

# Oli's India visit and positive gesture of Modi

Kathmandu : Has Nepal-India relation reached newer heights following Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to India? This question continues to surface with commentators describing Oli's maiden trip to the southern neighbour in both positive and negative lights. This visit was important for both the countries as it sought to bury the hatchet between two strongmen – Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, who enjoy sweeping mandate in their respective countries. Nonetheless, both the leaders treaded a cautious path to avoid potential diplomatic bloopers that may hit their fence-mending mission. At the outset, PM Oli found himself in a tight spot after India unilaterally announced the date of his visit



because the visit timetable deprived him of attending the 2018 edition of BOAO Forum for Asia that was organised in China from April 8-11. The BOAO Forum would provide him an opportunity for selling his vision of nation-building to the top-notch leaders of Asia and muster their support towards this end. However, Oli accorded priority to India visit without reading India's motive much. There lie

domestic and geopolitical reasons to make New Delhi his first port of call. It was urgent for both leaders to improve personal as well as bilateral relations in the changed context. For Nepal, India is not a choice but a reality. Without thawing ties with India on an equal basis, the new dispensation is unlikely to achieve its much-vaunted goals of stability and prosperity. It was Indian PM Modi,

who made desperate efforts to make up with Oli after the latter secured resounding victory in the three-tier elections on the plank of patriotism, stability and prosperity. As the largest democracy, India would hardly go against the electoral wave that put Nepali communists in the driving seat of power. Besides, Nepal's growing engagement with China has been a matter of tension for the Indian establishment,

elites and media that have not yet shed their colonial mindset inherited from British Raj. They still harbour a notion that Nepal is India's exclusive sphere of influence as well as a Himalayan frontier that serves as the buffer state against the 'Chinese penetration'. So India wants to stop China's increasing influence in its 'yard' at all cost. They are for developing their relations with Nepal in Bhutan model, not one that can execute their independent foreign policies and elevate themselves to a level of mediating between the two giant neighbours. It was compulsion for Indian PM Modi to improve sour relations with Oli in changing geopolitical dynamics in the region. A noted orator, Modi heaped praise on Oli, calling him 'a leader of bold

Continue in page 4...

# Province 2 unveils policy and programs

Janakpur: Chief of Province-2, Ratneshwor Lal Kayastha, unveiled the policy and programmes of the provincial government for the fiscal year 2074-075.

In the policy and programme, he underscored that the government accord priority to good governance, empowerment, and development. Chure regional conservation policy would be brought to prevent desertification of Madhes region. Data to reflect the present



economic, social, infrastructure development, human development would be collected and made public. Plan for short, mid and long terms would be formulated with the cooperation

of various bodies.

Similarly, the government would cooperate and collaborate with the federal government to construct the Sunkoshi-Kamala diversion, while cooperation would be sought from the federal government to make effective the irrigation from Bagmati and Narayani Rivers.

The issues of farmers would be put in priority with the facility of irrigation, subsidized

Continue in page 6...



## Editorial

### Expectation from PM's India visit

The recent visit to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to India has become the subject of concern and discussion in Nepal and India. Even after a week's visit to the Prime Minister's visit to India, the discussions among Kathmandu's experts have not been stopped. The visit of Prime Minister's predecessor has probably not been discussed so much about this visit to the Prime Minister. PM's visit to India has been termed successful in 'taking care' of the strained relations between two nations. The trip by Prime Minister was undertaken to give continuity to the tradition of the Nepali prime ministers making India their first destination of the foreign visit after resuming the office.

The PM's visit has restored the trust, goodwill and close friendship between the two close neighbours of whose relations witnessed a dip in recent times. The visit has assisted the both sides in realising the 'mistakes' and realising new necessities deepening the friendly relations during the present changed context.

The 'success' of the trip was also marked by the issuance of 12-point joint statement in which PM Oli and his Indian counterpart have emphasised that the relations between the two nations would be taken to newer heights by adhering to the principles of Panchasheel and equality, bilateral trust, mutual respect and benefits.

The agreements in the three areas appear to be the main 'achievements' for the visiting Nepali delegation this time around. Nepal and India signed agreements with the Nepali side to provide assistance to Nepal in constructing railway line from Raxaul to Kathmandu, assist the land-locked Nepal to find access to sea through inland water channels through Nepal and Indian rivers and financial and technical help to Nepal's agriculture sector.

