Panchsheel and China

What in news?

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Amidst the standoff at Doklam, China has invoked Panchsheel by saying that India has trampled upon the five principles of peaceful co-existence.

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What is Panchsheel?

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- It a set of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to govern relations between states.
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- They are –\n
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1. Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity,
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2. Mutual non-aggression,
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3. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
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4. Equality and mutual benefit, and
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5. Peaceful co-existence.
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- It was first indicted in treaty form between China and India in 1954.
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- India viewed the agreement as an opportunity to promulgate its anti-colonial posture.
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- China saw in this expression of ‘Asian solidarity’ a means to check the growing anti-communist sentiments in the West.
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Did China practise this principle?

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- Within a few months of agreeing to the five principles, China made its first attempt to infringe upon it by its territorial claim over Bara Hoti in Uttarakhand.
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- Throughout the latter half of the 1950s, Chinese intrusions, claims over territory and construction of roads continued.
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- Entire border between the India and China has not been demarcated formally and one can support the Chinese claims.
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- But it is to be noted that the traditional practices like the inherited treaties or the customs in place were predominantly in India’s favour.
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- China also blocked efforts by India to solve the boundary dispute through bilateral talks,.
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- The very initiation of the 1962 War was another violation of the principles.
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- The Colombo Proposals were the result of the Colombo Conference of six non-aligned countries to discuss the India-China border dispute.
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- While India agreed to the principles, China showed an inconsistent and contradictory attitude by agreeing with many reservations.
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- So five decades of no war is seen as mainly due the evaluation of the high price of war and not due to love for peace.
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Why has Panchsheel been invoked by China now?

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- In contrast to previous confrontations, India has been proactive and aggressive in its posturing in Doklam.
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- This newfound assertiveness of India has left China stumbling for a gambit.
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- Peace is undoubtedly the best way to resolve the conflict but its application should not be selective and devious.
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Source: **ISDA**

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