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दैनिक सामयिक अभिज्ञता सेवा

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## Not all rosy with border infrastructure

*By Josy Joseph & Dinakar Peri*

***Advanced landing grounds ready, but Mountain Strike Corps pruned; only 23 of 73 roads planned have been completed***

Under the Narendra Modi government, India's infrastructure development along the border with China has picked up, though it has rolled back the most ambitious military plan for the boundary.

According to several military and intelligence sources, India is at least a decade away from matching the infrastructure on the Chinese side, where most posts have direct road access. Across Tibet, massive infrastructure projects have come up providing easy access to the border for the Chinese military.

**Mountain Strike Corps** - The 17 Corps, which is India's first dedicated strike corps for mountain operations, was originally supposed to have three full divisions. Now it has been scaled down to two, of which just one division has been raised until now. With two divisions, the 17 Corps would have about 60,000 men, against the original plan of over 90,000.

**Rs. 64,000-crore plan** - In 2013, the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had approved a Rs. 64,000-crore plan to raise the corps. It was to be completed by 2020.

The Strike Corps was to be armed with, among others, the M-777 ultra-light howitzers, manufactured in the U.S. by BAE Systems, which can be easily airlifted. These were to be inducted from March 2019.

While the Modi government has scaled back ambitions for the Strike Corps, it has stepped up the UPA initiative to strengthen border infrastructure with China.

According to latest statistics, only 24 of the 73 roads identified along the Line of Actual Control with China have been completed until now. Of the total, 61 roads with a length of 3409.27 km, are with the Border Roads Organisation while other 12 were entrusted to agencies like the Central Public Works Department, NBCC and State Public Works Departments.

In a report presented in the Parliament in March this year, the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) said: "All 61 India-China Border Roads (ICBR) included in the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB) programme were planned to be completed by 2012. However, only 15 roads had been completed by 2012. Out of the balance, 46 roads, only 7 roads were completed by March 2016, extending the Planned Date of Completion (PDC) of balance roads.. to 2021." India is also constructing some critical bridges in the northeast which will cut down time for troop movement. The recently inaugurated 9.2-km Dhola-Sadiya bridge will cut down the distance between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh by 165 km.

## Pachnanda is new ITBP chief

*R.K. Pachnanda takes charge*

Amid ongoing tensions with the Chinese Army, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the main force deployed along the China border, got a new chief on Friday.

R.K. Pachnanda, a 1983-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre, took over as the 29th ITBP chief.

Prior to the new posting, he was Director-General, National Disaster Response Force. He took charge from Krishna Chaudhary, who retired on Friday. Mr. Pachnanda has served in major Central paramilitary forces and organisations, including the CRPF, the CISF, the BSF, the SPG and the CBI.

The ITBP is a 90,000-strong force that primarily guards the 3,488-km India-China border located at freezing heights of up to 18,700 ft in the upper Himalayas.

In some areas such as Nathu La in Sikkim, the troops are posted a few kilometres behind the Army.



*Sat, 01 July, 2017*

## **This is not 1962, India warns China**

New Delhi/Beijing: India expressed serious concern on Friday over Chinese construction activities in Donglang area, saying they amount to a “significant change of status quo” even as Beijing insisted the standoff in Sikkim sector could only be resolved by New Delhi recalling its troops to their original positions.

In a riposte to the Chinese military’s warning that India should learn lessons from the 1962 border conflict and not clamour for war, defence minister Arun Jaitley said circumstances had changed over the past five decades: “If they are trying to remind us, the situation in 1962 was different, the India of today is different.”

Jaitley said at a media event that Bhutan had accused China of trying to change the status quo by claiming Bhutanese territory, and this was “absolutely wrong”. He added, “It is Bhutan’s land, close to the Indian border, and Bhutan and India have an arrangement to provide security.”

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang brushed aside questions on Donglang mountain pass being at the centre of a territorial dispute between China and Bhutan, and said the region was an “indisputable” part of China. Indian troops had “trespassed” into the area on June 18, Lu told a news briefing. Bhutan claims the area.

“So the most pressing issue is the withdrawal of troops into the Indian territory. That is the precondition for any meaningful dialogue,” Lu said.

