



● POLITY

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## INDIA, CHINA HAVE SET TIES ON RIGHT TRACK: JAISHANKAR

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** External Affairs Minister Jaishankar highlights ongoing diplomatic efforts with China for LAC disengagement; Lok Sabha Speaker denies Opposition's questions on the issue during the session.

**BACKGROUND:** India-China ties are showing signs of improvement, as stated by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. He attributed progress to consistent diplomatic efforts and a phased approach, leading to disengagement in border areas. The situation, deemed "abnormal" since 2020 due to Chinese actions, is gradually stabilizing.

### Next steps

With disengagement 'fully achieved' at the India-China border, Minister Jaishankar details the developments to follow as per agreement between the two countries

- Talks on de-escalation along Line of Actual Control (LAC)

- Discussions on management of border and confidence-building measures

- Meeting of Special Representatives Ajit Doval and Wang Yi

- Meeting of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and his Chinese counterpart

We have been very clear that the restoration of peace and tranquillity would be the basis for the rest of the relationship to move forward

**S. JAISHANKAR**  
External Affairs Minister



### India-China Border Disengagement Efforts at LAC

- Suo Motu Statement in Lok Sabha: Foreign Minister recounted steps of October 21 agreement on troop disengagement at Demchok and Depsang.
- Opposition Requests Denied: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla refused clarifications, limiting discussion to the minister's statement.
- Verification of Disengagement: Patrolling resumed to traditional areas, with ground verification of disengagement by patrols completed.
- Disengagement Achieved: Minister stated full disengagement at all friction points along the Line of Actual Control achieved.
- Focus on De-escalation: Next steps involve troop withdrawal and diplomatic meetings by Special Representatives and Foreign Secretaries.

India and China have engaged in extensive talks, including 17 WMCC and 21 SHMC meetings since 2020, focusing on resolving tensions at Demchok and Depsang. Despite

creating temporary buffer zones to avoid further friction, India emphasizes respecting the LAC, maintaining the status quo, and adhering to past agreements.

## DHAKA SUMMONS INDIAN ENVOY AFTER BREACH AT AGARTALA MISSION

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** Bangladesh's MoFA summoned Indian envoy Pranay Verma over security breaches at its Agartala mission, suspending consular services, while Acting Foreign Secretary Riaz Hamidullah addressed the issue.

**BACKGROUND:** Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma met Bangladesh's Acting Foreign Secretary Riaz Hamidullah after Bangladesh suspended consular and visa services at its Agartala mission. The Bangladesh Foreign Ministry cited security concerns, announcing that all visa and consular services at the Assistant High Commission would remain suspended until further notice.

## India-Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations amid Protests

- **Multi-faceted India-Bangladesh Relations:** India emphasizes wide-ranging interdependencies, focusing on trade, power transmission, and essential commodities in recent developments.
- **Shared Aspirations for Peace:** Indian government expresses interest in collaborating with Bangladesh for peace, security, and development.
- **Cordial Meeting:** The diplomatic meeting between India and Bangladesh was described as cordial, reflecting positive bilateral relations.
- **Protests in India against Bangladesh:** Protests continued in Agartala, Assam, and West Bengal over alleged atrocities against minority Hindus in Bangladesh.
- **Tensions over Flag Incident:** Bangladesh reacted angrily after a protest in Agartala led to the tearing of the Bangladesh flag at the mission.

### Milestones in India-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations



**1971 - Crucial Role in Liberation:** India played a key role in Bangladesh's Liberation War against Pakistan, providing military and diplomatic support.



**1974 - Formal Diplomatic Relations:** India and Bangladesh established formal diplomatic ties, strengthening their relationship and cooperation.



**1996 - Awami League Comes to Power:** Sheikh Hasina's Awami League promoted closer relations with India, leading to improved bilateral cooperation.



**2011 - Land Boundary Agreement:** India and Bangladesh signed the Land Boundary Agreement, resolving a long-standing border dispute and enhancing cooperation.



**2015 - Agreement Comes Into Effect:** The Land Boundary Agreement officially came into effect, marking a key milestone in bilateral relations.



**2017 - Prime Minister's Visit:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh, strengthening the strategic partnership and emphasizing shared priorities.