The detractors of the present Oli-led government were quick to criticise the visiting PM for not raising to resolve some of the pressing 'genuine' issues with the Indian side. The ambitious Pancheswhor project, trade imbalance with India and issues of inundation of Nepal's Terai areas as well as the exchange of the demonitised Indian currencies held by Nepalis did not find serious mention during the visit.

Despite all criticisms during and after the visit, one thing appears certain - the visit has helped a lot to improve the nation's relationship with India. Our PM had even gone a step further in saying that Nepal's relation with India had never worsened. The visit will help in restoring bilateral trust in the days ahead, though there is still some suspicions whether or not our southern neighbour, which attracted a lots of flak for its recent 'interference in the Nepali affairs' and its arm-twisting tactics against Nepal, has realised the significance of its friendly relations with Nepal that is based on bilateral trust and mutual benefits. The Nepalese side's mending of relation with India will be fruitful only when India accords important and higher priority to the relation with Nepal through its sensible behaviour.

## China's shadow loomed over Nepal PM Oli's 'successful' India visit

All apparent indications suggest that Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's three-day visit to India has been a success. Oli was received at the airport by India's Home Minister, he was lodged in Rastrapati Bhawan with a special guard of honour, and he had a long and frank one-on-one discussion with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A twelve-point joint statement was issued highlighting the resolve of the two prime ministers to take their bilateral relations "to newer heights on the basis of equality, mutual trust, respect and benefit." Three agreements, on a rail project connecting an Indian border town with Kathmandu, on inland waterways connectivity and on agricultural development in Nepal, were signed. The main purpose of the visit was to rebuild trust between the two countries, seriously vitiated for more than two years, since September 2015.

India had then felt cheated on the promised inclusiveness (accommodation of Madhes) and secular character (India informally wished the word 'secular' to be dropped) of the new Nepali Constitution. The United Marxist Leninist (UML) Party under Oli's leadership was seen as the main source of resistance to the Indian agenda. The Indian leadership used all the tricks of the trade, ranging from regime change to economic coercion, to send a strong message of disapproval.

Oli reacted strongly and decisively. He whipped up Nepali nationalism with anti-India overtones, defeated political formations that were willing to play for India to marginalise him and flashed the China card to diversify Nepal's dependence on India. His success was ensured by a huge simmering backlog of resentment in Nepal vis-à-vis India, resulting from India's intrusive and insensitive approach, delivery deficit on promises made, and tendency to take things for granted. These were patently emotive approaches on the part of both leaderships, resulting from their mutual ego clashes, knee-jerk

reactions and gross misunderstandings.

There was also the invisible elephant in the room - China - that was all too willing to and capable of exploiting Indian weaknesses and vulnerabilities in the whole of South Asia, including Nepal, to facilitate its assertive intrusion into India's neighbourhood, both economically and strategically.

Its Belt and Road Initiative had come into play as a major and attractive instrument in this respect.

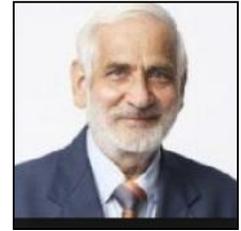
The relationship between the two countries being deeply and intricately intertwined by geography, civilisational bonds, and cultural and social enmeshing, the strain in relations could not have been sustained for long.

Soon after Oli's impressive victory in Nepal's first constitutional elections at the local, provincial and federal levels in December 2017, India moved to control the damage. Modi called Oli to congratulate him on his electoral victory and sent foreign minister Sushma Swaraj in February 2018 to assuage Oli's hurt feelings, asking him to "forget past bitterness".

Oli also responded positively and agreed to honour the tradition of making India the first destination of his foreign state visits.

Oli also realised that his posturing on seeking an alternative to India in China was more of a political statement than an economic reality. He knows that without Indian help and support, his electoral promises to deliver development cannot be kept. An unhappy India can also be a source of trouble as his alliance with the Maoists, even after unification of the two Communist parties, will remain inherently fragile and vulnerable.

Oli did not hesitate to articulate all his grievances in New Delhi. He asserted Nepal's sovereignty and independence, demanded non-interference and respect for Nepal's sensitivities, asked for expediting implementation of pending and promised projects in a time-bound manner, expected concrete steps to reduce Nepal's heavy bilateral trade deficit, and sought all possible help in ensuring Nepal's political



SD Muni

stability and economic development.

