



## Nepal PM Visits India

**For Prelims:** Kali River, India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, Dharchula Bridge.

**For Mains:** Significance and Challenges of India-Nepal Relations.

### Why in News?

The Prime Minister of Nepal visited India and held a summit meeting with the Indian Prime Minister.

- Earlier, the Union Cabinet had cleared a plan to build a [new bridge connecting India and Nepal](#) over the [Mahakali river](#) and link Dharchula in Uttarakhand with Nepal's Dharchula.



### What are the Highlights of the Visit?

- **Connectivity:**
  - Launched the **35-km cross-border railway line linking Jaynagar in Bihar to Kurtha in Nepal.**
    - This is the **first broad-gauge passenger rail link between the two sides** and it **will be extended to Bardibas in Nepal** under a project supported by an Indian grant of Rs 548 crore.
- **Solu Corridor:**
  - The Indian side handed over the Solu Corridor, a **90-km, 132 kV power transmission line** built for Rs 200 crore under an Indian line of credit.
  - The line **will help bring electricity to several remote districts in northeastern Nepal** by connecting them to the country's national grid.
- **RuPay card:**

- Launched India's RuPay card in Nepal.
- The domestic variant of the RuPay card will now work at 1,400 point-of-sale machines in Nepal, and the move is expected to facilitate bilateral tourist flows.
- Nepal is the **fourth country, after Bhutan, Singapore and the UAE**, where RuPay is live.
- **MoUs:**
  - Nepal signed a **framework agreement to join the India-led [International Solar Alliance](#)** (becoming the 105<sup>th</sup> member country).
  - Signed three more pacts – a memorandum of understanding (MoU) **on enhancing technical cooperation in the railways sector**, and **two agreements between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation for the supply of petroleum products** for five years and for sharing of technical expertise.
- **Joint Vision Statement on Power Sector Cooperation:**
  - India called for taking **full advantage of opportunities in the power sector, including through joint development of power generation projects in Nepal** and development of cross-border transmission infrastructure.
    - India plays an important role in **developing Nepal's power sector, through capacity building and direct support** to infrastructure projects related to generation and transmission.
  - Nepal also **appreciated India's recent cross-border electricity trade regulations** that have enabled it to access India's market and trade power with India. Nepal exports its surplus power to India.
  - The two sides **agreed to expedite work on the delayed Pancheshwar multipurpose dam project (on Mahakali river) that is considered to be a gamechanger for the development** of the region.
- **Border Issue:**
  - Nepalese Prime Minister urged his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to take steps to resolve a boundary dispute.
    - The Indian side made it clear **both countries need to address the boundary issue through dialogue and to avoid the politicisation of such issues.**
  - India had **earlier rejected Nepal's unilateral move in 2020 to amend its constitution to show the Kalapani region as part of Nepal** for the first time.

## What are the Key Points of India - Nepal Relations?

- **Historical Ties:**
  - Nepal is an important neighbour of India and occupies special significance in its foreign policy because of the geographic, historical, cultural and economic linkages/ties that span centuries.
  - India and Nepal share similar ties in terms of [Hinduism](#) and [Buddhism](#) with Buddha's birthplace Lumbini located in present day Nepal.
  - The two countries **not only share an open border and unhindered movement of people**, but they also have close bonds through marriages and familial ties, popularly known as **Roti-Beti ka Rishta**.
  - The India-Nepal [Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950](#) forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.
  - Rivers originating in Nepal feed the [perennial river systems](#) of India in terms of ecology and hydropower potential.
- **Trade and Economy:**
  - India is Nepal's largest trade partner and the largest source of foreign investments, besides providing transit for almost the entire third country trade of Nepal.
- **Connectivity:**
  - Nepal being a landlocked country, it is surrounded by India from three sides and one side is open towards Tibet which has very limited vehicular access.
  - India-Nepal has undertaken various connectivity programs to enhance people-to-people linkages and promote economic growth and development.
    - MOUs have been signed between both the governments for laying an electric rail [track linking Kathmandu with Raxaul in India](#).
    - India is looking to develop the inland waterways for the movement of cargo, within

the framework of trade and transit arrangements, providing additional access to sea for Nepal calling it linking [Sagarmatha \(Mt. Everest\)](#) with [Sagar \(Indian Ocean\)](#).

▪ **Defence Cooperation:**

- Bilateral defence cooperation includes assistance to Nepalese Army in its modernization through provision of equipment and training.
- The Gorkha Regiments of the Indian Army are raised partly by recruitment from hill districts of Nepal.
- India from 2011, every year undertakes joint military exercise with Nepal known as [Surya Kiran](#).

▪ **Cultural:**

- India has signed three [sister-city agreements](#) for twinning Kathmandu-Varanasi, Lumbini-Bodhgaya and Janakpur-Ayodhya.
  - A sister city or twin town relationship is a form of legal or social agreement between two geographically and politically distinct localities.

▪ **Humanitarian Assistance:**

- Nepal lies in a sensitive ecological fragile zone which is prone to [earthquakes, floods](#) causing massive damage to both life and money, and it remains the biggest recipient of India's humanitarian assistance.

▪ **Multilateral Partnership:**

- India and Nepal share multiple multilateral forums such as BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), [BIMSTEC \(Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation\)](#), [Non Aligned Movement](#), and [SAARC](#) (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) etc.

▪ **Issues & Challenges:**

◦ **China's Intervention:**

- As a landlocked nation, Nepal depended for many years on Indian imports, and India played an active role in Nepal's affairs.
- However, in recent years, Nepal has drifted away from India's influence, and China has gradually filled the space with investments, aid and loans.
- China considers Nepal a key partner in its [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#), and wants to invest in Nepal's infrastructure as part of its grand plans to boost global trade.
- Rising Nepal and China cooperation can undermine Nepal's distinction of buffer state between India and China.
- China on the other hand wants to avoid the formation of any Anti-China stance by the Tibetans living in Nepal.

◦ **Border Dispute:**

- The [issue erupted in November 2019](#) when Nepal had 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.

## Way Forward

- India should negotiate diplomatically to resolve the boundary dispute with Nepal under the aegis of [International law on Trans-boundary Water Disputes](#). In this case, boundary dispute resolution between [India and Bangladesh should serve as a model](#).
- India should engage more proactively with Nepal in terms of people to people engagement, bureaucratic engagement as well as political interactions.
- Mere differences shall not turn into disputes and both the countries should resolve the issues peacefully.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q. Consider the following statements: (2020)

1. The value of Indo-Sri Lanka trade has consistently increased in the last decade.
2. "Textile and textile articles" constitute an important item of trade between India and Bangladesh.
3. In the last five years, Nepal has been the largest trading partner of India in South Asia.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

**Q. Consider the following pairs: (2016)**

Community sometimes mentioned in the news      In the affairs of

- |             |   |            |
|-------------|---|------------|
| 1. Kurd     | — | Bangladesh |
| 2. Madhesi  | — | Nepal      |
| 3. Rohingya | — | Myanmar    |

**Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?**

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 3 only

**Ans: (c)**

- **Kurd:** They are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now South-eastern Turkey, North-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, North-western Iran and South-western Armenia. **Hence, pair 1 is not correctly matched.**
- **Madhesi:** It is an ethnic group living mainly in the southern plains of Nepal, close to the border with India. **Hence, pair 2 is correctly matched.**
- **Rohingya:** They are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine. **Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.**
- *Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.*

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