**2021 - 50th Anniversary of Relations:** India and Bangladesh celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties, highlighting the enduring relationship and future cooperation.

Nahid Islam, a Bangladeshi student activist, criticized Mamata Banerjee's call for UN intervention in Bangladesh, calling it a baseless remark. He emphasized the close ties between Bangladesh and India, urging India to avoid anti-Bangladesh politics. Meanwhile, security breaches at Bangladesh's Agartala mission led to suspensions and heightened security measures.





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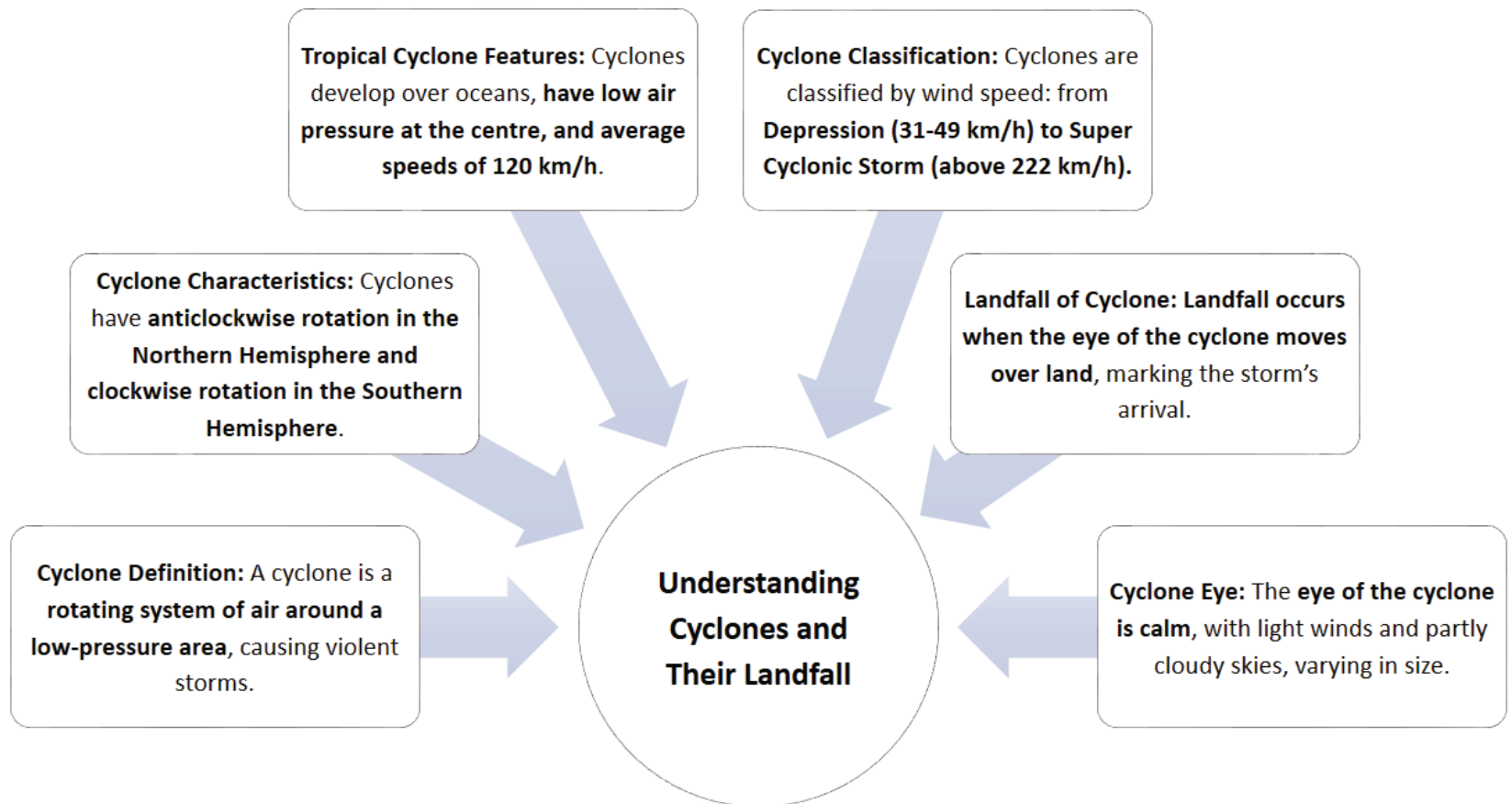
## GEOGRAPHY

**CONTEXT:** The southern peninsula often sees heavy rainfall during the northeast monsoon, which is crucial for countries like Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

**BACKGROUND:** Cyclone Fengal, which crossed the coast near Puducherry on the night of November 30, caused unexpected devastation in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin informed Prime Minister Modi that nearly seven million families and 15 million individuals were affected by the cyclone's impact.

