China’s New Land Border Law and Indian Concerns

What is the issue?

China passes a new border law for the “protection and exploitation of the country’s land border areas” amid a continuing stalemate in negotiations with India.

What is the new law about?

- The law which will take effect on January 1 designates the responsibilities of various agencies in China, from the military to local authorities, in guarding the frontiers.
- It states that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People’s Republic of China are sacred and inviolable.
- The law asks the state to take measures to safeguard territorial integrity and land boundaries.
- The law says that the Chinese military shall carry out border duties to prevent, stop and combat invasion, encroachment, provocation and other acts.
- It suggests a push to settle civilians in the border areas.
- It also asks the state to follow the principles of equality, mutual trust, and friendly consultation and handle land border related-affairs with neighbouring countries through negotiations.

What is the status of China’s land border dispute?

- China shares its 22,457-km land boundary with 14 countries including India, the third longest after the borders with Mongolia and Russia.
- Unlike the Indian border China’s borders with these two countries are not disputed.
- The only other country with which China has disputed land borders is Bhutan (477 km).

What does China’s action signal India?

- The announcement of new law at this time sends a clear signal to New

Delhi that Beijing is in no mood to quickly end the 18-month-long crisis along the LAC.

- India has reacted sharply, telling China that it must not use legislation as a pretext to formalise the PLA's actions to unilaterally alter the LAC.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry said the law would not affect the implementation of existing agreements.
- It makes the negotiations more difficult and the Chinese are clearly indicating that they will resolve the boundary through use of force.
- China has been building border defence villages across the LAC in all sectors to use the civil population to reinforce their claims.
- The law is the latest signal that the continuing deployments by both sides in forward areas and a build-up of infrastructure is likely to continue over the longer term.

References

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