India, China commanders meet again to try and calm Arunachal frontier

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, November 21

INDIA AND China have concluded a second round of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve tensions along the frontier in Arunachal Pradesh before winter sets in fully, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The closely guarded talks, which began immediately after Diwali on November 8, continued for nearly 10 days with a short break in between.

Lt General Girish Kalia, General Officer Commanding of the Army's III Corps — also called the Spear Corps, it has its headquarters at Rangapahar near Dimapur in Nagaland — held talks with his Chinese counterpart and other officers. An official from the Ministry of External Affairs was also present.

The talks were said to be cordial. There is no clarity yet whether the measures agreed upon will be implemented

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SHAURYA ASSB TRG (8368104529)

Commanders meet

before winter sets in fully — it is usually severe along the Line of Actual Control, making sustenance and logistics efforts extremely challenging in the area.

This round of talks was held to set engagement rules between the two sides, avoid friction between troops on the ground, ensure open communication lines between both sides and bring down tensions before winter. Both sides have massed troops in large numbers in the area.

India and China held their first Corps Commander-level talks in the eastern sector on September 6-7 this year. That meeting at the Wacha-Damai border meeting point — Wacha is India's easternmost border personnel meeting point, located in the Kibithoo sector — followed reports of tension in the Taksing area of the Upper Subansiri district.

In August, two weeks before the first round of the military talks, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the special representatives for the boundary talks between the two countries, met in Beijing.

In October, days before his retirement at the end of the month, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Director General Shatrujeet Kapur said Indian and Chinese troops had faced off at multiple locations in Arunachal Pradesh.

In response to Kapur's remarks, the Ministry of External Affairs said the situation along the LAC "gets disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns". It underlined that "maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations".

Days later, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said "transgressions" keep happening along the frontier since China does not recognise the McMahon Line.

Agreed upon in 1914 between British India and Tibet, the McMahon Line serves as the de facto boundary between India and China in Arunachal Pradesh. Beijing does not recognise it, saying it was not for Tibet to enter into such an agreement.

Khandu told reporters: "No doubt transgression has happened. It keeps happening. It is nothing new since the border is not defined. The situation is quite normal now and our Armed Forces are guarding the border very well."

"China doesn't consider the McMahon Line in Arunachal and since the state shares a very long border with Tibet, China, sometimes patrolling parties transgress. Our soldiers go (to) that side, their patrolling parties also come (to) this side sometimes," he said.

Earlier, former Chief of Defence Staff Lt Gen Anil Chauhan (retd) said the boundary issue remains unsettled, and differing perceptions of the boundary, infrastructure construction and force multipliers create "the possibility of friction and escalation", adding that this requires vigilance, credible capabilities, clear agreements and consistent adherence to them.

HAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

OFFERS REHAB PACKAGE TO AFFECTED

Shah: Siang dam national project, we will hold talks



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the Police Training Centre in Banderdewa near Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, Saturday. PTI

Says project is key to energy security, strategic interests

Shinjini Ghosh & Jay Mazoomdaar
Guwahati, New Delhi, November 21

IN FIRST public remarks on the proposed 11,200-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh where protests against the project took a violent turn last month, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Saturday described the SUMP as a national project crucial to the state's development and offered talks and a comprehensive rehabilitation package to the affected communities.

Speaking at the President's Police Colour award ceremony near Itanagar, Shah said Chief Minister Pema Khandu had briefed him Friday on the situation. "The Siang project is a national project which is extremely important for the development of Arunachal, the country's energy security, the state's budget and income, as well as its strategic interests," he said.

"We will hold positive and constructive discussions," Shah said. He urged residents to speak to the state government

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Shah on Siang dam

and, through it, to the Union Home Ministry. The affected communities, he said, would receive a comprehensive rehabilitation package. He also assured them that their heritage, culture and religious beliefs would be protected.

His remarks are significant because they reiterate the project's strategic importance and reaffirm the Centre's resolve to build the dam, while leaving the terms of consultation open.

After Shah's speech, Khandu urged Siang residents to listen to the assurances directly. In a post on X, he said Shah had made clear that the project would move forward only through dialogue and after taking the people of Siang into confidence.

On November 20, the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF) and the Adi Bane Kebang United sent a joint memorandum to Shah, seeking cancellation of the project, an immediate halt to pre-feasibility work and a judicial inquiry into the October 23 violence in Pasighat. They also sought the release of protesters still in custody, withdrawal of criminal cases and removal of Central security forces from the region.

