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1. China-India attempt to repair ties

Overview

"If you and I don't have trust, then the countries cannot have trust," a senior Chinese government official said to a correspondent in Beijing last week.

The official was referring to the trust deficit between India and China over the last four-and-a-half years of the border standoff in Ladakh.

This correspondent was part of an Indian media delegation that visited China at the invitation of the Chinese government. This was the first media delegation to visit the country since 2019 — after the Covid-19 pandemic and the border standoff.

Open for business

The message from several meetings with Chinese officials, members of the business community, and scholars and analysts in state-run think tanks and media organisations was clear: China wanted to move on in the bilateral relationship, and was open for business.

Senior Chinese officials mentioned the "chemistry" between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which they said was evident during the meeting of the two leaders on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia on October 23.

The officials said the two sides were discussing ways to bring ties back to "normal" – as it was before the face-off started in April-May 2020 along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The officials outlined their "wish-list": resumption of "direct flights" between the countries, easing of visa curbs on Chinese nationals including diplomats and scholars, lifting of the ban on Chinese mobile apps, letting Chinese journalists report from India, allowing more Indian movies in Chinese theatres, etc.

Thaw after Galwan

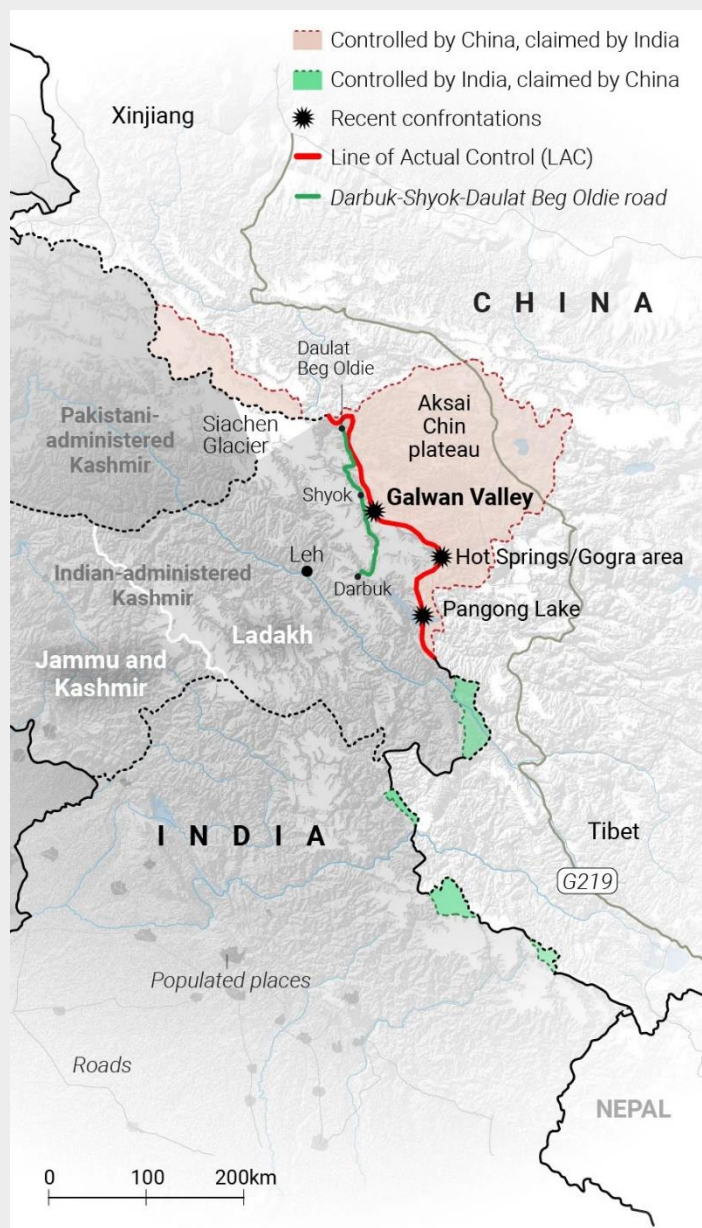
All these restrictions and curbs were put after the bloody clashes in Galwan in June 2020, in which 20 Indian soldiers including a Colonel-rank officer and at least four Chinese soldiers were killed.