### Impact of Cyclonic Storm and Need for Long-Term Flood Management in Tamil Nadu

- **Heavy Rainfall and Loss of Life:** Cyclonic storm caused 40-50 cm of rainfall, leading to 16 fatalities, including seven in Tiruvannamalai.
- **Flooding and Farmland Damage:** Over 2.21 lakh hectares of farmland, including 10,000 hectares in Puducherry, were submerged due to flooding.
- **South Pennai River Flood:** The South Pennai river experienced a flow of 2.4 lakh cusecs, worsening the plight of affected districts.
- **Financial Aid for Relief:** ₹2,000 crore requested by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, while Puducherry announced ₹210 crore assistance for relief.
- **Need for Long-Term Preparedness:** Authorities must intensify efforts in flood risk management, strengthen infrastructure, and curb encroachments to mitigate future disasters.



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# REFLECTIONS ON BAKU'S 'NCQG OUTCOME'

## EDITORIAL – ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** The IPCC emphasizes the need for stronger global commitments to limit warming to 1.5°C, warning that current policies could result in a temperature rise of up to 3.1°C.

**BACKGROUND:** The visible impacts of climate change and growing scientific evidence highlight the urgent need for accelerated climate action. Cleaner fuels and technological solutions are emerging, but their deployment requires focus on implementation. With COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, branded as the "Finance COP," there is hope for ambitious outcomes, particularly regarding the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG).

### Finance for Accelerating Clean Energy Transition in Developing Countries

- **High Upfront Costs for Clean Technologies:** Some renewable technologies have high initial costs, requiring government support to ensure consumer affordability.
- **India's Green Energy Budget:** India's MNRE received ₹19,100 crore in Budget 2024-25, with additional funds for energy efficiency and electric vehicle subsidies.
- **Concerns over Fiscal Debt:** There are growing concerns about fiscal debt, with calls for public grants rather than loans from developed countries.
- **High Cost of Capital in Developing Countries:** Developing countries face high capital costs, limiting access to affordable finance for climate action.
- **Need for Accessible Climate Finance:** Affordable lending rates and financial flows are crucial to enable climate action and unlock markets in developing countries.

### Disappointment over Climate Finance Commitments and the NCQG Outcome

- **Pledge for \$100 Billion by Developed Countries:** At Cancun (2010), developed nations pledged to provide \$100 billion annually until 2020 for climate finance.
- **Establishment of NCQG Framework:** COP21 (Paris) set the goal for establishing Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and quantified climate goals by 2025.
- **Needs Determination for Climate Finance:** The UNFCCC's Second Needs Determination Report estimates \$5-7 trillion by 2030 to meet the needs of 98 countries.
- **Inadequate Financial Commitment from Developed Countries:** Developed countries committed only \$300 billion annually till 2035, which is far below the required \$1.3 trillion.
- **Concerns over Slow Progress and Mobilisation of Funds:** There is disappointment with the NCQG's finance target and its reliance on private capital, potentially slowing transformative climate action.

COP29's finance commitment increased to \$300 billion annually, but it falls short of expectations, lacking ambition and ignoring climate justice principles. The outcome bypasses equitable burden sharing and overlooks the financial needs of the global south. Ongoing talks and global cooperation are crucial to ensure a just, fair transition for developing countries.

# LOCAL ACTION AMIDST GLOBAL INERTIA

## ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** COP29 concluded with a climate finance goal of \$300 billion annually by 2035 from developed countries, but this falls short of developing nations' needs, highlighting global climate gridlock.

### Challenges in Climate Action and the Role of Global Negotiations

The principle of developed countries financing climate action in developing nations while accelerating their mitigation efforts faces challenges due to fossil fuel reliance and political barriers. The deadlock persists at climate negotiations, with the developed world delaying net-zero targets and being influenced by powerful fossil fuel lobbies, climate change deniers, and uneven global impacts.