He made it abundantly clear to all his interlocutors that while keeping in mind India's core security interests, he will freely engage with all other neighbours in promoting Nepal's interests.

His foreign minister had warned that a basic restructuring of relations with India is being attempted by Nepal.

The Indian side has gone along with Oli's sentiments in all public pronouncements, but has quietly conveyed the message subtly, yet firmly, that undue warming up with China and Pakistan will not go down well with New Delhi.

India preferred the strengthening of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) as against SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), and suggested that Oli give up Pakistan's advocacy for activating SAARC.

In relation to China, if Nepal ignores India's concerns, there were options open to New Delhi, like not purchasing power from the Chinese-added hydro-projects. The Madhes issue, though put on the back-burner, has not been abandoned.

The test of Oli's visit and India-Nepal parleys in New Delhi will depend upon the extent the two sides meet their commitments as well as each others' expectations.

It will surely not be easy for Oli to dilute his two political assets; of politically cashing in on Nepali nationalism and deploying the China card to extract concessions from India. The first is a manifestation of his political and electoral strength and the second is tied to the support and interests of China.

# China still does not know Madhesh

**China always welcomes the government formed in Nepal. China has linked ties with Nepal but it is not the connecting with the Nepali people. China is not a racist in our point of view.**

**The 15-member team of the Federal Socialist Forum recently visited to China, what was the purpose of that visit?**

All three levels of elections had concluded in Nepal. Through the elections, Forum emerged as the national party. Earlier, students, women and leaders visited for foreign trip. More UML and Maoists leaders visited more. After the election, there are only five parties having national status and one of them is the Federal Socialist Forum. It also formed the state government in Province 2. It is a party that is struggling for the prosperity of the country. Therefore, this party also taken the same place as the other party, making it a separate team by accepting China's invitation and went to the tour.

**What was the purpose of that visit?**

The main objective of the visit was to establish a friendly relationship. How China has developed, how China's tourist, cultural, economic and agricultural areas have increased. During the visit we had shared about these areas of cooperation. The visit tour was very fruitful.

**Do you say the visit was achievable?**

China has progressed a lot in agriculture. In tourism sector, Madhes has a too lot possibility. But we have lack of sources. So we are considering how to take advantage from China and how to cooperate

with China for the development of tourism in Madhesh. How could China get progress over 40 years and we also got a chance to study operations, law enforcement, good governance from the visit. This topic has taken interest in both sides of Nepal and China.

**There should be talk to cooperate between Nepal and China?**

China's strategy was to cooperate with Nepal which is still in force. China's policy is to invest more than 30 projects in Nepal and share only on profit. But these projects were left behind plain areas and projected in upper areas. We have also felt that China has changed its strategy, with the government formed in Province 2. It was understood by China that Madhes has suffered a loss of backwardness and there is a need to invest in tourism, agriculture and education. For that reason, it has been a pleasure to find our purpose. I think China too has gone ahead to invest in the Madhesh.

**Especially China's projects are more focused on the mountains than in Madhes, so due to this it has accused China as a racist politician?**

China's policy is based on what it is. The China-based policy-making center, China will not make any condition. China does not take the strategy to fund the budget by conducting this project. China always welcomes the government formed in Nepal. China has linked

ties with Nepal but it is not the connecting with the Nepali people. China is not a racist in our point of view. If the Nepal government is inconvenient to Madhes, China does do. Nepal government has not made an environment of development in Madhesh neither for India nor for China.

Nepal Government has been blamed rather than blaming India and China. That mistake is corrected. This is the habit of ignoring Madhes.

**Is there guilt in Nepal's government not in China's policy?**

Yes, there is fault in our government. It was justified by the behavior of the government. Within our own country, we should seek its measures and we have followed the policy of our country.

**This election shows that your party has a mandate in Madhes, how did you find Madhes in China in this regard?**

Probably, China has already been realized that there are also Madhesi in Nepal but did not knew they are suffering. I think China does not know Madhesh. If the people of India did not know that our ethnicity, language as there is a close relationship, how could China know more? According to the movement of 2062/063, the entire world is known only. In the times of Madhesh movement also, Madhesi reached at the border and after that China became very confused. But we were



**Ram Babu Yadav**

**Member, HOR, Federal Socialist Forum**

able to explain all the things in China during the visit and they were also positive.