The Galwan clash was the deadliest along the border since 1967, and cast a dark shadow on political ties. After many rounds of discussions between the two countries, India announced a

breakthrough on October 21 this year — and soldiers from both sides started patrols along the LAC.

The agreement on “patrolling arrangements” was an important beginning to the three-step process of disengagement, de-escalation and de-induction of troops. An important meeting took place this week to take the process forward.

On September 18, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 leaders’ summit in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The two Ministers discussed the “next steps in India-China relations”, according to the official statement issued by India.



Views from capitals

The Indian and Chinese statements after the Jaishankar-Wang meeting opens a window to how New Delhi and Beijing are viewing the situation, and the way forward.

The Indian statement said that the “Ministers recognized that the disengagement in our border areas had contributed to the maintenance of peace and tranquility. The discussions focused on the next steps in India-China relations. It was agreed that a meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place soon.”

The Chinese statement was more enthusiastic: “Wang Yi said President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a successful meeting in Kazan recently, and China-India relations have been restarted and re-launched, which is in line with the fundamental interests of the two peoples, the expectations of countries in the global South, and the right direction of history.”

The Indian statement was in sync with the way New Delhi has framed the state of bilateral ties — that the situation at the border is a precondition to the next steps.

China, however, has taken it forward by describing the Modi-Xi meeting as a “restart and re-launch”.

In step — and not

On the next steps forward, there are both convergences and divergences.

The Indian statement said “among steps discussed were the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage, data sharing on trans-border rivers, direct flights between India and China and media exchanges”.

The Chinese statement said: “We should strive to make practical progress as soon as possible in the resumption of direct flights, mutual assignment of journalists and visa facilitation. Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, and the two sides should plan commemorative activities and encourage exchanges and visits in all fields and at all levels to enhance understanding and mutual trust.”

✦ Both sides have talked about the resumption of direct flights and media exchanges.

However, Pre-pandemic, Chinese airlines such as Air China and China Southern operated direct flights to India. Now, there are no direct flights. The flights are via Hong Kong.

There is one Indian journalist in Beijing currently; there are no Chinese reporters in Delhi. Journalists of both countries had to leave in recent years after their visas were not renewed. There is a strong feeling that journalists from each country must be allowed to report freely from the other.

✦ India did not mention the 75th anniversary events, and China did not talk about the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and river data-sharing.

Despite the divergences, it is important that India — which had taken a very strong line about not normalising ties until the border situation improves — has agreed to talk about the next steps. While officials and analysts in Beijing have been advocating the resumption of ties, India has been guarded and cautious, mindful of hardened public opinion over the last four-and-half years.

It is not clear yet when the next meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place. The last SR-level talks took place in December 2019.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

2. Understanding Peak Oil and Its Evolving Implications

What Is Peak Oil?

Originally, "peak oil" referred to the point when global oil production would hit its highest level before declining permanently. However, the term now commonly refers to a peak in oil demand rather than supply.

The Initial Prediction

In 1956, geoscientist M. King Hubbert predicted that global oil production would peak by 2000, leading to economic turmoil. While production from easily accessible reserves peaked in the early 21st century, new technologies like fracking allowed oil production to keep growing, reaching 96.4 million barrels daily in 2023.

Demand Shifts to Green Energy

The global energy landscape is changing as renewables gain momentum. Key developments include:

- **Record Growth:** Solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources reached record growth in 2023, driven by innovations and lower costs.
- **Increased Share:** Renewables have grown from 19% to over 30% of the electricity mix since 2000.
- **Investment Surge:** Funding for clean technologies surpassed fossil fuel investment in 2023, with \$2 trillion allocated to renewables in 2024.

Economic and Climate Impacts

Investments in renewable energy align with efforts to reduce emissions and tackle climate change. Studies suggest that to limit global warming to 2°C, significant portions of oil, gas, and coal reserves must remain untapped.