Global climate agreements, like the Montreal Protocol, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, and Glasgow Climate Pact, have achieved progress in environmental protection, but action remains slow. The 1.5°C target is at risk of being breached, leading to severe natural disasters, heat stress, and potentially catastrophic unknown consequences as the climate continues to evolve.



# COP29

## Baku Azerbaijan

### India's Approach to Climate Change: Focused National Action for Clean Energy Transition

- **Exponential vs Incremental Action:** The challenge of reconciling exponential action needed for climate change and incremental action achievable calls for focused local efforts.
- **India's Clean Energy Transition Policies:** India has implemented policies like PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana and PM E-DRIVE for clean energy and transport.
- **Co-benefits Approach:** India adopts a co-benefits approach to tackle climate change, combining energy

access, emissions reduction, and clean energy transitions.

- **PAT Scheme and Carbon Market:** The PAT scheme, to be replaced by the Indian Carbon Market, mobilises investments in energy efficiency and emissions reduction.
- **State Action Plans for Adaptation:** State Action Plans on Climate Change focus on agriculture, water resources, disaster risk reduction, and tailored adaptation strategies.

While global consensus and funding remain challenges, local and national actions, such as India's efforts, are making progress. Continued focus on emissions reduction, mindful consumption through Mission LiFE, resilient infrastructure, and heat action plans will be key to addressing climate challenges and building sustainable communities.

## THE SALIENCE OF THE PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT

### INDIAN POLITY

**CONTEXT:** Communal violence erupted in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, while Justice Chandrachud's 2022 remarks on the Gyanvapi case sparked political controversy. The Places of Worship Act, 1991, maintains the status quo of religious sites.

**BACKGROUND:** A lawsuit filed against the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, led to a violent incident on November 24, resulting in four deaths. The petition claims the mosque was built over an ancient Hari Har Mandir destroyed by Babur. Experts warn such suits violate the Places of Worship Act, 1991.

### Legal Challenges to the Constitutionality of the Places of Worship Act

Petitions challenging the constitutionality of the 1991 law argue it prevents Hindus from reclaiming religious sites, freezing their status as they stood in 1947, and disregards Hindu personal laws. The delay in responding to the petitions has raised concerns. Academician Prof. Faizan Mustafa stresses the need for a swift ruling from the apex court, emphasizing the government's duty to defend the law's constitutionality to maintain India's social fabric.

### The 1991 Act: Preservation of Religious Place of Worship in India

- **Introduction of the Act:** The 1991 Act was introduced by P.V. Narasimha Rao's government to address communal tensions after the Babri Masjid demolition.
- **Preservation of Religious Character:** The Act preserves the character of places of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, barring alterations.
- **Conversion Prohibition:** Section 3 prohibits conversion of religious places between denominations or sects, safeguarding religious identity.
- **Exemption for Ayodhya Dispute:** The Ram Janmabhoomi dispute in Ayodhya was exempted, as it was already under judicial review when the Act passed.
- **2019 Supreme Court Verdict:** The 2019 Ayodhya verdict upheld the law, preventing similar suits related to religious place disputes in India.

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# TOXINS OF THE 1984 BHOPAL DISASTER

POLITY/ ECOLOGY

**CONTEXT:** Forty years after the Bhopal disaster, hundreds of tonnes of toxic waste remain around the Union Carbide plant, with only a small fraction disposed of despite legal orders and local pressure.

**BACKGROUND:** Chemical analyses of soil, air, and water in Madhya Pradesh have shown elevated levels of toxic compounds. The state received ₹126 crore from the Union government to incinerate 340 tonnes of hazardous material, but critics argue that burning it could release harmful fumes, causing further contamination and health risks.

## The Bhopal Gas Tragedy and Its Aftermath

Union Carbide India's Bhopal plant leaked toxic methyl isocyanate gas after water entered a storage tank, causing a reaction that released harmful vapours. The leak affected surrounding settlements. The Union Carbide Corporation has never confirmed the exact gases released, complicating health responses. Visual cues, including the blood-red colour of victims' viscera, suggested hydrogen cyanide presence in the fumes.