**Should China's policy have changed?**

Previous, China relationship was only with the left, but it has changed now. China should not leave any party. The policy has to come up with all the national parties. China has established a relationship with over 400 parties in 165 countries.

**How much do you see China's potential investment in Madhesh?**

Chinese are interested to invest in Madhesh. But it depends how much of the state governments could trust. Another policy of China is that, it is not only happy and prosperous unless neighbors should also be happy and prosperous. It does a stable unless the neighbor should be prospering country. Therefore, the neighbor should help. If the neighbor's happiness helps peace, then the happiness will have peace. If the atmosphere of Nepal damaged, it would influence both China and India. There is a lot of investment in

China. We also have the policy that we should take our neighbor together.

**When you talked about political matters, did not they come to inquire about whether to go to the government?**

Its sign had come and they are positive about it. But it is about the activities of representatives by the Madhesi people whether or not to go to government.

**How is China's perception in favor of constitution amendment?**

They are also positive in that matter. They know well what is wrong with our constitution. But they want to know whether the constitution is modified or not. But they have to show that the constitution should be amended by incorporating all.

**When your party will go to the government?**

That is the topic to depend on the prime minister. If only the government was just going to talk, it could have already been used. If there is no the guarantee of a faithful environment and constitution amendment, we would not go to the government.

## Kathmandu-Raksaul railway study soon

Kathmandu: Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has said that he had developed some understandings with India bearing in mind the national interest and integrity.

Prime Minister said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with India would add newer dimensions in the areas of agriculture, railways and agriculture.

Both Nepali and Indian sides would undertake study soon for the construction of Kathmandu-Raksaul railway, he said, sharing that the government is doing its groundwork with the mission to operate waterways hoisting Nepali flag.

## PM's India visit successful, says NC leader Mahat



Kathmandu: Nepali Congress (NC) leader Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has said that the Prime Minister's three-day visit to India was fruitful.

At an interaction programme in Kathmandu, Dr Mahat said no PM's visit to India so far is unfruitful and PM KP Sharma Oli's visit was goodwill visit that played a role to strengthen Nepal-India relations.

No Indian PM's visit to Nepal so far was unfruitful; he said while adding that India herself

has realized the misunderstanding created after the promulgation of constitution in Nepal. India was willing to develop its relations with Nepal from new dimensions.

Meanwhile, Nepali Congress central committee member Prakash Sharan Matat has remarked that the country failed to make any achievement by Prime Minister KP Oli's recent India.

During a press conference at NC party headquarters in Sanepa, Lalitpur, Mahat said, "The strained relations with India following the blockade at the Nepal-India border had improved significantly during the tenures of the previous governments under Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sher Bahadur Deuba." "Nepal-India relations had already improved. Oli ji could have only improved his relations," he said.

## Feasibility study of waterway begins next month: Minister Mahaseth

Kathmandu: Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Raghuraj Mahaseth said feasibility study of the waterway would begin next month.

During an interaction organized by Reporters' Club Nepal in Kathmandu, Minister Mahaseth wondered why Prime Minister's view on ship was taken so lightly. Nepal's dream to have waterway



would be materialized, he argued.

He further said PM's visit to India had been very fruitful.

## Oli's India visit and ...

vision,' and added Oli's motto of Samriddha Nepal Sukhi Nepali (Prosperous Nepal Happy Nepali) was in sync his own vision of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas (Collective Efforts Inclusive Growth). In his first visit to Nepal in 2014, Modi had used the images of 'Pani' (water) and 'Jawani' (youth) to electrify the hearts of Nepalis. This time he used the metaphors of Sagaramatha (Mt Everest) and samundra (sea) to highlight Nepal's connectivity with the sea. The two sides agreed to develop inland waterway connection. Detractors see the deal the other way around. It has been interpreted as a response to Nepal's historic trade and transit treaty with China, which had in principle granted Nepal an access to the international waters. Then, another accord on opening railway tracks from Raxaul in India to Kathmandu has been described as India's another connectivity strategy to answer the much-talked about Kerung-Kathmandu railway to be built under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Given the bad track records of the implementation of India-aided projects, optimism does not run high here with regard to the construction of Raxaul-Kathmandu railway services. Seen positively, these developments are propitious for Nepal's growth of trade and development. Nepal welcomes both neighbours as long as they compete for Nepal's development. But Nepal can hardly withstand if an elephant and a dragon fight on the fragile land for their own geopolitical interests.

