

## Mamallapuram Summit - India and China

### Why in news?

- The second informal summit between leaders of India and China is to take place in the coastal town of Mamallapuram, south of Chennai.
- In this context, here is an overview of the terms between India and China in the recent period and the significance of the current meet.

### Why an informal meet now?

- Informal summits have their use as trust-building exercises.
- The last such meet was the [Wuhan Summit](#) held in 2018.
- Among the decisions taken there was to hold more such summits, aimed at ensuring “higher levels of strategic communications.”
- But, it is largely uncertain if in the past months the two leaders had succeeded in enhancing strategic communications.

### What is the significance with Mamallapuram?

- Mamallapuram, a World Heritage Site, is symbolic of India’s ‘soft power’.
- It is an important town of the erstwhile Pallava dynasty that ruled this part of south India from 275 CE to 897 CE.
- The site is renowned for its architecture, widely admired across the world.
- Mamallapuram and the Pallava dynasty are also historically relevant in regards with China.
- The earliest recorded security pact between China and India (in the early 8th century) involved a Pallava king (Rajasimhan, or Narasimha Varma II).
- It was from this Pallava king that the Chinese sought help to counter Tibet.
- Tibet had notably been emerging as a strong power posing a threat to China then.

### How have India-China ties been since Wuhan summit?

- Little has changed as far as India-China relations are concerned since the Wuhan Summit.
- **Afghanistan** - Wuhan Summit raised hopes that the two countries would jointly work together on an economic project in Afghanistan.
- However, this has proved to be short-lived; the political situation in Afghanistan deteriorates.

- But even as this happens, China, along with countries like Pakistan, is keen more than ever on ensuring that India has no role to play in Afghanistan.
- **Circumstances** - After the Wuhan Summit, many things have changed, altering the circumstances surrounding India-China relations.
- Relations between China and the U.S. have sharply deteriorated.
- In 2018, the China-Russia axis appeared to be carving out an exclusive zone of influence in East Asia.
- But, by mid-2019, new alignments appear to be altering equations in the East Asian region.
- These include a further strengthening of India-Russia ties, and a new triangular relationship of Russia, India and Japan.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has also come under increasing attack, even from countries that earlier encouraged it.

### **How has China's domestic situation been?**

- China is making a series of achievements, and did not think it needed to make concessions to anyone, least of all India.
- However, China also has met with certain setbacks geo-politically and economically.
- The economy is far more fragile than in early 2018.
- Internal security concerns include unrest in Tibet, inroads made by radical extremist groups in Xinjiang and the Hong Kong protests.
- The attack by the U.S. on China's economic practices has only aggravated the mood of pessimism on the leadership's ability to control the above situation.

### **What is the case with India in this regard?**

- India was disturbed by a host of economic setbacks.
- Nevertheless, India seems better positioned today than in the spring of 2018 when Wuhan summit took place.
- India's relations with the U.S. have attained a new high.
- Relations with Russia have acquired a fresh dimension, incorporating economics alongside a longstanding military relationship.
- India's line of credit to develop Russia's Far East has fundamentally changed the nature of India-Russia relations.
- India's relations with Japan have also greatly strengthened.
- The Quadrilateral (the U.S., India, Japan and Australia) has gained a new lease of life.

### **What are the conflicting issues?**

- China and India continue to compete and have a contradictory outlook on many strategic and civilisational issues.
- These include the nature of Asian security, regional stability and the role of the U.S. in the region.
- The China-Pakistan axis has been further cemented.
- Doklam and the disputed border between the two countries remains an issue of concern.
- India's efforts to 'dumb down' the Dalai Lama will have appeased China to an extent.
- However, India taking keen interest in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh will be seen by China as a provocation.
- The moves here include -
  - i. the *Changthang Prahar*
  - ii. the reopening of the Advance Landing Ground at Vijoyanagar in Arunachal Pradesh for the use of military aircraft
  - iii. a proposed major combat exercise in Arunachal Pradesh, in which the new Integrated Battle Groups will be seen in operation

### **What is the way forward?**

- All the above are certain to be read suspiciously by China and to add to its concerns.
- Well ahead of the 70th anniversary of the republic, President Xi has already begun talking of the "great struggle" needed to build a new China.
- He is implicitly seeking a reversion to the Maoist period of "struggle to achieve victory."
- India should be cautious in understanding this change in terms of international relations.
- China's efforts are likely to be directed towards 'disruption', concentrating on disrupting the strategic alliances that India has forged recently.
- India, hence, needs to proceed with utmost caution at the Mamallapuram summit, to preserve the 'Wuhan spirit'.
- "Subduing the enemy without fighting" as in Sun Tzu's 'Art of War' would help in this regard.

**Source: The Hindu**

### **Quick Facts**

### **Changthang Prahar**

- It is an “all arms integrated” exercise codenamed Changthang Prahar (assault).
- It is planned in a “super high altitude” area near Chushul in eastern Ladakh.
- The assault plan features tanks, artillery guns, drones, helicopters and troops, as well as para-drops.

