

1. **Unlock 1.0 to begin from June 1. Temples, malls will be reopened. Lockdown to continue till 30TH June. India adds 8520 cases and 207 deaths yesterday. People venturing out should maintain social distancing norms and use face masks compulsorily. There is a high chance for spread of the virus with unlock 1.0 being launched from tomorrow.**
2. **India's recovery rate improves to 47%.**
3. **Trump severs ties with WHO**

Recently, a draft legislation on national security has been tabled before China's Parliament which will allow Beijing to draft national security laws for Hong Kong and also operate its national security organs in it.

It will make changes in the Basic Law, the mini-constitution which defines ties between Hong Kong and Beijing (China's capital).

Key Points

Basic Law allows Hong Kong to enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, barring matters of defence and foreign affairs.

Under Article 23 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong has to enact a national security law "to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies."

Article 23 aims at preserving national security but it will also allow China's national security organs to formally operate and set up institutions in Hong Kong.

Basic law makes it clear that only Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) can make and repeal laws.

Beijing wants LegCo to pass the new legislation as soon as possible because it is afraid that if LegCo comes under the control of democrats after elections later in 2020, it will be hard to implement the legislation. Democrats are against this law as it curbs the autonomy of Hong Kong as SAR.

However, Beijing can bypass LegCo if it chooses to and make the national security law applicable to Hong Kong by inserting this legislation in Annex III of the Basic Law.

Under Article 18 of Basic Law, national laws can be applied in Hong Kong if they are placed in Annex III, and must be confined to defence, foreign affairs and matters outside the limits of autonomy of the region. Once listed in Annex III, national laws can be enforced in the city by way of promulgation (automatically being put into effect) or by legislating locally in the SAR.

Basic Law

Hong Kong was formerly a British colony and was handed over to mainland China in 1997, becoming one of its Special Administrative Regions (SAR).

It is governed by a mini-constitution called the Basic Law, which affirms the principle of "one country, two systems".

The constitutional document is a product of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, under which China promised to honour Hong Kong's liberal policies, system of governance, independent judiciary, and individual freedoms for a period of 50 years from 1997.

Background

Since 1997, Hong Kong residents have protested many times to protect their Basic Law freedoms. In 2003, the first major pro-democracy protest took place when the Hong Kong government first tried to enact the national security law.

In 2014, over one lakh city residents took part in the Umbrella Revolution to protest against China's denial of democratic reforms.

In 2019, the largest protest till now, took place against a proposed extradition law, and continued with pro-democracy marches even after the legislation was withdrawn.

Impact of the Protests:

The protests were seen as an affront by mainland China after which the government started adopting a more hardline approach to foreign policy and internal security issues.

The Hong Kong unrest also impacted Taiwan which led to the victory of the Democratic Progressive Party, which openly opposes joining China.

China considers the island states as its own but Taiwan opposes the view.

Criticism

The draft law has been criticised by democratic parties in Hong Kong as it undermines the "one country, two systems" model that gives the SAR a high degree of autonomy.

Hong Kong's freedoms will be compromised as the law could effectively bring the city under full control of mainland China.

The new law would ban seditious activities that target mainland Chinese rule, as well as punish external interference in Hong Kong affairs. This will lead to the revival of the protests.

Way Forward

Recent protests against the extradition law questioned the secretive, authoritarian and coercive government system of China which believes that people can be controlled all the time. These also spreaded in the UK, France, US, Canada and Australia gathering global attention and support.

The move to enact the national security law could also undermine Hong Kong's position as an East Asian trading hub, and invite global disapproval for Beijing, which is already being accused of withholding key information related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It becomes crucial to see how Hong Kong deals with the situation. The freedoms granted to it under the Basic Law will expire in 2047 and it is not clear what Hong Kong's status will be.

US President Donald Trump has lashed out at the WHO by declaring he would “hold” their funding, and then said the decision is still under consideration.

Trump accused WHO to be China-centric and that it got every aspect of the coronavirus pandemic wrong. US, however, isn't the only one criticizing the WHO. Several leaders, columnists, and others have also criticised the WHO's handling of China — where the virus had originated.

The WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health. It is part of the U.N. Sustainable Development Group.

The WHO Constitution, which establishes the agency's governing structure and principles, states its main objective as ensuring “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.”

It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with six semi-autonomous regional offices and 150 field offices worldwide.

The WHO was established in 7 April 1948, which is commemorated as World Health Day.

The first meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA), the agency's governing body, took place on 24 July 1948.

The WHO incorporated the assets, personnel, and duties of the League of Nations' Health Organisation and the Office International d'Hygiène Publique, including the International Classification of Diseases.

Its work began in earnest in 1951 following a significant infusion of financial and technical resources.

The WHA, composed of representatives from all 194 member states, serves as the agency's supreme decision-making body.

The WHA convenes annually and is responsible for selecting the Director-General, setting goals and priorities, and approving the WHO's budget and activities.

The current Director-General is Tedros Adhanom, former Health Minister and Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, who began his five-year term on 1 July 2017.

The WHO relies on assessed and voluntary contributions from member states and private donors for funding.

