



The road ahead from Gogra

While disengagement happens, a long-lasting solution along the LAC remains a challenge.

Disengagement

1. After the talks on July 31, India and China have taken one more step towards restoring peace and normalcy on the LAC by disengaging at Gogra. It is, however, only one step, and the road ahead towards returning to the status quo of April 2020, before the tensions of last summer upended years of a carefully managed even if uneasy peace along the LAC, remains uncertain.
2. It has taken 12 rounds of military-level talks to see both sides disengage and put in place buffer zones in the Galwan Valley, the site of the June 2020 clash that marked the worst violence since 1967, Pangong Lake, and now Patrolling Point 17 in Gogra.
3. The disengagement process at PP17 took place on August 4 and 5, with a return to permanent bases. The next round of talks will discuss PP15 in Hot Springs. Demchok, where China has transgressed in relatively smaller numbers than the deployments seen in Pangong Lake, also remains unresolved.
4. Beijing has appeared unwilling to discuss the strategically significant Depsang plains, where the Chinese side has been blocking Indian patrols. The buffer zone model, where both sides temporarily cease patrolling in disputed areas, has appeared to work so far in keeping the peace.
5. It is, however, only a temporary measure, and one that India should not accept as permanent as it would prevent India from enforcing its territorial claims and favour the PLA, which can deploy faster in larger numbers owing to the more favourable terrain and better logistics.

Long term Solutions:

1. The next step will be full de-escalation and a withdrawal of some of the new forward deployments that have come up close to the LAC. India has signalled that it is prepared for the long haul; its message: relations cannot return to normal without full restoration of normalcy on the borders.



2. While the strategic motivations of China's border deployments last year are not clear, the tactical objectives are not difficult to ascertain. Since the 2017 Doklam crisis, China has consistently stepped up building new permanent airbases and air defence units closer to the LAC, with at least 13 new positions coming up since then, according to an analysis of satellite images from Stratfor.
3. India has been moving to rapidly upgrade its own infrastructure to close the gap. The result is an entirely changed security dynamic along the LAC. There is a need to come up urgently with new protocols and confidence-building measures, as both sides gradually resume patrolling in the buffer zones.
4. The multiple transgressions by China and the violence of last year have set back years of efforts to carefully manage the borders and thrown into doubt whether the four agreements regulating the behaviour of both sides still remain valid.
5. While the recent moves towards restoring the peace are certainly welcome, finding a more long-lasting solution to ensure peace along the LAC will present a taller challenge.

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IPCC's warning on climate points to a small window of opportunity that still exists.

The Assessment Report 6

1. The IPCC has issued arguably its strongest warning yet on impending catastrophe from unmitigated global warming caused by human activity, lending scientific credence to the argument that rising wildfires, heatwaves, extreme rainfall and floods witnessed in recent times are all strongly influenced by a changing climate.
2. In a stark report on the physical science basis of climate change contributed for a broader Assessment Report of the UN, the IPCC's Working Group I has called for deep cuts to carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases and a move to net-zero emissions, as the world would otherwise exceed 1.5°C and 2°C of warming during the 21st century with permanent consequences.



3. Climate change is described by many as a far greater threat to humanity than COVID-19, because of its irreversible impacts. The latest report is bound to strengthen the criticism that leaders in many countries have stonewalled and avoided moving away from coal and other fossil fuels, while even those who promised to act, failed to influence the multilateral system.
4. The new report attributes catastrophic events to sustained global warming, particularly the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts, the proportion of intense tropical cyclones, reductions in Arctic Sea ice, snow cover and permafrost.
5. A phenomenon such as heavy rainfall over land, for instance, could be 10.5% wetter in a world warmer by 1.5°C, and occur 1.5 times more often, compared to the 1850-1900 period.

Scenarios of the large-scale collapse of climate systems

1. More than five years after the Paris Agreement was concluded, there is no consensus on raising ambition to reduce emissions, making access to low carbon technologies easier, and adequately funding mitigation and adaptation.
2. COVID-19 had the unexpected effect of marginally and temporarily depressing emissions. The IPCC's analysis presents scenarios of the large-scale collapse of climate systems that future leaders would find virtually impossible to manage.
3. Heatwaves and heavy rainfall events experienced with increasing frequency and intensity are just two of these, while disruptions to the global water cycle pose a more unpredictable threat.
4. Also, if emissions continue to rise, oceans and land, two important sinks and the latter a key part of India's climate action plan, would be greatly weakened in their ability to absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide. The new report sets the stage for the CoP26 conference in November.
5. The only course to adopt there is for developed countries with legacy emissions to effect deep cuts, transfer technology without strings to emerging economies and heavily fund mitigation and adaptation. Developing nations should then have no hesitation in committing themselves to steeper emissions cuts.



