

## India-Nepal Relations

### Why in news?

The new government in India in June 2024 could consider offering Nepal a new and holistic development road map.

### What is the history of relations between India and Nepal?

- **Historical ties-** India and Nepal share close and friendly relations characterized by age-old historical and cultural linkages, open border and deep-rooted people-to-people contacts.
- **Diplomatic relation-** The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1947.

*The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.*

- **Neighbourhood first policy-** India's foreign policy focuses on centrality of neighbours, it stems from clear understanding that a peaceful periphery is essential for India to achieve for multifarious development.
- **Political relations-** The frequent high level visits by the leaders of the two countries at different points of time and the interactions constitute the hallmark of the ties between the two countries.
- **Trade-** Nepal is India's 11th largest export destination which constituted 2.34% of India's exports.
  - **Main imports from India-** Petroleum products, iron and steel, cereals, vehicles and parts, machinery parts.
  - **Major export to India-** Soyabean oil, Spices, Jute fiber & products, synthetic yarn and tea.
- **Defence cooperation-** The 'Indo-Nepal Battalion-level Joint Military Exercise *Surya Kiran* is conducted alternately in India and in Nepal.
- **Operation Maitri-** In the wake of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, India was the first responder and carried out its largest disaster relief operation in Nepal.



- **Energy cooperation-** Both have a *Power Exchange Agreement since 1971* for meeting the power requirements in the border areas of the two countries, taking advantage of each other's transmission infrastructure.
- **Education-** *Sampark India-Nepal Alumni network* was launched in 2021, it seeks to bring Nepali alumni and students presently pursuing studies in India together on a common platform to establish a vibrant alumni network.
- **Cultural cooperation-**

Initiative	About
Swami Vivekananda Centre for Indian Culture at Kathmandu in 2007	To showcase the best of Indian culture
Nepal-Bharat Library was founded in 1951 in Kathmandu	It is regarded as the <i>1<sup>st</sup> foreign library in Nepal</i> with the objective to enhance and strengthen cultural relations and information exchange between India and Nepal.
B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation	It was set up in 1999 through an MoU signed between both countries.

- **BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)-** Nepal is a partner in this agreement, it permits the member states to ply their vehicles in each other's territory for transportation of cargo and passengers.

*BBIN is Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal MVA for the regulation of passenger, personal and cargo vehicular traffic*

- **Mahakali treaty, 1996-** Implementation of Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project is the centerpiece of the treaty.
- **People to people exchange-** India and Nepal extend visa-free entry in their respective territories to each other's nationals.
- **Sister city agreements-** With a view to strengthen people to people exchanges, sister city agreements have been signed
  - Kathmandu-Varanasi
  - Lumbini-Bodhgaya
  - Janakpur-Ayodhya and
  - India-Nepal Ramayana Circuit
- **COVID-19 assistance-** India's efforts to ensure uninterrupted supply of Medical Oxygen to Nepal as well as in maintaining normal trade flows through border points even during the peak of the pandemic has been greatly appreciated in Nepal.

### What are the changes faced by Nepal due to China's influence?

- **Economic influence-** China has been increasing its economic footprint in Nepal through investments, infrastructure projects, and trade. Projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have provided Nepal with avenues for economic development and connectivity.
- **Chinese investments-** It has invested in Nepal's infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and hydropower projects which offer alternatives to Indian investments and aid.
- **Strategic cooperation-** Nepal's growing strategic alignment with China can create perceptions of a shift in its traditional geopolitical orientation towards India.
- **Security concerns-** Increased Chinese presence in Nepal, especially in strategic sectors like defense and infrastructure, may raise security concerns for India.
- **Strategic cooperation-** It has been cultivating closer ties with Nepal on strategic fronts, including defense and security cooperation, this strategic alignment can influence Nepal's security policies and outlook, potentially impacting its relationship with India.
- **Diplomatic support-** It often provides diplomatic support to Nepal on international platforms potentially altering the dynamics of regional diplomacy.
- **Aggressive China-** China's assertive stance and its strategic interests in Nepal challenge India's traditional influence in the region, potentially exacerbating tensions and complicating Nepal's domestic politics.

### What lies ahead?

- India's approach to its relationship with Nepal must carefully balance its interests with respect for Nepal's sovereignty and the aspirations of its people.
- While offering development assistance and promoting cross-border projects can foster goodwill and stability, India must avoid appearing heavy-handed or interfering in Nepal's internal affairs.

### References

1. [The Hindu-Stabilise India-Nepal relations](#)
2. [Ministry of External Affairs- India Nepal bilateral brief](#)