It started off with \$5 million and 51 member countries — all of whom signed its constitution.

Now, it has 194 member countries, with a budget of \$4.8 billion.

The US is currently the biggest financial contributor to the WHO and has been its active member for many decades.

Handling of novel coronavirus pandemic

In December 2019, the WHO's China office was informed about cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in the Wuhan city of Hubei province.

Ever since, the WHO has worked to inform the world about the illness — called the novel coronavirus — and even earned the praise of global health experts initially for its transparent and swift approach.

It was the WHO that announced a global emergency due to the spread of the virus and later declared it a pandemic.

It is raising \$675 million to find a cure and spread awareness about the illness.

Why is WHO under Criticism?

1) Some unanswered questions

Questions were raised when WHO director praised China for the speed with which detected the outbreak and its commitment to transparency.

China has a history of keeping its data under wraps and it is said to have even concealed the extent of the outbreak during the early stages.

The WHO surprisingly maintained that masks only need to be used by those with symptoms, and travel bans are "ineffective" in curbing the spread of the virus.

2) Affinity with China

The WHO can certainly be criticized for giving China too much benefit of the doubt at the beginning of this pandemic.

The WHO is now being called "Chinese Health Organisation" even as it is at the forefront of fighting its worldwide spread.

Despite the criticism, the WHO has pledged to keep fighting against the current pandemic.

3) Delayed response

They accuse the WHO of simply reporting virus statistics given to them by the Chinese government, even though we now know China widely underreported and even tried to hide the extent of the virus.

For example, in mid-January, the WHO repeated that China said human-to-human transmission of the virus hadn't been proved.

The WHO waited weeks to declare a public health emergency and only declared it a pandemic March 11, later than many countries would have preferred.

4) Trump being Trump

The US is trying to deflect the blame away from this catastrophe back onto China.

This fight between the US and China, with the world's leading health organization in the middle, is a distraction.

Some of its failures:

It has come under fire in recent years for its heavy bureaucratic framework, which has led to inefficiencies, inertia, and even "over-reactions".

During the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic, the WHO was accused of overplaying the dangers of the virus and aligning with pharmaceutical interests.

As a consequence, member states bought billions of doses of vaccines that ultimately remained unused, leading to wastage of resources and money.

The organisation later admitted having failed in communicating about it properly.

During the Ebola outbreak in 2013-2015, the WHO failed to sound the alarm over the virus, despite knowing about it. Thousands of lives were lost before the WHO could act.

Why has WHO failed?

The WHO's sprawling structure is an outcome of a vague mandate and global power imbalance. WHO is facing the biggest pandemic in human history. For all the responsibility vested in the WHO, it has little power.

Unlike international bodies such as the WTO, the WHO, which is a specialised body of the UN, has no ability to bind or sanction its members.

Its annual operating budget, about \$2bn in 2019, which is smaller than that of many university hospitals and split among a wide array of public health and research projects.

At the same time, the international order on which the WHO relies is fraying, as aggressive nationalism becomes normalized around the world.

Conclusion

Whatever the causes of this disaster are, it is clear that the WHO has failed in its duty to raise the alarm in time.

This shortfall of WHO is failure indicative of a deeper malaise: the global institutional framework is a pawn in the hands of the great powers, cash-strapped.

While the focus has been on what happened between China and the WHO, in epidemiological terms the crisis has moved on.

The WHO is battling against a breakdown in international cooperation that is far beyond its capacity to control.

States have been turning away from international institutions for a long time. And WHO has relied on the often unspoken norms of international collaboration that underlie it.

Way forward

The new world order is on the way. The spread of concepts like "before corona" and "after corona" will become commonplace.

The global institutional architecture of the 1940s cannot help humanity face the challenges of the 2020s.

India as a nation has an important say for fundamental reforms in the UN System, including the WHO to make it more transparent, competent, and accountable.

Nothing less than a new social contract between states and the international system can serve the purpose.

Recently, Nepal has released a new political map that claims Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of Nepal's territory. The area of Susta (West Champaran district, Bihar) can also be noted in the new map.

Key Points

India rejected the new map of Nepal saying that Nepal's new map involves artificial enlargement of territories, which is not based on historical facts and evidence.

Nepal's act is an unilateral act and is contrary to the bilateral understanding to resolve the outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue.

India has urged the Government of Nepal to refrain from such an unjustified cartographic assertion and respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India has also asked Nepal to return to dialogue.

Nepal's move came after India's Defence Minister recently inaugurated a motorable link road that connects India and China, significantly reducing the time of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

The road passes through territory at the Lipulekh pass that Nepal claims as its own territory.

Earlier, Nepal had protested strongly against India, when India published a new map which showed the region of Kalapani as part of the Indian territory.

Nepal had also expressed displeasure on the 2015 agreement between India and China for using the Lipulekh pass for trade, without consulting Nepal.

Border Dispute Between India and Nepal

Currently, India and Nepal have border disputes over Kalapani - Limpiyadhura - Lipulekh trijunction between India-Nepal and China and Susta area (West Champaran district, Bihar).

