Patrolling Points on the LAC

Why in news?

The recent disengagements between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are around the patrolling points.

What exactly are Patrolling Points?

- PPs are patrolling points identified and marked on the LAC.
- They are patrolled with a stipulated frequency by the security forces.
- They serve as a guide to the location of the LAC for the soldiers.
- They act as indicators of the extent of 'actual control' exercised on the territory by India.
- By regularly patrolling up to these PPs, the India is able to establish and assert its physical claim about the LAC.

Are all the PPs numbered?

- The PPs where there are identifiable geographical features, such as a pass, no numerals are given.
- Only those PPs where there are no prominent features are numbered.

Are these Patrolling Points manned?

- The PPs are not posts and thus not manned.
- Unlike on the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan, the border with China is not physically held by the Army all along.
- They are just physical markers on the ground, chosen for their location.
- They have no defensive potential or tactical importance for the Army.

How the claims are made?

- The claim of these PPs is asserted by the Army or joint Army-ITBP patrols as they show more visible presence in these areas.
- This is done by physically visiting PPs frequently, as the deployment has moved closer to the LAC and due to improved infrastructure.
- As the Chinese may not see when the Indian patrols visit these PPs, they will leave cigarette packets or food tins with Indian markings behind.
- That lets the Chinese know that India was in control of these areas.

Who has given these PPs?

- These PPs have been identified by the high-powered China Study Group, starting in 1975 when patrolling limits for Indian forces were specified.
- It is based on the LAC, after the government accepted the concept in 1993, which is marked on the maps with the Army in the border areas.
- But the frequency of patrolling to PPs is not specified by the CSG.
- It is finalised by the Army Headquarters in New Delhi, based on the recommendations made by the Army and ITBP.

What is this frequency?

- The frequency of reaching various PPs are given in the annual patrolling programme.
- Based on the terrain, the ground situation and the location of the LAC, the duration for visiting each PP is specified.
- It can vary from once a month to twice a year.

Source: The Indian Express

