in the decision may be that **Hong Kong is unlikely to see a return of large-scale protests while social-distancing rules remain in place, although flare-ups of unrest are possible.**
- Analysts say the move shows Beijing has **lost confidence in the ability of pro-establishment Hong Kong lawmakers to push through controversial legislation** since that side suffered a major setback during last November's district council elections. **Pro-Beijing parties also are not expected to claim a big win** in the upcoming vote for the Legislative Council in September.

What is Washington's position on the issue?

- China has frequently condemned what it describes as **foreign interference in its domestic matters.** In particular, Beijing has singled out Washington as a driving force behind street protests in Hong Kong.
- Two members of the U.S. Congress quickly responded to the latest developments by proposing a **bipartisan bill that would essentially sanction any Chinese officials who enforce the proposed national security law.** The measure would impose sanctions on people or entities that violate China's legal obligations to Hong Kong under the Basic Law, as well as on banks that do "significant transactions" with them.
- Last year, amid some of the most violent demonstrations in Hong Kong, Congress overwhelmingly passed — and President Donald Trump signed into law — **the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019.** The law calls for mandatory sanctions on Chinese officials found responsible for human rights violations, and requires the State Department to annually review Hong Kong's special status, which awards it preferential trade treatment.



What happens next?

- The law, potentially allowing Beijing to arrest anyone whom it deems as a threat to national security, could lead to restrictions on free speech and prompt media as well as individuals to adopt self-censorship. In



an extreme scenario, opposition broadcasters and newspapers could face closure, while pro-democracy politicians and activists could be imprisoned.

- Such moves would take a toll on the city's status as a rule-of-law international financial hub — the free flow of information is vital to Hong Kong's economic success.
- If foreign investors' confidence dwindles, hundreds of multinational corporations headquartered in Hong Kong could consider relocating elsewhere in Asia, posing a risk to the city's long-term prosperity. Social instability could also push expatriates and local professionals to seek job opportunities elsewhere, leading to brain drain.

So can China just push this through?

- The Basic Law says Chinese laws can't be applied in Hong Kong unless they are listed in a **section called Annex III** – there are already a few listed there, mostly uncontroversial and around foreign policy.
- These laws can be introduced by decree – which means they bypass the city's parliament and Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam has already said she will co-operate.
- Critics say **this amounts to a breach of that “one country, two systems” principle, which is so important to Hong Kong.**



WHO Foundation created to tap new funding sources

- The **WHO Foundation** was created recently as an **independent grant-making entity**.
- It will support the WHO's efforts to address the most pressing global health challenges.

Key Points:

- The foundation will enable WHO to tap new non-traditional sources of funding, including the general public.
- It will support the global health ecosystem by funding **high-impact initiatives** and advancing strategies of **innovation, effectiveness, and rapid response**.
- Its Headquarter will be in Geneva.
- It will be legally independent from the WHO.
- It will provide funds to WHO and trusted implementing partners to deliver on the Organization's **triple billion goals**.
- These goals aim to achieve the following by 2023:
 - 1) Protect 1 billion people from health emergencies.
 - 2) Extend universal health coverage to 1 billion people.
 - 3) Assure healthy lives and wellbeing to 1 billion people.

'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG) initiative proposed by India

- **OSOWOG** initiative was recently proposed by India to set up a **framework** for facilitating **global cooperation** which aims at building a **global ecosystem** of **interconnected renewable energy resources** that can be easily **shared**.

Key Points:

- **Parent Body:** The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- **Objective:** To build global consensus about sharing solar resources among more than 140 countries of **West Asia** and **South-East Asia**.
- This grid shall be interconnected with the African power pools also at the later stage.
- Proposals are invited from consulting firms for making a **long-term OSOWOG road map**, and identify two or three cross-border projects that can be initiated within one or two years.