

India-China LAC | Buffer zones to Depsang to Demchok: Spotlight on pullback plan, the extent

Since 2020, Corps Commanders of India and China have been discussing resolution of the flashpoints along the LAC, including those which emerged after the standoff began.

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The extent of disengagement — and where on the LAC it will take place — is not immediately clear. Sources said while clear orders are awaited, various modalities have been prepared for possible limited disengagement in phases. (File/Representational Photo)

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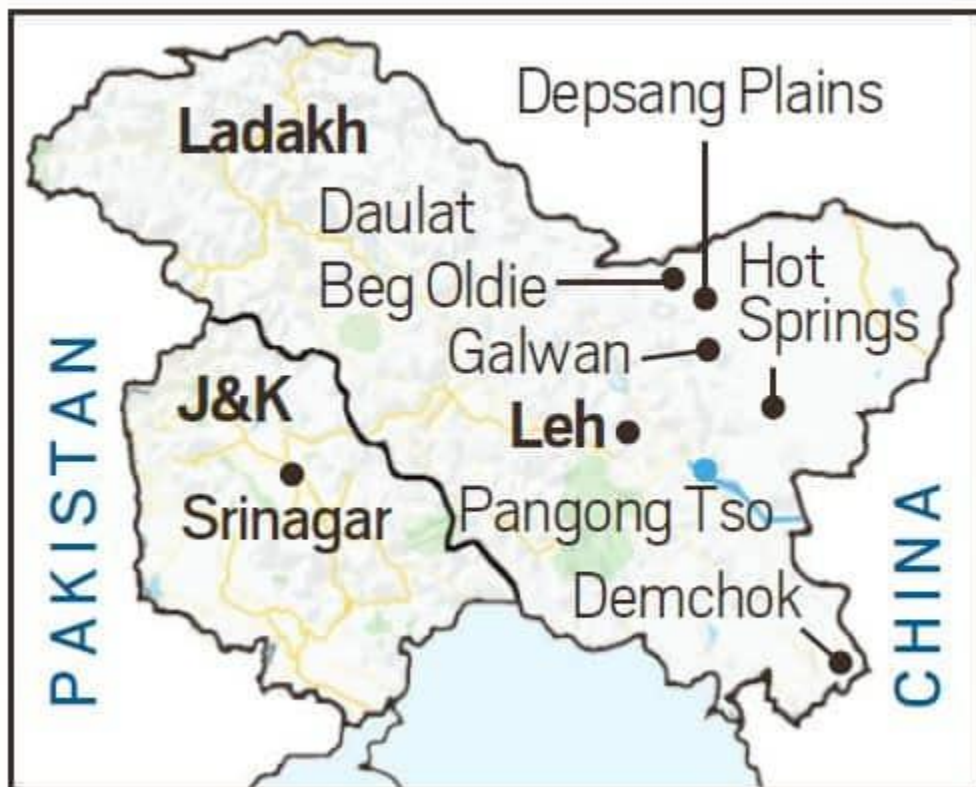
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With Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping **agreeing to intensify efforts for expeditious disengagement and de-escalation** along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in eastern Ladakh, the spotlight is now on the exact contours of plans being drawn up by military commanders on the ground to pull back troops.

The extent of disengagement — and where on the LAC it will take place — is not immediately clear. Sources said while clear orders are awaited, various modalities have been prepared for possible limited disengagement in phases.

As reported by *The Indian Express* earlier this week, commanders on the ground have been **discussing possible scenarios for limited disengagement** at certain mutually-accepted points along the boundary after the 19th round of India-China military talks earlier this month.

Since 2020, Corps Commanders of India and China have been discussing resolution of the flashpoints along the LAC, including those which emerged after the standoff began.



The talks led to some forward movement with both sides deciding to pull back troops – and dismantle temporary structures – from the Galwan Valley, the north and south banks of Pangong Tso and Patrolling Points in the Gogra and Hot Springs area.

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The last such movement was in September 2023 when both armies disengaged from PP-15 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area after multiple rounds of talks.

Disengagement in most of these areas led to the creation of buffer zones – this stops troops of both sides from accessing areas which they patrolled earlier.



PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg on Thursday. (ANI)

Other than these friction points, the legacy issues of Depsang Plains and Demchok – which predate the 2020 incursions by the Chinese PLA – continue to fester.

At the Depsang Plains, Chinese troops have been blocking Indian access to PPs 10 to 13 from a bottleneck known as the Y-junction as well as the 972 sq km tract of land there. **The**

Depsang Plains are located close to the strategically important Daulat Beg Oldie.

The Depsang Plains issue began in 2013 when China carried out an 18-km incursion in the area.

Despite the two countries agreeing then to go back from their positions, the PLA troops did not vacate the area completely.

India has since deployed a separate brigade to look after the area.

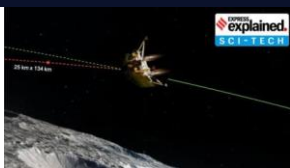
In Demchok, which is in the southern part of eastern Ladakh, the problem is mainly at the

Charding Ninglung Nullah (CNN) junction. In multiple instances, the PLA also stopped

Indian graziers at the Saddle Pass at the CNN junction, well within India's perception of the LAC.

Following the 19th round of talks this month, Major General-level talks were held to decide the finer details of resolving the existing issues, including the legacy issues along the LAC, as well as gaining access to all pre-2020 patrolling points along the LAC.

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The commanders discussed several issues such as mutually ensuring that no new posts are constructed in close proximity to the LAC, and identifying specific limits of patrolling.

