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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "India-Nepal Relations". The topic "India-Nepal Relations" has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

### **Relevance:**

#### **For Prelims:**

*Facts about Nepal?*

#### **For Mains:**

*GS 2: International Relations*

*Importance of Nepal for India?*

*Challenges in India-Nepal Relations?*

*Measures to be Taken?*

### **Why in the news?**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his visiting Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda', held wide-ranging talks focusing on boosting India-Nepal cooperation in several areas including energy, connectivity and trade.

### **Facts about Nepal:**

- **Location:** Nepal is a landlocked country located in South Asia. It shares borders with India to the east, south, and west, and with China (Tibet Autonomous Region) to the north.
- **Capital:** The capital city of Nepal is Kathmandu, which is also the largest city in the country.
- **Geography:** Nepal is known for its diverse geography, ranging from the lowland Terai plains in the south to the rugged Himalayan mountain ranges in the north. It is home to several of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Everest, the highest peak on Earth.
- **Religion:** Nepal is a predominantly Hindu country, with Hinduism being the major religion practiced by the majority of the population. Buddhism is also widely followed, particularly in areas with significant Buddhist heritage.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** Nepal is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Kathmandu Valley with its ancient cities of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan, as well as Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha.

### **Importance of Nepal for India?**

- **Geopolitical Relations:** Nepal shares a long and porous border with India, spanning over 1,850 kilometers. This geographical proximity makes Nepal strategically important for India's security and regional stability. Both countries have historically maintained close ties, fostering cultural, economic, and political exchanges.

- **Cultural and Historical Ties:** India and Nepal have deep-rooted cultural and historical connections. The people of Nepal and India share common traditions, religious beliefs (particularly Hinduism and Buddhism), and social customs. This cultural affinity has created strong social and people-to-people bonds between the two nations.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Nepal's geographical location makes it a natural trade partner for India. The open border between the two countries facilitates bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation. India is one of Nepal's largest trading partners, providing essential goods, petroleum products, and transit facilities for Nepal's international trade.
- **Security Collaboration:** India and Nepal have a history of collaborating on security issues, including intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism efforts. The open border allows for joint efforts in managing cross-border crimes, controlling illegal activities, and maintaining regional security.
- **Energy and Water Resources:** Nepal is blessed with abundant water resources, including numerous rivers and potential hydropower projects. India has supported Nepal in developing its hydropower sector and the utilization of these resources. India also imports electricity from Nepal during peak demand periods, contributing to its own energy needs.
- **Strategic Connectivity:** Nepal serves as a transit country between India and other nations in the region, such as China and Bangladesh. This connectivity provides India with access to these countries, allowing for trade, transportation, and regional integration.
- **Cultural Diplomacy and Tourism:** Nepal's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty attract a significant number of Indian tourists. This tourism inflow strengthens people-to-people contacts, fosters cultural exchange, and promotes mutual understanding between the two nations.
- **Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance:** India has played a vital role in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief during natural calamities in Nepal. Proximity and historical ties enable India to respond swiftly and effectively to such crises, contributing to Nepal's post-disaster recovery.

### Challenges in India-Nepal Relations?

- **Border Disputes:** The border between India and Nepal has witnessed occasional disputes and disagreements. Issues related to the delineation of the boundary, demarcation of border pillars, and encroachments have strained relations between the two countries. Example **Kalapani-Limpiyadhura Region:** This region, located in the western part of Nepal, has been a longstanding area of dispute between India and Nepal. The disagreement stems from differences in interpreting historical treaties and maps regarding the exact location of the border. India has maintained a military presence in the Kalapani area, which Nepal claims as its own territory. **Susta Region:** The Susta region, located in the southern part of Nepal, has also been a subject of boundary dispute. Nepal claims that the Kali River, which forms the border between the two countries in that area, has changed its course over time, resulting in encroachment by India. This issue remains unresolved, and both countries have differing perceptions of the boundary alignment in the Susta region.
- **Political Instability:** Nepal has experienced political instability and frequent changes in government over the years. These transitions have sometimes led to policy shifts, making it challenging for India to maintain consistent engagement and cooperation with Nepal.
- **Nepalese Perception of Indian Interference:** At times, Nepal has accused India of interfering in its internal affairs. There have been concerns raised by Nepal about India's influence on its politics, including issues related to constitutional amendments, federalism, and other domestic matters.
- **Cross-border Security Challenges:** The open border between India and Nepal poses challenges in managing cross-border crimes, illegal activities, and smuggling. Both countries need to enhance cooperation in border security and law enforcement to address these challenges effectively.
- **Hydropower Projects and Water Sharing:** India and Nepal have had discussions and occasional disagreements over hydropower projects and the sharing of water resources. Nepal's potential for