For Oli, 'ship' and 'rail' have become new development imageries to overcome Nepal's landlocked position and high economic dependency on India. And Modi seemed to have struck a right note by reaching agreements on rail and water connectivity with Nepal to win Oli. While critics dismiss them as fanciful notions, Oli had pledged to realise them during his election campaign. This stands as a litmus test for him during his second term in office

PM Oli did not let us down. He successfully upheld the nation's independent image while holding talks with the Indian side. Unlike some past Nepali PMs, who used to act as supplicants before their Indian counterparts and beg for favour, Oli presented himself as the PM of a sovereign nation and candidly put up Nepal's all genuine concerns, underlining the need for building political trust between them first to expedite the development projects to be constructed under the Indian funding. Perhaps for the first time, the joint statement of the two nations made no reference to the internal affairs of Nepal. India changed its diplomatic tone by refraining itself from the Madhes and constitutional issues of Nepal. "The two Prime Ministers resolved to work together to take bilateral relations to newer heights on the basis of equality, mutual trust, respect and benefit," said the 12-point joint statement. A score of deals and initiatives were made during the visit in order to boost the relations between the two states sharing a common civilisation.

However, there is no reason to be euphoric about the achievements of the visit. The positive gesture and amicability, shown by India, should be translated into action. It is imperative for the southern neighbour to drop its Sinophobic attitude and stop evoking 'China factor' in the bilateral relations between Nepal and India. This writer mentions this point in view of the warning of some Indian media and intellectuals that their country might not buy electricity generated from China-funded hydropower projects in Nepal and re-stoke the Madhes issue if Nepal goes on deepening its relations with China and Pakistan. As an independent nation, Nepal is free to execute its foreign policies and relations with other nations based on its national interest and international laws. And in the 21st century, no power should attempt to impose hegemony on smaller neighbours and nations.

## Oli's Delhi visit -A milestone in Nepal-India relations



**Hari Bansh Jha**

Governments in Nepal and India keep on changing, but the people-to-people relations between the two countries continue to remain evergreen. At times the relations between these two closest neighbours with open border system sour at the government-to-government level, but because of certain inbuilt mechanism of course corrections it soon get adjusted. This was well reflected during the Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's recent visit to New Delhi between 6 and 8 April. PM Oli, who until recently was known as anti-India, made it amply clear that Nepal would do nothing that could hurt Indian interests in his country. He also expressed keen desire to improve Nepal's relations with India as he did not have any misunderstanding with this country.

While in New Delhi, PM Oli, along with his counterpart Narendra Modi, inaugurated the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Birgunj, apart from the 69-km Amlekhganu-Motihari oil pipeline. The two countries also agreed to expedite the much-delayed Pancheshwar, Terai road and other infrastructure related projects.

Operationalisation of the ICP is expected to increase the volume of cross-border trade. It is also likely to facilitate the movement of people from one country to the other. Similarly, the oil pipeline will deliver two million tonnes of petrol to Nepal per annum, which could remove major constraints in the transportation of oil from India to Nepal.

The agreement made by Nepal and India to develop a partnership in agriculture sector is equally encouraging. India has made an outstanding achievement in agricultural sector.

The country is not only self-sufficient in the production of food grains, but it is also one of the exporters of foodgrains. It has also emerged as the largest producer of milk and milk products. All this is possible because of green and white revolution in the country.

Given such realities, Nepal's interest to enter into a partnership with India in agricultural sector could help this country to learn as to how to increase production and productivity in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors. Production and exports of such agricultural products in the county could help bridging the gap in the balance of trade with India. Available data

Nepal-India relations.

With the completion of this vital project, Kathmandu will be linked to over 115,000 kilometres of Indian railway system, which happen to be one of the largest rail networks at the global level. Both time and cost-wise, it will be far easier to travel to Kathmandu from the Terai region and also from India. Even the transport cost of carrying goods from Terai or India to Kathmandu will be far less. With this development, the volume of business and trade within the country as well as with India and the third countries would increase at faster rate.

Additionally, the Raxaul-Kathmandu railway link will have greater strategic importance. Experts believe that this project is likely to counter

This was in regard to the 2.5 billion dollars Budhi Gandaki Hydroelectric project. Initially, the contract for this project had been awarded to China Gezhouba Group Corporation. But former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba cancelled this contract to the Chinese company for its failure to meet the requirements. Soon afterwards, Oli gave a statement that he could renew the contract to the Chinese company that is expected to produce 1200 MW of power. It will be difficult to make this project sustainable if India refuses to buy power.