In New Delhi, the external affairs ministry said in a statement it was “deeply concerned at the recent Chinese actions” as the construction represents a “significant change of status quo with serious security implications for India”. The statement also acknowledged for the first time since the standoff began on June 16 that Indian troops were acting in coordination with the Bhutan government. It said Indian troops in Doka La area approached a Chinese road construction party and “urged them to desist from changing the status quo” by building the road.

Government sources countered Beijing’s allegation that Indian troops entered Chinese territory, saying the Sikkim China border alignment was still not settled and was being discussed by their Special Representatives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been briefed by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and foreign secretary S Jaishankar on the standoff. The two armies are at a distance with no reports of altercations or physical contacts between the troops, the sources said.

The sources dismissed reports that 3,000 troops had been arrayed on both sides. They said footage on social media purporting to show the current standoff was from an earlier incident. The sources said Sikkim is an integral part of India though its border with China had not been finalised. Since Sikkim and Bhutan are contiguous, there is no question of Indian troops entering Chinese territory as is evident from the 1954 survey maps, they said.

On Thursday, Bhutan too asked China to maintain status quo, saying the construction activity violated two agreements signed by Beijing and Thimphu in 1988 and 1998 to maintain peace and tranquillity along their disputed border.

There were also signs that the two sides were working to bring the situation under control. Spokesperson Lu said the diplomatic channel of communication between the two sides remained “unimpeded” while the Indian statement noted that the matter was being discussed in New Delhi and Beijing. The issue was also discussed by border personnel at a meeting in Nathu La on June 20.

Though New Delhi has not decided to raise the matter at the apex level in case of a meeting between Modi and Xi at the G-20 Summit in Germany during July 6-8, India is prepared to wait and watch without ceding any ground. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nathu La has been suspended by the Chinese but the pilgrimage through Lipu-Lekh pass and Taklakot is still on. Also, border trade through Nathu La has not been suspended even for a day.



*Sat, 01 July, 2017*

## **1967 Nathu La clashes a lesson for China, India**

Beijing: The bloody clashes between Indian and Chinese troops nearly 50 years ago at Nathu La in Sikkim, the scene of an ongoing standoff, are a grim reminder of how the unsettled border of the two countries has triggered hostilities.

The fighting that erupted on September 11, 1967 was preceded by months of accusations from both sides about incursions and territorial intrusions.

The language used by China at that time to warn Indian authorities was strikingly similar to the aggressive narrative emanating from Beijing five decades later. It even included references to the 1962 border war, which was fresh in the minds of military commanders on both sides at the time.

“The Chinese Government must tell the Indian Government in all seriousness: You must draw lessons from your past experience, stop provocative activities along the China-Sikkim border and cease all your calumnies against China, otherwise you are bound to eat the bitter fruits of your own making,” said a note handed over by China’s foreign ministry to the Indian embassy in Beijing on April 11, 1967.

On September 10, a day before hostilities broke out, the foreign ministry issued another terse warning, calling Indian leaders “reactionaries” who were “component part of the worldwide anti-Chinese chorus currently struck up by US imperialism and Soviet Revisionism in league with the reactionaries of various countries”.

“The Chinese Government sternly warns the Indian Government: the Chinese Border Defence Troops are closely watching the development of the situation along the China-Sikkim boundary. Should the Indian troops continue to make provocative intrusions, the Indian Government must be held responsible for all the grave consequences,” it added.

The external affairs ministry countered the Chinese allegations with its own version of events, saying China’s troops had violated agreements.

“The Chinese Government is well aware that the Sikkim-Tibet border is a well-defined international border and has been recognised as such by China. By launching an armed attack the Chinese Government is seeking to build up tension at a point on the border which has never been in dispute,” the external affairs ministry told Beijing in a note.

The initial clashes in 1967 lasted four days. While the 1962 war was a debacle for New Delhi, the Indian Army proved more than a match for the Chinese five years later. According to an account of the clashes written by

Maj Gen Sheru Thapliyal, who was posted in Sikkim at the time, the Indian side lost more than 70 soldiers while the Chinese casualties were more than 400.