A 2010 study revealed severe contamination at the Bhopal plant, with 11 lakh tonnes of contaminated soil, mercury, and hazardous compounds. Greenpeace in 1999 reported dangerous substances, including mercury and hexachlorobutadiene. The Supreme Court ordered water supplies for affected communities in 2004, expanding coverage by 2013. In 2018, tests confirmed hazardous concentrations in the water, leading to broader water-supply operations and identification of persistent contamination.


## Toxins linger 40 years on

Chemical analyses of soil, air, and water samples collected from the area around the ill-fated Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh have revealed the presence of toxic compounds at elevated concentrations. Several hundred tonnes of toxic waste still lie around the plant

**CASUALTY TOLL (Official figures)**  
 Deaths (Dec 3-6, 1984): 3,787  
 Injured: 5,58,125, including 3,900 permanently disabled  
 Activists say 25,000 people have died, with a further 1,00,000 still suffering from different sicknesses

## Harmful Effects of Heavy Metals and Organic Compounds

- **Heavy Metals and Health:** Chromium, copper, lead, mercury, and nickel are toxic, causing organ damage and cancers in humans.
- **Chromium Exposure:** Chromium is essential but long-term high doses cause cytotoxic and genotoxic effects, damaging the immune system.
- **Lead Toxicity:** Lead disrupts photosynthesis in plants and damages cells in animals, linked to stomach cancer and other cancers.
- **Copper Overload:** High levels of copper damage the liver, kidneys, and gastrointestinal system, leading to severe health issues.
- **Organic Compound Dangers:** Hexachlorobutadiene, chloroform, carbon tetrachloride, and trichlorobenzene cause liver damage, cancer, and affect nervous systems when ingested or inhaled.

<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>                  The Indian government argues that slack management and deferred maintenance caused the disaster. Then-plant owner, the U.S. firm Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), blamed sabotage</p>	<p><b>COMPENSATION</b>                  In 1989, UCC paid \$470m to the Indian government to settle litigation stemming from the disaster                  But India is now backing a new court case to secure greater compensation – Dow Chemical, which bought UCC in 2001, denies liability</p>
<p>In 2010, eight former managers of the plant were convicted of negligence and sentenced to short prison terms</p>	<p>Payouts by the Indian government to Bhopal claimants over the years reportedly average \$550 apiece</p>
<p>UCC chairman Warren Anderson, who left India soon after the disaster, was sought by the Indian government, which had called for his extradition from the U.S. He died in September 2014, aged 92</p> 	<p><b>CONTAMINATION</b>                  Environmentalists say the toxic chemicals remaining in the abandoned plant continue to leak, causing health problems                  Dow says contamination is the responsibility of Indian authorities who took control of the site in 1998</p>

Sources: Indian government, Madhya Pradesh government

Picture: AP

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# ON WORLD WILDLIFE DAY, MAKING A CLARION CALL TO PROTECT INDIA'S CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES

## ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** World Wildlife Conservation Day (December 4) celebrates the nation's biodiversity while prompting a review of efforts to protect critically endangered species residing here.

**BACKGROUND:** India, covering just 2.4% of the world's land area, is home to 7-8% of all recorded species, including 45,000 plant species and 91,000 animal species. This remarkable biodiversity contributes to India's recognition as a megadiverse country.

### Biodiversity and Conservation in India

- **India's Biodiversity:** India has 10 biogeographic zones and hosts 8.58% of mammalian, 13.66% of avian species, and significant reptile, amphibian, fish, and plant species.
- **Biodiversity Hotspots:** India is home to four of the 36 globally identified biodiversity hotspots, including the Himalayas and Western Ghats.
- **India's Global Contribution:** With 2.4% of the world's land area, India holds vast evolutionary biodiversity despite its economic and resource demands.
- **Resource-Hungry Growth:** India's growing population (65% under 35) leads to increased demand for natural resources, impacting wildlife habitats.
- **Wildlife Conservation:** Unlike Africa, India's wildlife reserves are unfenced, with religious mythology influencing the reverence and protection of wild animals

India is home to 73 critically endangered species, up from 47 in 2011, largely due to improved data and monitoring. While iconic carnivores like tigers receive attention, lesser-known species like the Kashmir stag and Great Indian Bustard also face significant threats, highlighting the need for broader conservation efforts.



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