On the night of October 23, clashes broke out in Pasighat, East Siang district, hours after a 12-hour bandh called by groups opposing the dam. A police station, an NHPC office and several police vehicles were set on fire, and the homes of local political leaders were vandalised. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd and reported injuries to personnel due to stone-pelting.

Khandu has maintained that the state government is seeking people's cooperation for a pre-feasibility study. In a November 2 open letter to residents of the Siang belt, particularly members of the local Adi community, he said any decision on construction would require extensive consultation and consent. On November 12, he ruled out the use of force and offered to meet protesters anywhere with experts.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said he shared Khandu's position and invited groups opposing the project for talks. On November 9, Arunachal East BJP MP Tapir Gao told students in Tezu that the dam would be built "today or tomorrow", even if it took another generation. Khandu later said Gao's remarks had been misinterpreted.

Earlier, on October 8, Union Minister and Arunachal West MP Kiren Rijiju said in Pasighat that a decision would not be imposed on residents and urged dialogue with Adi community leaders. "If we sit down and talk, technically, everything will be clear. We have to talk. We have to move forward," he said.

In an October 29 letter to Union Jal Shakti minister C R Paatil, Assam Congress president and Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi sought an independent assessment of downstream impacts and prior consultation with Assam and affected communities. He questioned whether the dam could reliably moderate floods and maintain year-round flows in a region prone to extreme rainfall, landslides and glacial lake outbursts.

Plans to harness the Siang and Subansiri date back to 1982. The Siang gained strategic importance as China advanced its hydropower plans on the Yarlung Tsangpo, as the river is known in Tibet. In 2002, India and China agreed on a mechanism for sharing flood-season hydrological data. A year later, India launched a 50,000-MW hydropower initiative, with about 27,000 MW envisaged in Arunachal Pradesh.

India raised concerns about upstream Chinese projects in 2011 and 2013. In 2017, NITI Aayog proposed replacing two planned upper Siang projects with one large storage dam. In December 2024, Beijing approved a 60,000-MW project with five cascade power stations on the lower Yarlung Tsangpo, sharpening concerns in India over downstream flows and sudden releases of water.

Opposition to the SUMP came together in August 2025 when Adi clans convened a Bogum Bokang Kebang, or supreme council, at Geku in Upper Siang for the first time in 25 years. The council opposed both the dam and the pre-feasibility studies.

The SIFF estimates that the reservoir could submerge 27 villages, affect dozens more and displace between one lakh and 1.5 lakh indigenous people. Villagers fear losing paddy fields, jhum plots, orchards and the livelihoods they sustain. They regard the land as belonging to Abo Tani, their primordial ancestor, and revere the river as Ane Siang, or Mother Siang. For those opposing the dam, submergence would also mean losing places that connect them to their ancestors.

SHRUTIYA SSTRG (8374104291)

COP31 extends into overtime as divisions persist; text lacks vision, say climate groups

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Much like the 1.5 degree Celsius warming ceiling, COP31 proceedings going on at Antalya in Turkiye also breached upper limits with countries, as of Saturday evening, yet to decide the final text or convene a final plenary meet to decide on the path forward for climate action.

Proceedings were expected to officially conclude on Friday though historically it almost always goes into overtime and extends into the early hours of the weekend.

Latest iteration

The inability to reach a compromise — every clause of the final text must be agreed upon by every participant country — is due to the familiar division between a bloc of European countries and developing countries over a timeline to phase out fossil fuels and paying out the trillions of dollars necessary to fund that transition.



Activists unsatisfied with the second draft text at COP31 hold a silent protest outside the plenary hall on Friday. AFP

The latest public iteration of the COP31 draft cover text, as of November 19, has eliminated references to fossil fuels phase out and net zero dates but has also deleted references to a firm $120 billion adaptation-finance target that developing countries have been asking for as "legally binding financial obligations" on developed countries.

Taking off from the previous editions of the COP in Baku, Azerbaijan and Belem, Brazil, developed nations said they would "take the lead" in contributing at least $300 billion annually towards adaptation to climate change by 2035, though developing countries say this should be at least $ 1.3 trillion. Other than the thorny debate on whether loans, grants, for-profit investments in green projects are all included in this number, there is also debate on how much of the annual money should be split between adaptation and mitigation. A cover text is an overarching political decision that frames the outcome of a climate conference rather than settling any single agenda item.

Carbon capture

However, a widely expected outcome was that of raising electricity's share in final energy consumption to 35% by 2035 and scaling up the use of carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) technologies. The latter involves unproven expensive technology to extract atmospheric carbon dioxide. Proponents say this is necessary to counter the effects from the carbon that's already in the atmosphere and responsible for the 1.5C temperature breach that has already occurred.

