Five-Point Consensus

Why in news?

The five-point consensus was reached by the Foreign Ministers of India and China in Moscow, Russia.

What is the consensus?

- In a joint statement, both India and China agreed that the current situation suits neither side.
- They agreed that the troops should quickly disengage, maintain proper distance, and ease tensions.
- Both sides said they would abide by all existing agreements, continue dialogue, and expedite work on finding confidence building measures.
- They agreed to take guidance from previous understandings, including on not allowing differences to become disputes, a formulation of 2017.

Will the consensus work?

- It provides a glimmer of hope of a diplomatic solution, while thousands of troops from both countries remain deployed along the border.
- Each point has been affirmed previously by the two neighbours, both in past boundary agreements and in talks held since June 2020.
- Yet, the LAC remains tense, facing its worst crisis since 1962.

What was unusual?

- The issuing of the joint statement was unusually accompanied by separate press statements.
- **India's statement** - It stressed that peace on the boundary was essential for ties.
- It also said that recent incidents had impacted the broader relationship.
- **China's statement** - It has sought to emphasise the importance of moving the relationship in the right direction.
- It also emphasized on putting the border in a proper context.
- It quoted India's Foreign Minister as saying India believed China's policy toward India had not changed and that it did not consider relations to be dependent on the settlement of the boundary question.

What are the differences?

- While Beijing wants to separate the border conflict from the rest of the relationship, Delhi says the two are inextricably interlinked.
- While India insists that the objective of the exercise is to “restore” the status quo ante, there is no explicit Chinese commitment to that goal.

What is next?

- It is welcome that India and China have found something to agree on.
- The consensus, however, is only the first step of a long road ahead.
- The continuing rounds of talks should be aimed at disengagement.
- It should not be aimed at presenting a veneer of diplomatic engagement even while China strengthens its hold along the LAC.
- India must negotiate with China in good faith, but it cannot again mistake Beijing’s diplomatic words for PLA’s deeds.

Source: The Indian Express, The Hindu

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