Challenges for the Oil Industry

Despite rising renewable adoption, many oil companies continue to increase production. Risks include:

- **Stranded Assets:** New fossil fuel projects may become financially unviable as renewable costs decline.
- **Shareholder Concerns:** Investors are urging companies to align with clean energy goals to avoid financial losses.

Economic Risks for Nations

Countries heavily reliant on oil revenues face fiscal challenges as demand for fossil fuels declines. Reduced oil prices could affect budgets, economies, and living standards in these nations.

Transitioning Away from Oil

While the shift to clean energy is accelerating, fossil fuels will remain part of the energy mix in the short term, especially for:

- **Backup Power:** When renewable sources like wind and solar are intermittent.

- **Hard-to-Decarbonize Sectors:** Industries such as shipping, aviation, and heavy manufacturing.

A Balanced Energy Future

The International Energy Agency (IEA) emphasizes the potential to ensure reliable energy supplies while addressing the climate crisis. Executive Director Fatih Birol states, "Clean electricity is the future."

This gradual yet inevitable transition marks a critical turning point in the global energy landscape.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

3. What is Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, launched at Brazil G20?

Introduction

In 2015, all 193 UN Member States adopted the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' which aimed to, among other things, end poverty and hunger, and achieve food security and improved nutrition by 2030.

The G20 Leaders' Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was headlined by the official launch of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty (henceforth "the Alliance").

One of the main initiatives championed by Brazil during its G20 presidency in 2024, the initiative will serve as a platform for connecting countries in need of assistance with public policies targeted towards eradicating hunger and poverty, with partners willing to offer expertise or financial support.



An urgent need

In 2015, all 193 UN Member States adopted the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' which aimed to, among other things, end poverty and hunger, and achieve food security and improved nutrition by 2030.

But the Covid-19 pandemic led to significant reversals in the progress made towards these ends, as extreme poverty rose and nutrition standards fell, especially in the Global South. The uneven economic recovery since, along with a rise in global conflicts, and the harmful impacts of climate change, have further weakened the fight against hunger and poverty.

As things stand, progress is too slow to meet the 2030 targets. "Current projections indicate that 622 million people will live below the extreme poverty line of \$ 2.15 per day by 2030 — double the target level," the Alliance said in a statement during its launch. It added: "If current trends persist, 582 million people will live in hunger by 2030, approximately the same number as in 2015".

It is in this context that Brazil chose to launch the Alliance during its G20 presidency. Speaking during the launch, Brazil President Lula da Silva said: "I attended the first G20 Leaders' Meeting in Washington in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Sixteen years later, I am saddened to see that the world is even worse off. We have the highest number of armed conflicts since World War II, and the highest number of forced displacements ever recorded. Extreme weather events are having devastating effects on every corner of the planet. Social, racial, and gender inequalities are deepening in the wake of a pandemic that has claimed more than 15 million lives. The ultimate symbol of our collective tragedy is hunger and poverty."

How Alliance will function

According to Lula, 81 countries (including India), 26 international organisations, 9 financial institutions, and 31 philanthropic foundations and non-governmental organisations have already joined the Alliance.

The Alliance will provide a platform for countries to support each others' public policies aimed at eradicating hunger and poverty. According to a factsheet released by the Alliance, "any member country can access proven best practices from other members and identify potential partners willing to assist in the development of its own national model." Assistance may be in the form of technical expertise or financial support.

The Alliance has identified an evidence-based policy basket, which comprises more than 50 policy instruments that member countries can avail support for. Of particular importance are the six "Sprints 2030", high-impact areas which will see target-oriented initiatives catering to the most vulnerable. These include: school meals; cash transfers; smallholder and family farming support programs; socio-economic inclusion programs; integrated maternal and early childhood interventions; and water access solutions.

Unlike many initiatives, the Alliance does not boast an exclusive fund. Rather it envisions playing a matchmaking role, connecting countries in need with motivated donors and technical support. The \$2-3 million required annually for its operations will come from member countries and institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF, and the World Bank.

The Alliance may be headquartered in Brasilia, or some other Global South country. It will also likely have an office at the FAO headquarters in Rome.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations
Source: Indian Express

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