

# Pangong Tso and its fingers

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**In News:** China's fortified deployments on Finger 5 proved to be the most contentious part of the negotiations to chart out a mutually acceptable troop withdrawal plan for Pangong Tso.

## About Pangong Tso Lake

- It is formed from Tethys geosyncline.
- It is a salt water lake.
- Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh has often been in the news, most famously during the Doklam standoff, when a video of the scuffle between Indian and Chinese soldiers.
- In the Ladakhi language, Pangong means extensive concavity, and Tso is a lake in Tibetan.
- Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, endorheic (landlocked) lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.
- The western end of Tso lies 54 km to the southeast of Leh. The 135 km-long lake sprawls over 604 sq km in the shape of a boomerang and is 6 km wide at its broadest point.
- The brackish water lake freezes over in winter and becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.
- 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.

## Why dispute ?

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) – the line that separates Indian and Chinese troops since 1962 – generally runs along the land except for the width of Pangong Tso.
- Here it runs through water. Both sides have marked their areas announcing which side belongs to which country.

- India controls about 45 km stretch of the Pangong Tso and China the rest.
- The current site of confrontation is spurs jutting out of Chang Chenmo, an eastern extension of the Karakoram Range. These spurs are called fingers.

## Fingers in the lake



- The barren mountains on the lake's northern bank, called the Chang Chenmo, jut forward in major spurs, which the Army calls "fingers".
- India claims that the LAC is coterminous with Finger 8, but it physically controls area only up to Finger 4.
- Chinese border posts are at Finger 8, while it believes that the LAC passes through Finger 2.
- Around six years ago, the Chinese had attempted a permanent construction at Finger 4 which was demolished after Indians strongly objected to it.
- Chinese use light vehicles on the road to patrol up to Finger 2, which has a turning point for their vehicles.
- If they are confronted and stopped by an Indian patrol in between, asking them to return, it leads to confusion, as the vehicles can't turn back.
- The Chinese have now stopped the Indian soldiers moving beyond Finger 2. This is an eyeball-to-eyeball situation

which is still developing.