

THE DE-ESCALATION ROAD MAP FOR INDIA AND CHINA

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It has been a month since the India-China face-off began with an incident at the Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Another incident took place days later along the LAC in north Sikkim. Mint takes a look at steps taken to ease the tension.

What is the problem at the border?

Troops of both countries have been face-to-face at the [Pangong Tso Lake](#) since 5 May and in the Galwan Valley and Demchok in Ladakh. The trigger for the face-off seems to be China's opposition to India building a road around the Pangong Tso Lake and a link road connecting Darbuk, Shyok, and Daulat Beg Oldi in Galwan Valley, close to the LAC. India has been building border infrastructure in recent years, but is still behind China, which has motorable roads right up to the LAC. This time Chinese troops have intruded in larger numbers and have done so in areas such as Galwan Valley, where there was no dispute earlier.

What has been done to ease tensions?

India and China have had at least three meetings at the level of major generals and many at the level of brigadiers since the face-off began. Earlier, small patrols from both sides used to come face-to-face and, with senior officers of the Indian Army and the [People's Liberation Army](#) (PLA) of China intervening, disengagement was quick. This time, the Chinese have stayed put with a rise in troop numbers last month, diverting personnel from a military exercise in Tibet to the LAC. India rushed reinforcements, supported by heavy vehicles and equipment, to mirror the Chinese deployment.

Where do talks for disengagement take place?

India and China have five established locations for Border Personnel Meetings, including Daulat Beg Oldi and Chushul in Ladakh, Bum La and Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh, and Nathu La in Sikkim. Ceremonial meetings are also held on occasions such as India's Independence Day on 15 August or People's Liberation Army Day on 1 August.

What has been done at the diplomatic level?

India and China have been working at the level of senior diplomats to sort out the impasse. India's ambassador to China Vikram Misri has been having talks with officials in the Chinese foreign ministry, while China's ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, has had meetings in New Delhi. Both countries are also working through the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs set up in January 2012 to de-escalate tensions between the neighbours.

What is expected on Saturday?

A pullback of troops and heavy vehicles by China and continuous talks to ease tension could be

taken as a step towards resolution. Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, who commands the Leh-based 14 Corps, is expected to lead the talks with his Chinese counterpart. A proposal to disengage and a pullback to positions prior to 5 May will be the main issues on the agenda. There will be no negotiation on Galwan Valley, which India considers its territory. It is also unlikely to agree to stop infrastructure upgrade.

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