



PANGONG TSO: GEOGRAPHY

NEWS: Army installs Shivaji statue on Pangong Lake bank; Ladakh councillor, others question its relevance

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Indian Army's installation of a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue at Pangong Tso in Ladakh has sparked local and veteran concerns over its cultural relevance and environmental impact, prompting discussions on appropriate representation and conservation.

Simplified Pointers

The Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Pangong Tso

- **Location:** Banks of Pangong Lake, Ladakh, at an altitude of 14,300 feet.
- **Purpose:** Installed by a Maratha Light Infantry unit as a symbol of valor and inspiration.
- **Funding:** Constructed with voluntary contributions from serving and retired personnel.
- **Criticism:**
 - Locals question its relevance to Ladakh's unique culture and environment.
 - Veterans suggest Zorawar Singh, a historical Ladakhi military figure, as a more appropriate choice.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Emphasis on preserving the fragile ecosystem of Pangong Tso.

Local and Veteran Reactions

- **Local Representatives:**
 - Konchok Stanzin, councillor of Chushul, expressed concerns about the lack of local input and relevance.
 - Suggested honoring local historical figures like Khree Sultan Cho or Ali Sher Khan Anchen.
- **Veterans:**
 - Criticized the installation for its perceived irrelevance to the region.
 - Highlighted Zorawar Singh's historical significance in the Ladakh-Tibet region.



Broader Implications

- **Tradition vs. Relevance:** While infantry units traditionally erect unit-related icons, the relevance to the local context is being questioned.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Calls for honoring local heroes instead of imposing external cultural symbols.

Geographical Features of Pangong Tso

- **Location:** Spans eastern Ladakh (India) and western Tibet (China).
- **Elevation:** Approximately 4,225 meters (13,862 feet) above sea level.
- **Length:** About 134 kilometers (83 miles).
- **Width:** Up to 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) at its broadest point.
- **Type:** Endorheic (landlocked) and brackish water lake.
- **Seasonal Characteristics:** Freezes completely during winter despite its saline water.
- **Ecological Significance:** Home to various migratory bird species; however, the surrounding region has sparse vegetation due to high altitude and arid conditions.
- **Strategic Importance:** Lies along the Line of Actual Control between India and China, making it a site of geopolitical significance.



Source: https://epaper.thehindu.com/ccidist-ws/th/th_delhi/issues/113934/OPS/GJMDPM139.1+G1QDPO58F.1.html