North Korean Missile Test

Why in news?

Recently North Korea fired four short-range missiles into the sea.

Why does North Korea's conduct missile tests?

- The country has a long history of performing major weapons tests when new governments take power in the United States (U.S.) and South Korea.
- In 2009, North Korea conducted a long-range rocket launch and a nuclear test within the first four months of the Obama administration.
- In February 2017, less than a month after Donald Trump assumed the US presidency, it tested a mid-range missile.
- Later in 2017, four days after South Korean President assumed power, it fired a newly developed nuclear-capable intermediate-range missile.

What is North Korea's intention now?

- These tests largely appear to follow the same path but it is believed that North Korea held back from a more serious provocation.
- This is because the current U.S. administration is evaluating its North Korean policy.
- It wants the U.S. to lift sanctions while letting it maintain its nuclear capability.
- But U.S. is unlikely do that and North Korea may stage bigger provocations like a long-range missile test or a nuclear detonation.
- For now, it is ramping up its rhetoric along with the short-range missile launches.
- Earlier, North Korean leader announced that the country's nuclear arsenal will be enlarged to cope with the hostile US policy and military threats.
- He also pressed South Korea to suspend regular military drills with the U.S. if it wants to better the ties with North Korea.

What was U.S. response?

- Earlier U.S. has reached out to North Korea but the country did not respond to it.
- U.S. slammed the North Korea's human rights record and its nuclear ambitions.

- Now North Korea's First vice Foreign Minister said that the country will ignore such US offers because of its hostility to America.

What will happen now?

- It is unlikely for U.S. to make concessions in the face of North Korea's short-range missile launches.
- U.S. clearly advocated that unless North Korea pledges that it will denuclearize one-on-one talks with President is not possible.
- Amid the standoff, North Korea could end up launching bigger weapons tests, if it isn't satisfied with the U.S. North Korea policy review.
- Any such major provocation would certainly prompt the U.S. and its allies to seek additional UN sanctions against North Korea.
- But tougher sanctions may be difficult because China has veto power on the UN Security Council.
- This is because North Korea is China major diplomatic ally and economic lifeline and it may not easily agree to more sanctions even if North Korea engages in long-range missile or nuclear tests.

Source: The Indian Express

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