India China - Doklam Plateau Standoff

What is the issue?

- Indian troops intervened to block the path of Chinese soldiers engaged in building road-works on the Doklam plateau of Bhutan’s territory that Beijing laid claim.
- Beijing responded by closing access to Indian pilgrims seeking to proceed through the Nathu La pass on to Kailash-Mansarovar.

What is the source of the conflict?

- Doklam plateau is a 269-sq km plateau in Bhutan, which overlooks the strategic Chumbi Valley.
- The plateau is claimed by China.
- Bhutan has a written agreement with China that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, peace and tranquility should be maintained.
- Now the construction of road raised concerns between Bhutan and China.
Why China is interested in the region?

- The road, which passes through Bhutan’s territory, has significantly enhanced China’s military logistics in the region.
- China aims to promote the development of the Yadong region, which is connected to Lhasa with a highway.
- China is also aiming to establish formal ties with Bhutan.
- It was reported to have Pressured Bhutan by saying it would not agree to a border deal until Bhutan allowed it to open a diplomatic mission in that country.
- It would also like to adopt a military posture in the area to ensure that it can defeat India in any military contest.
- At the same time it is seeking to check India’s efforts to help Bhutan.
How India and China relation is affected by it?

- China accused Indian border guards of crossing into its territory to stop the construction of the road.
- Chinese are using it to send various political messages.
- India boycotted the Belt and Road Initiative jamboree in Shanghai in May.
- It’s unclear if its $50-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be viable if India doesn’t join.
- China’s riled at India’s growing US tilt in what Beijing sees as an anti-China alliance that includes Japan and Australia.
- Chinese also wants to signal that China has consolidated its position on the global stage.

What are India’s interests?

- Indian Army regards the Doklam plain as strategically crucial because it opens a path to the Siliguri Corridor which links the northeast to the rest of India.
- India also can’t afford to abandon its diplomatic ties with Bhutan.

What should be done?

- India needs to make some kind of economic concessions to China.
- While we stay out of CPEC, we should offer to join BRI.
• At the same time we need to ensure that we aren’t side lined to smaller stage by the global giant next door.

Source: Business Line