hydropower generation raises concerns about the impact on downstream areas in India, leading to occasional tensions.

- **Trade Imbalance:** There has been a significant trade imbalance between India and Nepal, with India being the major trading partner. Nepal has expressed concerns about the trade deficit and seeks to promote its exports to India. Addressing this imbalance is crucial to ensure equitable economic relations between the two countries.

### Measures to be Taken?

- **Dialogue and Diplomacy:** Consistent and open communication through diplomatic channels is crucial. Regular high-level meetings, diplomatic talks, and mechanisms such as Joint Commission Meetings can help address concerns, clarify positions, and find mutually acceptable solutions.
- **Boundary Dispute Resolution:** Establishing joint survey teams with technical experts from both countries can help resolve boundary disputes. Accurate mapping, historical research, and adherence to international norms and principles can guide the resolution process.
- **Mutual Respect and Non-Interference:** Both countries should emphasize mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs. Strengthening bilateral ties based on principles of equality, non-interference, and shared interests is essential.
- **Economic Cooperation and Trade:** Promoting balanced and fair trade relations can help address the trade imbalance between India and Nepal. Encouraging investment, enhancing connectivity, and facilitating trade facilitation measures can boost economic cooperation and benefit both nations.
- **Development Projects and Assistance:** Collaborative efforts on development projects, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, energy, and connectivity, can foster mutual cooperation and contribute to the economic development of both countries. Ensuring transparent and inclusive development processes can address concerns and enhance cooperation.
- **Cultural and Educational Exchanges:** Strengthening people-to-people contacts through cultural and educational exchanges can promote understanding, appreciation, and harmony between the people of India and Nepal. Encouraging tourism, student exchanges, and cultural programs can build strong social bonds.
- **Security Cooperation:** Strengthening security cooperation and intelligence sharing can address common security challenges, such as cross-border crimes, terrorism, and illegal activities. Joint exercises, capacity building, and coordinated efforts can enhance border security and ensure regional stability.
- **Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance:** Strengthening collaboration in disaster management, sharing best practices, and providing timely humanitarian assistance during natural calamities can build trust and goodwill between the two nations.
- **Track II Diplomacy:** Encouraging Track II diplomacy, involving academics, experts, and civil society representatives, can contribute to generating innovative ideas, fostering dialogue, and building consensus on challenging issues.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-modi-nepalese-counterpart-pushpakamal-dahal-prachanda-hold-talks/article66918897.ece>

### Q.1 Which region has been a subject of border dispute between India and Nepal?

1. Kalapani-Limpiyadhura
2. Susta
3. Pashupatinath
4. Kailash Mansarovar

Which of the option given above is correct?

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

**Q.2 Consider the following statements regarding India-Nepal relations:**

1. Nepal shares its borders with India in the east, south, and west, but not in the north.
2. The Kalapani-Limpiyadhura region has been a subject of boundary dispute between India and Nepal.
3. Nepal is a predominantly Buddhist country, with Buddhism being the major religion practiced by the majority of the population.

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

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

Answer: (a)

**Q.3 Analyzing the key dimensions of India-Nepal relations, discuss the challenges and opportunities for fostering a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship. Suggest measures that can be taken to address the challenges and enhance bilateral ties between the two countries.**



Rishabh