“We gave them a bloody nose,” a former Indian diplomat said.

A second round of clashes erupted at Cho La on October 1, 1967, leading to more casualties. But Indian troops stood their ground and forced the Chinese soldiers to withdraw at Cho La. Since then, the border in the Sikkim sector has remained free of violence. In 1967, Sikkim was a protectorate of India and it joined the Indian union as a state in 1975. China recognised the frontier in the Sikkim sector in 2003.

## MAIL TODAY

Sat, 01 July, 2017

# China bristles over US-Taiwan arms deal

THE US state department has approved arms sales to Taiwan worth a total of \$1.4 billion (₹90,500 crore), the first such deal with the self-governing island since President Trump took office, officials said.

The sale will anger China, which regards Taiwan as part of its territory. It comes at a delicate time for relations between Washington and Beijing over efforts to rein in nuclear-armed North Korea.

The sale to Taiwan comprises seven items, including technical support for early warning radar, anti-radiation missiles, torpedoes and components for SM-2 missiles, according to a U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss the details before they



US approved arms sales worth \$1.4 billion to Taiwan.

were formally announced. State department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the Trump administration had notified Congress of its intent.

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Sat, 01 July, 2017

## China builds new military facilities on Spratly islands

Washington: China has built new military facilities on islands in the South China Sea, a US think tank reported on Thursday, a move that could raise tensions with Washington, which has accused Beijing of militarising the vital waterway.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI), part of Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies, said new satellite images show missile shelters and radar and communications facilities being built on the Fiery Cross, Mischief and Subi Reefs.

The US has criticized China's build-up of military facilities on the artificial islands and is concerned they could be used to restrict free movement through the South China Sea, an important trade route.

Last month, a US Navy warship sailed within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef in a so-called freedom of navigation operation, the first such challenge to Beijing's claim to most of the waterway since US President Donald Trump took office.

China has denied US charges that it is militarising the sea, which also is claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Trump has sought China's help in reining in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, and tension between Washington and Beijing over military installations in the sea could complicate those efforts.

China has built four new missile shelters on Fiery Cross Reef to go with the eight already on the artificial island, AMTI said. Mischief and Subi each have eight shelters, the think tank said in a previous report.

In February, Reuters reported that China had nearly finished building structures to house long-range surface-to-air missiles on the three islands.

On Mischief Reef, an antennae array is being installed that presumably boosts Beijing's ability to monitor the surroundings, the think tank said, adding the installation should be of concern to the Philippines due to its proximity to an area claimed by Manila.

"Beijing can now deploy military assets, including combat aircraft and mobile missile launchers, to the Spratly Islands at any time," it said.



Sat, 01 July, 2017

## US Plans to Sell Taiwan \$1.42 Billion in Arms

*By David Brunnstrom & Arshad Mohammed*

*The package includes technical support for early warning radar*

The United States plans to sell Taiwan \$1.42 billion in arms, the first such sale under the administration of Donald Trump. US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters the administration had told Congress of the seven proposed sales on Thursday. "It's now valued about \$1.42 billion," she said.

The State Department said the package included technical support for early warning radar, high speed anti-radiation missiles, torpedoes and missile components.

Nauert said the sales showed US "support for Taiwan's ability to maintain a sufficient self-defence capability", but there was no change to the United States' longstanding "one China" policy, which recognises Beijing and not Taipei. The United States is the sole arms supplier to Taiwan, which China deems its own and has never renounced the use of force to bring the self-ruled island under its control.

Beijing has given Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen the cold shoulder since she took power last year because she leads an independence-leaning ruling party and refuses to recognise the "one China" policy.

On Friday, Tsai's office said that her government will continue "to seek constructive dialogue with Beijing, and promote positive developments in cross-strait relations".

"(The arms sale) increases Taiwan's confidence and ability to maintain the status quo of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Tsai's office tweeted. The sale, which requires congressional approval, would be the first to Taiwan under Trump and the first since a \$1.83-billion sale that former President Barack Obama announced in December 2015, to China's dismay. The previous package included two navy frigates in addition to anti-tank missiles and amphibious attack vehicles.