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India-Nepal on Kailash Mansarovar Link Road

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Why in News

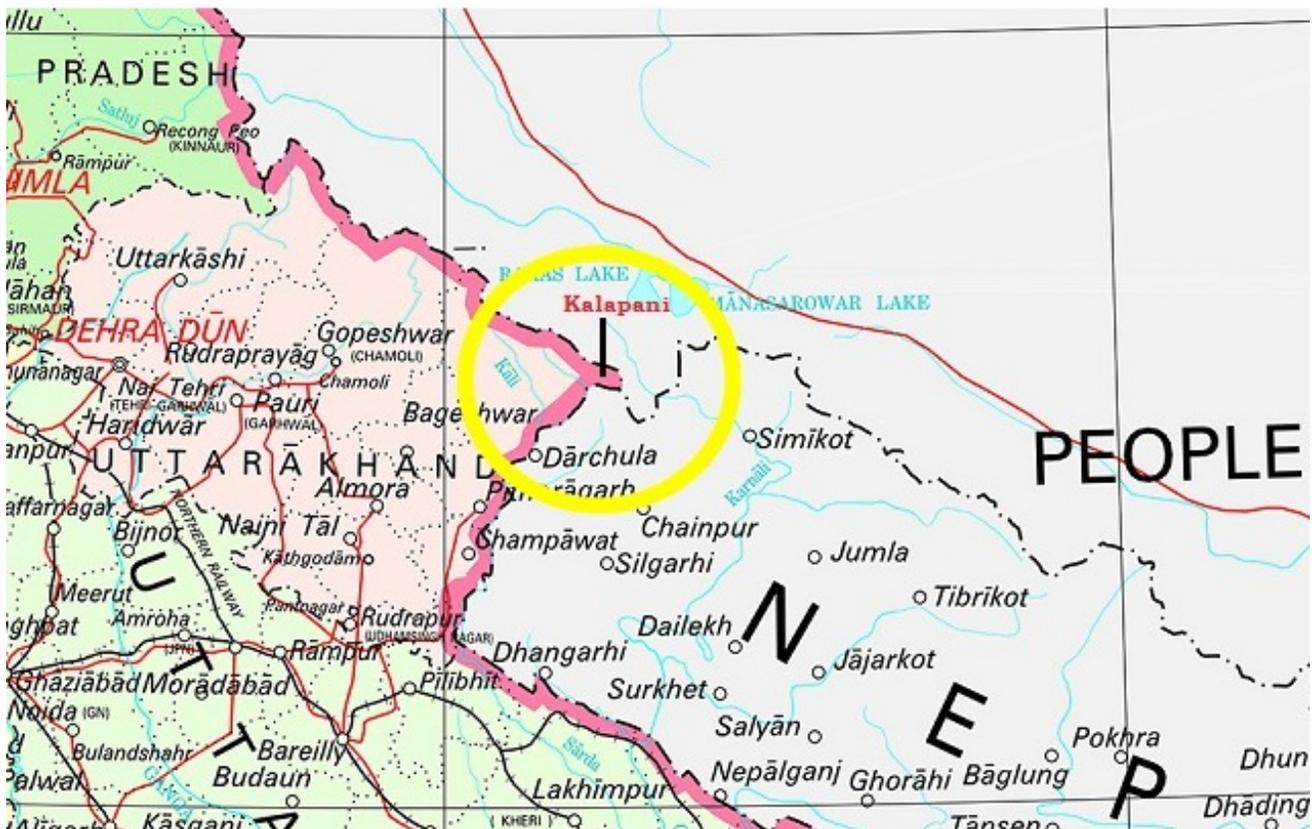
Nepal has strongly objected to the **newly inaugurated link road** which connects **Pithoragarh** (Uttarakhand) to **Lipulekh pass** (China border) significantly reducing the time of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

Nepal claims the territory at the Lipulekh pass around 400 sq km area east of Kali river in the tri-junction of Nepal, Tibet and India, through which the road passes **as its own**.

Key Points

Nepal's Stand

- Nepal referred to the **2014 agreement** between Prime Ministers of both countries, for **Foreign Secretaries to work out the “outstanding boundary issues” on Kalapani** (where Lipulekh lies) **and Susta** (bordering Bihar).
According to Nepal's Foreign Ministry, the **unilateral decision to build a road there, is a breach of the 2014 agreement.**
- For evidence, Nepal has the **maps during the 1816 Sugauli treaty and other complementing treaties that followed**, fixing that **Limpiadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh were shown east of Kali river and part of Nepal.**
These arrangements were made following Nepal's **war with the British** due to which Nepal had to **cede a large part of territory** which currently forms the **present Uttarakhand.**
- Nepal seeks to **question China as well** because **China and India** had signed an **agreement in May 2015 to develop Lipulekh** as a commercial passage **without consulting Nepal** which majorly affected the **triangulation** of the countries.
- The government of Nepal **remains committed to seek diplomatic solutions to the boundary issues** on the basis of historical treaty, documents, facts and maps in keeping with the spirit of close and friendly **bilateral ties between the two countries.**



Kali River

- It is also known as **Sharda** river or **Kali Ganga** in Uttarakhand.
- It **joins Ghagra** river in **Uttar Pradesh**, which is a tributary of Ganga.
- **River Projects:** Tanakpur hydro-electric project, Chameliya hydro-electric project, Sharda Barrage.

Lipulekh Pass

- It is also known as **Lipu-Lekh Pass/Qiangla or Tri-Corner** is a high altitude mountain pass situated in the **western Himalayas** with a height of **5,334 metre or 17,500 feet**.
- It is an **International mountain pass** between **India, China and Nepal**.
- **India's Response**
 - According to **India's Ministry of External Affairs**, the road going through Pithoragarh **lies completely within the territory of India**.
 - The road **follows the pre-existing route** used by the pilgrims of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra which has been made pliable for the ease and convenience of pilgrims, locals and traders, under the present project.
 - India held that the **boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is in process** and it is committed to resolving outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue.
- **Other Issues**
 - In **November 2019**, Nepal **protested against the publication of Indian maps that included the Kalapani area**.
 - However, **India rejected Nepal's contention**, asserting that the map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India.
- Both nations are in the process of scheduling foreign secretary-level talks, which will be held once dates are finalised after the two governments have successfully dealt with the challenge of **Covid-19**.

Source: TH