PM Oli's visit would have been more fruitful if he had made agreement with India for the construction of Sapt Koshi High Dam, 900 MW Arun III project and the 600,000 MW Pancheshwar Project. He would also have been more popular if he were to make a deal with India in regard to exchanging the banned notes of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 denominations. Such notes were demonetised in India in November 2016. Since the Nepalese were allowed to hold such high-value notes from 2014, many of them possessed those currencies. Following the demonetisation of such notes, certain sections of the Nepalese who had connections with India managed to convert the old notes into new ones. Yet, there were many people who could not do so. Officially, Nepal has over IRs. 300 million of such notes. But the unofficial account is that there is over IRs.10 billion worth of such notes in the country.

Yet, to the great satisfaction of the Nepalese, all such major deals that have been made in New Delhi this time — be it related to the joining Raxaut to Kathmandu through the railways, access to the sea through inland waterways, the oil-pipeline connection between the two countries or ICP in Birgunj — would prove a milestone in Nepal's development efforts. Possibly, those deals that could not be made this time in New Delhi might be done when Indian PM Narendra Modi would visit Kathmandu. Thus, on the whole, the visit to New Delhi by the Nepalese Prime Minister could be taken as successful.



show that Nepal's deficit in balance of trade with India amounted to NRs. 491 billion in the first 10 months of 2016-17, which is quite huge. Another landmark agreement between Nepal and India was to enhance connectivity through Inland Waterways. This could provide the landlocked country access to the sea. As the transportation cost through the waterways is often far lower than transportation through other modes, this could boost up Nepal's trade with India and third countries. And, more than this, the country now would no more remain landlocked with this development because of its access to the sea.

Most importantly, the agreement between Nepal and India to develop railway connectivity between Raxaul and Kathmandu is another most crucial development in

China's 8 billion dollar railway project under Belt and Road Initiative that is intended to link Tibetan railway through Rasuwagadhi-Kerung border to Kathmandu and further to Pokhara and Lumbini. In certain quarters, it is feared that the Chinese railway system could compel Nepal to remain in perpetual debt and thereby surrender part of its sovereignty to China. A poor country like Nepal is not in a position to repay the interest and principal amount of such a huge loan. If at all this railway project would benefit any country, it is China alone. There is very little that Nepal could export to China. But there will be quite a lot of products that Nepal would have to import from that country. This will further tend to worsen our balance of trade with China. In an important development in New Delhi, India made it clear that it would not buy energy if China built dams in Nepal.

## Nepal and India to meet on April 24 about waterways

Kathmandu: The officials of Nepal and India will discuss incorporating the agreement reached on inland waterways in the framework of Transit Treaty between the two countries at the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) meeting scheduled for April 24-27 in Pokhara.

During Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to India, from April 6-8, the two countries issued a joint statement on new connectivity through inland waterways, opening the door for Nepal to connect to sea through the waterways.

This new shipping initiative will efficiently move cargo to Nepal. As per the joint statement, PM Oli had noted the enormous impact the additional connectivity would have on Nepal's business and economic growth.

Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies Chandra Kumar Ghimire said the two sides

would discuss incorporating waterway connectivity as part of the Transit Treaty between the two countries at the IGC meeting.

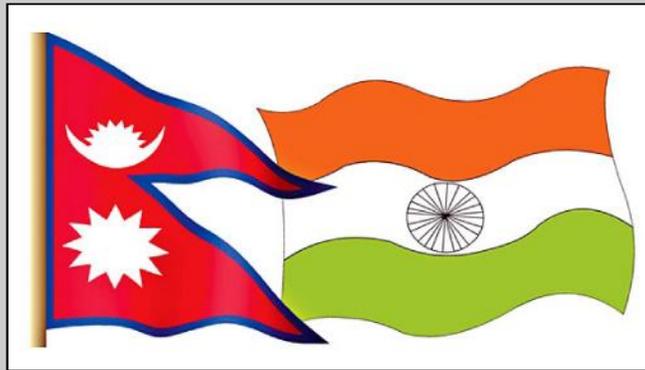
"It is for the first time that India decided to provide transit

including it in the framework of Transit Treaty," said Rabi Shankar Sainju, joint secretary at the ministry.

