Increase in Chinese Transgressions

What is the issue?

- The number of recorded Chinese transgressions across the disputed India-China border has surged by 75% in Ladakh in 2019.
- The Chinese forays into Indian territory in the first 4 months of 2020 have witnessed an increase compared to the same period last year.

What is a Chinese transgression?

- A Chinese transgression across the border is recorded when the Indian border guarding forces in an area are reasonably certain that the Chinese soldiers had crossed over to the Indian side of the LAC.
- It can be recorded, if it is visually observed by border posts, through use of surveillance equipment, in face-offs by patrols or indicated by locals.
- It can also be recorded based on evidence left by the Chinese in the form of wrappers, etc to show their presence in an unmanned area.
- Recently, the Chinese transgression is recorded in air, land or the waters of Pangong Tso Lake.

What does the 'Indian side' of the LAC mean?

- The border is not fully demarcated and the LAC is neither clarified nor confirmed by the two countries.
- Except for the middle sector, even the mutual exchange of maps about their respective perceptions has not taken place between India and China.
- This has led to different perceptions of the LAC for the two sides.
- The soldiers from either side try to patrol the area up to their perception of the LAC.
- Essentially, what Indians believe to be 'their side'in LAC is not the same as what the Chinese believe to be 'their side'.
- This is different from the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan where everything was agreed upon by the two armies following the 1971 War.

What are the various sectors on the India-China border?

- India-China border is divided into three sectors, where the LAC in the,
    1. Western sector (1597 km) falls in the union territory of Ladakh,

2. Middle sector (545 km) falls in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and
3. Eastern sector (1346 km) falls in the states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

- The middle sector is the least disputed sector, while the western sector witnesses the highest transgressions between the two sides.

What do increased Chinese transgressions indicate?

- This indicates that the Chinese soldiers are coming to the Indian side more often.
- The Indian soldiers are recording the Chinese soldiers' movements.
- This can be seen as an indicator of increased Chinese assertiveness.
- But as long as there are no major incidents, it means that the established border mechanisms between the two sides are working.
- So far, there has been no major standoff between the two sides, after the 73-day Doklam standoff on Sikkim-Bhutan border in 2017.

What happened in Wuhan Summit?

- Following the Doklam issue, Indian Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi had met for their first informal summit at Wuhan in 2018.
- Here, the two leaders had issued **strategic guidance** to their respective militaries to strengthen communication.
- This guidance may build trust and mutual understanding and enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs.
- They had directed their militaries to implement various **confidence building measures** agreed upon between the two sides.

Has the Wuhan spirit vanished?

- That is hard to say but tensions between India and China have shot up suddenly in 2020.
- The Indian foreign ministry responded to a terse statement by the Chinese foreign ministry in equally strong terms.
- Besides tensions at Naku La in Sikkim and at Galwan river and Pangong Tso in Ladakh, Indians have been worried about the Nepal government's recent behaviour on the border map issue.
- Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane said that Nepal was doing it at "the behest of a third party," ostensibly referring to China.

What is the need for caution?

- India and China are both nuclear-armed countries with strong militaries.

- There has not been a shot fired between them since 1976 or a military skirmish happened after 1967.
- But the fact that Indian and Chinese soldiers are in an eyeball to eyeball situation in Ladakh can’t be construed as a happy situation.
- Matters on the border have always been resolved peacefully by the two countries in the past four decades.
- Consequently, there is hope that the tensions will soon subside.

Source: The Indian Express

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