Chushul Sub-sector

Why in news?

Chushul sub-sector has come into focus in the Indo-China standoff following the movement that took place on the night of August 29-30, 2020.

What is the Chushul sub-sector?

- The Chushul sub-sector lies south of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh.
- It comprises high, broken mountains and heights besides passes such as Rezang La and Reqin La, the Spanggur Gap, and the Chushul valley.
- It is situated at a height of over 13,000 feet close to the LAC.
- The Chushul Valley has a vital airstrip that played an important role even during the 1962 War with China.
- Chushul is one among the five Border Personnel Meeting points between the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China.
- The recent brigade-level meetings between the two sides were held here.

What is its strategic importance to India?

- Chushul enjoys tremendous strategic importance because of its location and terrain, which make it a centre for logistics deployment.
- This sector has plains that are a couple of kilometres wide, where mechanised forces can be deployed.
- Its airstrip and connectivity by road to Leh add to its operational advantages.
- Indian troops have now secured the ridgeline in this sub-sector.
- This will allow India to dominate the Chushul bowl on the Indian side, and Moldo sector on the Chinese side.
- They have a clear sight of the almost 2-km-wide Spanggur gap, which the Chinese used in the past to launch attacks on this sector in the 1962 War.
- India's move has neutralised the advantage that China gained when it secured areas between Finger 4 and 8 on the bank of the Pangong Tso.

How is Chushul important to China?

- Simply put, Chushul is the gateway to Leh.
- If China enters Chushul, it can launch its operations for Leh.

Did the Chinese try to capture Chushul in the 1962 War?

- After the initial attacks in October 1962, the PLA troops prepared to attack Chushul airfield and the valley to get direct access to Leh.
- However, just before the attacks were launched, the area was reinforced by the 114 Brigade in November 1962.
- This brigade had under its command two troops of armour and some artillery.
- It's important to note that the heights secured by Indian soldiers on the intervening night of August 29-30 were held by them in 1962 as well.
- These included Lukung, Spanggur Gap, Gurung Hill, Rezang La, Magger Hill and Thatung Heights.

What are the future challenges in this area?

- An immediate challenge is of a **flare-up** as troops of the two countries are deployed within a distance of 1 km of each other at Black Top and Reqin La.
- **Logistics** also pose a major challenge.
- Porters are needed to carry water and food to the top.
- The troops shouldn't do that. If they do, they will lose fighting strength.
- At this point, villagers of Chushul are helping by ferrying water and essential commodities to the Indian troops deployed at Black Top.
- The **harsh winter** that lasts for 8 months of the year poses a challenge.
- It is very difficult to dig in, and make shelters on the ridgeline.
- The mercury plummets to minus 30 degrees Celsius, and there are frequent snowstorms.
- The Pangong Tso also freezes, making movement between its north and south banks possible.

Source: The Indian Express

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