

UPSC Mains Content Builder Series

Video 4



INDIA & NEPAL BORDER ISSUE



Our Interests

- ▶ Cultural, Diplomatic & Foreign relations.
- ▶ Security & Trade
- ▶ GS II - India and its neighborhood- relations.



Context

- ▶ New Delhi built a road in Uttarakhand, up to Lipu Lekh pass on the China border, the last section of 4 km of the road up to the pass still remains to be completed.
- ▶ Nepal protested against it.
- ▶ Army Chief General M M Naravane said that Nepal's protest was at “**someone else's behest**”.
- ▶ Nepal has released a **new political map that claims Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of Nepal's territory**. The area of **Susta (West Champaran district, Bihar)** can also be noted in the new map.
- ▶ New Delhi asked Kathmandu to refrain from such "unjustified cartographic assertion".



History

- ▶ India inherited the boundary with Nepal, established between Nepal and the East India Company in the **Treaty of Sugauli in 1816**.
- ▶ Kali river constituted the boundary, and the territory to its east was Nepal. The dispute relates to the origin of Kali.
- ▶ Near Garbyang village in Dharchula Tehsil of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, there is a confluence of different streams coming from north-east -Kalapani and north-west from Limpiyadhura.
- ▶ The early British survey maps identified the north-west stream, Kuti Yangti, from Limpiyadhura as the origin, but after 1857 changed the alignment to Lipu Gad, and in 1879 to Pankha Gad, the north-east streams, thus defining the origin as just below Kalapani.
- ▶ **Nepal accepted** the change and India inherited this boundary in 1947.



For Perspective



- ▶ In 1953, India and China identified Lipulekh Pass for both pilgrims and border trade. After the 1962 war, pilgrimage through Lipulekh resumed in 1981, and border trade, in 1991.
- ▶ In their respective maps, both countries (India and Nepal) showed Kalapani as the origin of Kali river and as part of their territory.
- ▶ After 1979, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police has manned the Lipulekh Pass.
- ▶ In actual practice, life for the locals (Byansis) remained unchanged given the open border and free movement of people and goods.



- ▶ After the **1996 Treaty of Mahakali** (Kali river is also called Mahakali/Sarada further downstream) which envisaged the Pancheshwar multipurpose hydel project, the issue of the origin of Kali river was first raised in 1997.
- ▶ The matter was referred to the Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee that had been set up in 1981 to re-identify and replace the old and damaged boundary pillars along the India-Nepal border.
- ▶ The Committee clarified 98% of the boundary, leaving behind the unresolved issues of Kalapani and Susta (in the Terai) when it was dissolved in 2008. It was subsequently agreed that the matter would be discussed at the Foreign Secretary level.
- ▶ Meanwhile, the project to convert the 80-km track from Ghatibagar to Lipulekh into a hardtop road began in 2009 **without any objections from Nepal**.



- ▶ The Survey of India issued **a new political map (eighth edition)** on November 2, 2019, to reflect the change in the status of **Jammu and Kashmir** as two Union Territories.
- ▶ Nepal registered a protest though the map in no way had changed the boundary between India and Nepal. However, **on November 8, the ninth edition** was issued.
- ▶ The delineation remained identical but the **name Kali river had been deleted**. Predictably, this led to stronger protests, with Nepal invoking Foreign Secretary-level talks to resolve issues.



Shri K. P. Sharma Oli's tension & political lifeline

- ▶ By April 2020, Mr. Oli's domestic political situation was weakening. Under the Nepali Constitution, a new Prime Minister enjoys a guaranteed two-year period during which a no-confidence motion is not permitted.
- ▶ This ended in February unleashing simmering resentment against Mr. Oli's governance style and performance. His inept handling of the COVID-19 pandemic added to the growing disenchantment.
- ▶ Within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) there was a move to impose a 'one man, one post' rule that would force Mr. Oli to choose between being NCP co-chair or Prime Minister.
- ▶ Hence the **inauguration** of the 80-km road on May 8, provided Mr. Oli with a political lifeline.



Convergences

- ▶ Given the **importance of ties with Nepal**, often romanticised as one of “roti-beti” (food and marriage)
- ▶ India must not delay dealing with the matter, and at a time **when it already has a faceoff with China in Ladakh and Sikkim**.
- ▶ Since the free movement of people is permitted across the border, Nepal enjoys immense strategic relevance from India’s national security point of view, as terrorists often use Nepal to enter India.
- ▶ Therefore, **stable and friendly relations with Nepal** is one of prerequisites which India can’t afford to overlook.



- ▶ India should also try to convey to Nepal's leadership about the congenial and friendly environment that 6 to 8 million Nepali citizens living in India enjoy.
- ▶ The existing bilateral treaties between India and Nepal have not taken the shifting of Himalayan rivers into consideration. A primary reason for this is the lack of an approach where ecological concerns and needs of rivers are often discussed.
- ▶ Therefore, India and Nepal should try to resolve the boundary dispute by taking into account all shared environmental characteristics.



Courtesy

- ▶ *The Hindu*
- ▶ *The Indian Express*
- ▶ *Outlook India*
- ▶ *Wikipedia*



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