

Pangong Lake

May 21, 2022

In news- Recently, Satellite imagery showed a second bridge was being built by China around the strategically key Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh.

The 2nd bridge & India's response to it-

- China's second bridge is located right next to the bridge it constructed earlier this year, in an area that lies along India's claim line.
- The bridge is located around 20 km east of Finger 8 on the north bank of the lake, where India says is the point that marks the LAC. But by road, it would be over 35 km from Finger 8.
- The area has been under Chinese control since 1958, although it is just west of India's claim line, which, according to India, is its international boundary.
- It is just east of a ruin named Khurnak Fort, where China has major frontier defence bases.
- The region is called Rutong County by China. China has a frontier defence company at the Khurnak Fort, and a water squadron further east at Banmozhang.
- The bridge is near the halfway mark of the boomerang-shaped, 135- km-long Pangong Tso. India has about 45 km of the lake under its control.
- The bridge could help the Chinese military to quickly mobilise its troops in the region.
- Indian Ministry of External Affairs said that both these bridges are in areas that have continued to be under the illegal occupation of China since the 1960s.
- It further said that India has not accepted China's "unjustified claim" or "such construction activities".

About the lake

- Pangong Tso is **a long narrow, deep, endorheic (landlocked) lake** situated at a height of more than

14,000 ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.

- In the Ladakhi language, Pangong means extensive concavity and Tso is a lake in Tibetan.
- It is situated at a height of almost 4,350m, and **is the world's highest saltwater lake.**
- **Its water, which seems to be dyed in blue,** stand in stark contrast to the arid mountains surrounding it.



- Lake is also known to change colors, appearing blue, green and red at different times.
- **It divided into five sub lakes**, called *Pangong Tso*, *Tso Nyak*, *Rum Tso* (twin lakes) and *Nyak Tso*.
- The eastern part of the lake is fresh, with the content of total dissolved solids at 0.68 g/L, while the western part of the lake is saline, with the salinity at 11.02 g/L.
- **During winter the lake freezes completely, despite being saline water. It becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.**
 - It is **not a part of the Indus river basin area.**
 - One-third of the water body, **its 45 km stretch is in Indian control** while the rest of the **90 km is under Chinese control.**
- **In October 1962, Pangong Tso saw military action during the Sino-Indian War, successful for the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA)**
- In the 1990s, when the Indian side laid claims over the area, the Chinese army built a metal-top road contending that it was part of the Aksai Chin.

- The legendary 19th century **Dogra general Zorawar Singh** is said to have trained his soldiers and horses on the frozen Pangong lake before invading Tibet.
- **An Inner Line Permit is required to visit the lake** as it lies on the Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control.
- The lake acts as an important breeding ground for a variety of birds including a number of migratory birds. **During summer, the Bar-headed goose and Brahmini ducks are commonly seen here.**
- The region around the lake supports a number of **species of wildlife including the kiang and the marmot.**