

## Concerns with Indo-Nepal relationship

### What is the issue?

\n\n

Despite several attempts at a reset, ties between India and Nepal continue to be a cause of concern.

\n\n

### What are the recent issues between the two?

\n\n

\n

- The Nepalese Army withdrew its contingent for BIMSTEC Military exercises and instead sent only an observer mission at the last hour.

\n

- The reason behind was India's "unilateral" announcement of the multilateral exercises without having formally proposed it to the hosts.

\n

- It was also visible with Thailand's non-participation in the counter-terror exercises because of lack of adequate notice.

\n

\n\n

### How does this benefit China?

\n\n

\n

- Nepal decided to join China for a 12-day Mt Everest Friendship Exercise in Sichuan province.

\n

- It drives the wedge further with India, since it also focussed on anti-terrorism drills, as what BIMSTEC proposed in MILEX-18.

\n

- New Delhi signalled its discomfiture with the volume of Chinese investment in hydropower, infrastructure and transport projects in Nepal.

\n

- Yet, Nepal recently finalised an ambitious connectivity proposal that will eventually link Kathmandu to Shigatse by rail.

\n

- This will give Nepali goods **access to Chinese sea-ports** at Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang and land ports in Lanzhou, Lhasa and Shigatse.

\n

\n\n

### **What are its other concerns against India?**

\n\n

\n

- India is still blamed for the 2015 economic blockade against Nepal.
- It is also held responsible for attempts to destabilise Mr. Oli's previous tenure as Prime Minister during 2015-2016.
- General Bipin Rawat recently stated on BIMSTEC, that "geography" will ensure that countries like Bhutan and Nepal "cannot delink themselves" from India.
- This could unnerve India's smaller neighbours and with the credibility to become a responsible regional power, such statements could be misleading.
- Thus, New Delhi cannot turn a blind eye to the rebuffs, and must address them.

\n

\n\n

### **What could be done?**

\n\n

\n

- Along with an open border, both countries have shared the deepest military links with traditionally awarding each other's Army chiefs the honorary rank of General.
- Such unique ties must not be undermined due to lack of communication.
- Modern technology and connectivity projects, as with china, could well take away geography's role as a guarantor of good relations.
- Thus, New Delhi and Kathmandu must put an end to the unseemly controversy by renewing diplomatic efforts over the issue.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