IPCC report forecasts a future of severe weather

The Indian Ocean is warming at a higher rate than other oceans, said the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with scientists warning that India will witness increased heatwaves and flooding, which will be irreversible effects of climate change.

Highlights:

1. The current overall global warming trends are likely to lead to an increase in annual mean precipitation over India, with more severe rain expected over southern India in the coming decades.
2. The authors of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis", said the warming of the ocean would lead to a rise in sea levels, leading to frequent and severe coastal flooding in low-level areas.
3. With a 7,517-km coastline, India would face significant threats from the rising seas. Across the port cities of Chennai, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Surat and Visakhapatnam, 28.6 million people would be exposed to coastal flooding if sea levels rise by 50 cm.
4. Monsoon extremes are likely to increase over India and South Asia, while the frequency of short intense rainy days is expected to rise. Models also indicate a lengthening of the monsoon over India by the end of the 21st century, with the South Asian monsoon precipitation projected to increase.
5. Stating that human activities are causing climate change, the report said the planet was irrevocably headed towards warming by 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times in the next two decades. Keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels by the turn of the century and endeavouring to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius was at the heart of the 2015 Paris Agreement.
6. Unless extremely deep emission cuts are undertaken by all countries immediately, these goals are unlikely to be met. The report recommended that countries strive to achieve net-zero emissions — no additional greenhouse gases are emitted — by 2050.



A circular economy for plastic

Of the many sustainability challenges that impact societies, climate change and plastic waste have a special significance. A 2019 report by the Center for International Environmental Law suggests that by 2050, greenhouse gas emissions from plastic could reach over 56 gigatonnes, 10-13% of the remaining carbon budget. However, viewed from the angle of livelihoods, post-consumer segregation, collection and disposal of plastics make up about half of the income of 1.5- 4 million waste-pickers in India.

Closing the Plastics Circularity Gap

1. A 2021 report commissioned by Google, Closing the Plastics Circularity Gap, suggests that unless large-scale global interventions are made, “we should expect to mismanage more than 7.7 billion metric tonnes of plastic waste globally over the next 20 years... [which is] equivalent to 16-times the weight of the human population...” Among the many applications of plastic, plastic packaging is the largest.
2. For India, the solution must be multi-pronged, systemic, and large scale, to create a visible impact. The Plastics Pacts model offers such a solution and is active in a number of countries including the U.K., South Africa, and Australia. It is now being brought to India by CII and WWF India.
3. The Plastics Pacts are business-led initiatives and transform the plastics packaging value chain for all formats and products. The Pacts bring together everyone from across the plastics value chain to implement practical solutions.
4. All Pacts unite behind four targets: to eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastic packaging through redesign and innovation; to ensure all plastic packaging is reusable or recyclable; to increase the reuse, collection, and recycling of plastic packaging; and to increase recycled content in plastic packaging.

The India Plastics Pact

1. The India Plastics Pact, the first in Asia, will be launched in September at the CII Annual Sustainability Summit. It can be expected to boost demand for recycled content, investments in recycling infrastructure, jobs in the waste sector, and beyond.

10.08.2021

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2. The first Plastics Pact was launched in the U.K. in 2018, by WRAP, a global NGO based in the U.K., in partnership with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The U.K. Pact helped channel over £120 million worth of investments in recycling infrastructure resulting in 300,000 tonnes of new recycling capacity.
3. The Pact will support the Extended Producer Responsibility framework of the government and improve solid waste management as envisioned in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
4. Integral to the Pact's framework is the involvement of the informal waste sector crucial to post-consumer segregation, collection and processing of plastic waste. The India Plastics Pact is supported by WRAP, which supports many Pacts globally. This association will ensure access to expertise and knowledge from different Pacts worldwide.
5. The India Plastics Pact focuses on solutions and innovation. Members' accountability is ensured through ambitious targets and annual data reporting.
6. The Pact will develop a road map for guidance, form action groups composed of members, and initiate innovation projects. While the India Plastics Pact will be active in India, it will link globally with other Plastics Pacts.

Many Indian businesses and organisations have expressed an interest in signing up for the Pact. Deeper and long-lasting benefits will be felt across the supply chains of these businesses, most of which comprise MSMEs. The Pact will encourage the development and maturing of the entire plastics production and management ecosystem. Apart from benefits to society and the economy, delivering the targets will drive the circularity of plastics and help tackle pollution. They will lead to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.