"CC[U]S has been researched and developed for decades yet has achieved no discernible breakthroughs in efficiency, capture rates, or costs. CCS is a tax on energy supplies at a time when affordability is strained and demand growth is seeking efficient supplies," said Grant Hauber, Strategic Energy Finance Advisor, Asia, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) in a statement.

"We're down to the wire at COP31 and the latest texts are alarmingly far from ambitious or equitable," said Rachel Cleetus, Climate Program director at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) in a statement.

"The attempt to prove that a flashy headline target signals success for this COP has gone wrong in many ways for this Presidency," said Avantika Goswami, Programme Manager, Centre for Science and Environment, "This text is a messy collation of disparate targets...It lacks coherence and vision."

Ladakh's first panchayat poll after UT tag sees 70% turnout

It also recorded 52.4% turnout in municipal council polls; several villages boycotted polls, says Wangchuk, seeking President's intervention 'to stop imposition of elections' against people's will

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Ladakh recorded 70.03% turnout in the panchayat elections and 52.4% in the municipal council polls on Saturday, even as the Leh Apex Body (LAB), a civil society body holding talks with the Union Home Ministry, expressed unhappiness over the electoral process and flagged several issues, including fears of voter deletion, and questioned the timing of the polls while discussions were being held on Statehood and the Sixth Schedule.

Highlighting the tough topography of the cold desert mountain region, officials said helicopter services were deployed to airlift polling teams to three remote and road-inaccessible polling stations in Zanskar.

Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena termed the elections as "a historic day for Ladakh". "Today's voter turnout, with 73.60% polling for Panch and 70.03% for Sarpanch, marks an improvement over the overall voter turnout of 67.8% recorded in the 2018 Panchayat elections. This reflects an encouraging level of public participation in the democratic process and celebrating the true essence of democracy," he said.



Women show their voter identity cards at a polling station during the Ladakh Panchayat elections on Saturday. PTI

The Lieutenant-Governor said this was the first Panchayat and municipal elections since 2018, and the first time since Ladakh was made a Union Territory in 2019, marking a proud milestone in self-governance.

He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for their steadfast vision and commitment to empowering and strengthening grassroots democracy across Ladakh.

The panchayat elections covered 192 panchayat halqas (village units) across eight districts, comprising 192 sarpanch positions and 1,428 panch seats. Of these, 55 sarpanches and 1,186 panches were elected unopposed.

The municipal council elections covered 38 wards, comprising 21 in Leh town and 17 in Kargil town. "Polling was conducted in all 21 wards of Leh, while four wards in Kargil were filled unopposed and polling was held in the remaining 13 wards," a spokesperson of the Ladakh administration said.

Activists dissatisfied

Meanwhile, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and LAB co-chairman Tsering Dorjey Lakrook, expressed unhappiness over the process, saying the elections were aimed at "derailing the current dialogue between the Centre and civil society groups of Ladakh".

"Participation projected is not true because 25-30% locals have moved outside Ladakh. The decision to allow voters from the 2018 rolls disallowed many Gen Z voters to participate. We also fear deletion of voters from the list. No Special Intensive Revision was held in Ladakh but still there are reports of large-scale deletions," Mr. Lakrook said.

Mr. Wangchuk said that for unknown reasons, the polling booth was shifted from his village, and several villages boycotted these elections, with many unhappy with the delimitation process. He sought the intervention of President Droupadi Murmu and Mr. Modi "to stop imposition of elections against the will of the people of Ladakh".

SHAURYA SSD (04529)

India pledges to expand its ocean observation network

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The country has joined the Ocean Eye International Alliance to boost global climate resilience

India has joined the Ocean Eye International Alliance for the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) in a significant step towards strengthening global climate resilience and marine science, and pledged to expand its ocean monitoring network across the Indian Ocean on Saturday.

The announcement was made at a high-level event during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya, Turkiye, on 'Ocean, Seas, Nature and Land Use Day'. India was represented by Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) Director T.M. Balakrishnan Nair, who formally announced the country's induction into the alliance alongside Albania and the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI).

Speaking at the event, Dr. Nair underscored the importance of the GOOS in improving weather and climate forecasts, strengthening disaster preparedness, and enhancing maritime safety.

An ambitious plan to expand ocean observations in the Indian Ocean region, by doubling its existing ocean observation network to address critical data gaps, was also unveiled on the occasion.

India will also extend technical and observational support to Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. "We must work collectively to make the Global Ocean Observing System more resilient," said Dr. Nair.