Kalapani Region:

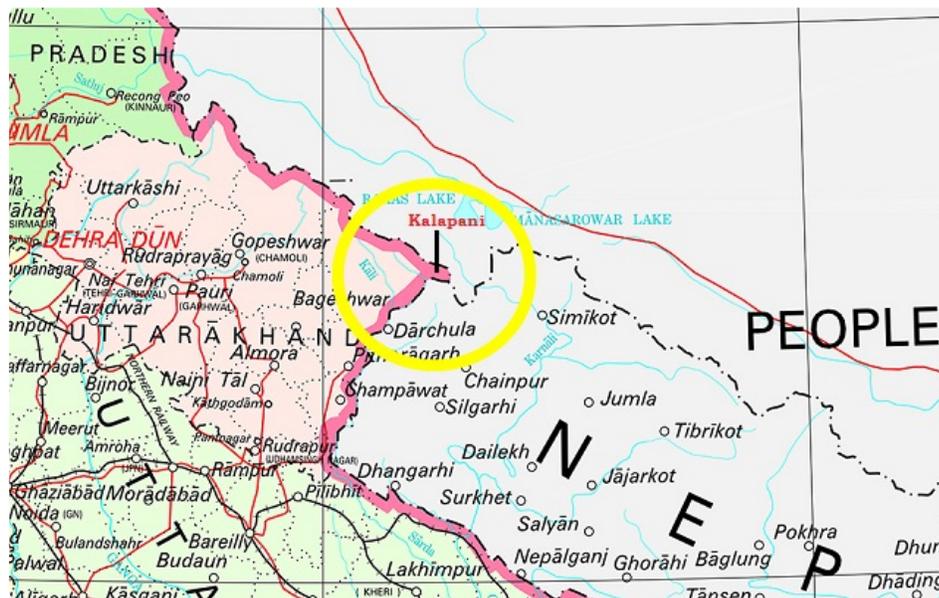
Kalapani is a valley that is administered by India as a part of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand. It is situated on the Kailash Mansarovar route.

Kalapani is advantageously located at a height of over 20,000 ft and serves as an observation post for that area.

The Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal.

The Treaty of Sugauli signed by the Kingdom of Nepal and British India (after Anglo-Nepalese War) in 1816 located the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary with India.

The discrepancy in locating the source of the Kali river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their own claims.



Susta Region:

The change of course by the Gandak river is the main reason for disputes in the Susta area. Susta is located on the bank of the Gandak river. It is called Narayani river in Nepal. It joins Ganga near Patna, Bihar.

Nepal's Stand:

Kali river originates from a stream at Limpiyadhura, north-west of Lipu Lekh. Thus Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura, and Lipu Lekh, fall to the east of the river and are part of Nepal's Dharchula district. Lipulekh was deleted from the country's map by the kings to get favours from India. The territory of Kalapani was offered to India by King Mahendra after the 1962 India-China war who wanted to help India's security concerns due to perceived lingering Chinese threats. Kalapani was not a part of Nepal-India dispute. It was Nepal's territory that the king had allowed India to use temporarily. The new map is in fact a document that was in circulation in Nepal till the 1950s.

India's Stand:

Kali river originates in springs well below the Lipu-lekh pass, and the Sugauli Treaty does not demarcate the area north of these streams.

The administrative and revenue records of the nineteenth century also show that Kalapani was on the Indian side, and counted as part of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

Efforts to Solve Border Dispute:

In the 1980s, the two sides set up the Joint Technical Level Boundary Working Group to delineate the boundary.

The group demarcated everything except Kalapani and Susta area.

Officially, Nepal brought the issue of Kalapani before India in 1998. Both sides agreed to demarcate the outstanding areas (including Kalpani) by 2002 at the prime ministerial level talk held in 2000. But that has not happened yet.

Issues Involved:

Nepal's deliberate effort to make the Lipu-Lekh Pass a disputed tri-junction (between India-China and Nepal) in which Nepal has an equal share.

India perceives Nepal to be tilting towards China under the leadership of Prime Minister K P Oli and his Nepal Communist Party.

Despite the open border between both countries and the people to people contact, the levels of distrust in Nepal about India have only increased.

Way Forward

Given the importance of ties with Nepal, often romanticised as one of "roti-beti" (food and marriage), India must not delay dealing with the matter, and at a time when it already has a faceoff with China in Ladakh and Sikkim.

Since the free movement of people is permitted across the border, Nepal enjoys immense strategic relevance from India's national security point of view, as terrorists often use Nepal to enter India. Therefore, stable and friendly relations with Nepal is one of prerequisites which India can't afford to overlook.

India should also try to convey to Nepal's leadership about the congenial and friendly environment that 6 to 8 million Nepali citizens living in India enjoy.

Therefore, Any thoughtless erosion of this centuries old togetherness may prove difficult for both countries.

The existing bilateral treaties between India and Nepal have not taken the shifting of Himalayan rivers into consideration. A primary reason for this is the lack of an approach where ecological concerns and needs of rivers are often discussed.

Therefore, India and Nepal should try to resolve the boundary dispute by taking into account all shared environmental characteristics.



Make a note of these places in your atlas or notes. These are potential map questions