Launched earlier this year with more than £211 million in initial pledges, the Ocean Eye Alliance has grown to over 30 members and seeks to strengthen global ocean observation efforts amid rising climate challenges, said a press release.

SHAURYA ASSET RG (8368104529)

Nations agree to UN talks aiming to regulate 'killer robots' by 2028

Reuters
Geneva, November 21

UN TALKS on regulating weapons with little or no human oversight ended Saturday with a pledge for further discussions to develop new rules within two years, an outcome weakened by Russia's opposition and disappointing human rights groups.

Proponents had called for legally binding rules within a short timeframe to regulate weapons systems that can identify and engage targets with varying degrees of autonomy, sometimes called "killer robots".

Around 100 countries backed this position but big arms-producing nations like the US, Russia and Israel opposed this, resulting in a watered-down agreement that left open the question of whether future measures would be legally binding.



Activists from Campaign to Stop Killer Robots protest against lethal autonomous weapons at Brandenburg in Berlin, on Friday. REUTERS

The member states of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons had been meeting in Geneva since Monday as alarm grows over the use of lethal autonomous weapons systems in conflicts, including in Ukraine, Sudan and West Asia.

The meeting's Swiss chair, Julien Thoeni, hailed the deal as a significant achievement for humanitarian disarmament after over 10 years of talks. "It shows that even in today's deeply divided world, multilateral diplomacy can still deliver concrete results," he told reporters in a hoarse voice as talks concluded after 4 am.

SHAURYA ASSB TRG (8368104529)

Iran wants diplomacy to end war, says Araghchi as U.S. rejects terms

Tehran needs guarantees that Washington is serious about negotiations, says Iran's Foreign Minister; highly enriched uranium should be kept inside Iran, he says, adding that 'a fair solution' could be reached; U.S. denies Iran fired at an F-16

Reuters
DUBAI

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran still hoped diplomacy could end its war with the United States, while U.S. President Donald Trump said Iran wanted a deal but one that was not acceptable to him.

Mr. Araghchi told the state-owned Iran newspaper that Tehran was seeking "an agreement that would ensure there was no further war" and wanted guarantees that Washington was serious about negotiations before proceeding further, adding that Iran had discussed with mediators the form and nature of confidence-building measures.



A man holds a placard as women hold photographs of children killed in Minab school strike, during a memorial in Tehran. AP

The remarks came as diplomatic efforts continued to try to end a conflict that has destabilised the West Asia, disrupted shipping, driven up global energy prices and drawn in countries across the region.

The Foreign Minister said Iran's red lines included keeping enriched uranium in the country, though he added that he believed "a fair solution" could be reached.

"They want to make a deal, but they don't want to make a deal that's acceptable to me," Mr. Trump said at a press conference on Friday.

The United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, prompting Tehran to strike Israel and Gulf states hosting U.S. military bases.

Qatari and Iranian officials met on Tuesday in talks aimed at "bridging perspectives and narrowing the gap between proposals presented on the ground," a spokesperson for Qatar's Foreign Ministry said.

U.S. Central Command on Saturday denied an Iranian account that its forces had fired a missile at a U.S. F-16 fighter jet over the Gulf, damaging the aircraft and forcing it to make an emergency landing.

Iranian state media earlier reported that the country's air defence systems targeted the aircraft on Friday evening, causing it to abort its mission and land at a nearby airport.

"Iran did not attack a US F-16 fighter aircraft yesterday – at all," Central Command said in a statement.

SHAURYA SCB TRC (8308104529)

Cargo vessel bound for Kaliningrad hit by drones

Reuters
HELSINKI

A cargo ship bound for Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad was struck by drones in international waters in the Gulf of Finland on Saturday, Russian and Finnish authorities said, prompting Finland to tighten security measures in the area.

The vessel, *Sparta II*, was damaged west of Russia's Gogland island, caught fire and later drifted into Finnish territorial waters, Finland's Defence Forces said, corroborating an earlier account by Russian officials.

Leningrad region Governor Aleksandr Drozdenko said the vessel had been attacked by two drones in international waters about three nautical miles from Russia's border. The crew was being evacuated and the extent of the damage was being assessed, he said.



The damaged *Sparta II* cargo ship in the Gulf of Finland following a Ukrainian drone attack on Saturday morning. AFP

Finland's Defence Ministry said the military had reintroduced temporary aviation and maritime restrictions in the eastern Gulf of Finland as a precaution to protect civilians and enable authorities to operate if drones needed to be intercepted.

"The war is spilling over into our neighbouring areas. Finnish authorities are handling the situation in the Gulf of Finland. Ukraine has the right to fight against the aggressor," Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said on X.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)