"Further negotiations would be necessary to finalise point of port of entry and port of arrival

of proposal India brings in during the negotiation," said Sainju.

India is developing its first modern inland water transport fairway on Ganga River between Varanasi and the seaport of Haldia, Kolkata with the assistance of the World Bank. Nepal could establish connectivity with the planned Indian waterways. The World Bank has approved \$375 million loan to India in February for the project. Nepal's rivers such as Koshi and Narayani connect with Ganga River. India has major rivers like Ganga where navigation is possible. No study has been done whether it is possible in smaller rivers of Nepal and, if possible, how. Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Raghuraj Mahaseth on Tuesday said his ministry would conduct a study on developing waterways by setting up a special unit at the ministry within a week.



facility through waterways to Nepal. The topic will feature at the IGC meeting for the first time," Ghimire said.

According to officials, the two sides will discuss modalities and procedures for establishing such waterways.

"First, we will work on

and that need to be included in the protocol of the treaty," he said.

Ministry officials said internal discussions on the matter are on ahead of the IGC meeting, but nothing concrete has been done yet.

"We also have to see what type

### Province 2 unveils ...

agriculture loan, establishment of chilling centres, mechanization, technical training, availability of seeds and chemical fertilizers, and storage of grains among others.

Efforts would be made to bring the sick industries back to operation, and implementation of the national pride projects in the province.

Discouraging the strikes, shutdown and obstruction in industry and transportation, the Province 2 government would launch the programmes as beti padhau, beti bachau (Educate daughter, protect daughter) and religious shrine conservation and upgrading of the regional and district levels hospitals and medical colleges.

With the preservation of indigenous cultures, tourism promotion would be focused, added Chief of the province Kayastha. Meanwhile, Magh 5 would be marked as the movement day in the province.

## Youth Delegation from India visits Nepal

Kathmandu: A 37-member Youth delegation from India visited Nepal from April 4 to 11 to participate in the Youth Exchange Program, at the invitation of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Youth Exchange Program

University as well as Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development. The students came from different parts of India.

The first youth delegation of Nepal, led by the then Minister of Youth and Sports Purushottam

of Nepal visited India.

The youth delegation concluded their visit on 11 April and found the Exchange Program to be a great learning experience which



was held in pursuance of the November 2014 Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India & the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The delegation comprised students from leading educational institutions of India including IITs, AIIMS, NIT, National Law School of India

Paudel, had visited India in April, 2015. From Indian side, the first visit of a Youth Delegation took place during 10-17 March, 2017 when a 47-member delegation visited Nepal. In April 2017, the second youth delegation of Nepal comprising 49 delegates and led by the Secretary of Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government

also helped them in acknowledging and appreciating the deep bond of friendship between India and Nepal. Before their departure to India, the delegation visited the Embassy of India, Kathmandu on 11 April and interacted with selected students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kathmandu.

## Unprecedented opportunity for economic development and prosperity: PM

Mugu: Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has spoken of an unprecedented opportunity at hand to herald economic development and prosperity in the country. In an address to the nation from the banks of the largest and mesmerizing Rara lake, the PM said the government remains competent in resolving the country's problems. PM Oli also took the occasion to wish good health and prosperity to the Nepali brothers and sisters on the occasion of New Year 2075. "Following the success of the elections, our country



Nepal has been able to establish a new standard in the democratic exercise," PM Oli said and added further "The history has provided us with an

unprecedented opportunity for economic development and prosperity; we had problems before us and a duty to resolve them. The people have given us a

mandate to address those problems." Stating that the year 2074 stood out as an important year for political

achievement, the PM noted that the country received pro-people, democratic, patriotic, progressive and pro-development government with the end of political transition last year. He went on to add that a new phase of stability has emerged in course of the successful implementation of the constitution following the conclusion of the three tiers of elections. The PM also said he has been hearing questions – "Will Nepal be now made better? Will this government fulfill our dreams?"

## India-funded post-quake housing reconstruction project starts

Gorkha: The post-quake housing reconstruction project funded by the Indian government has begun after more than one year of agreement. The three-year project worth \$100 million was signed in August 2017 between Nepal and India, under which India is to provide monetary support to reconstruct 50,000 private houses in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts. As per the agreement

that calls for the appointment of consultants to provide socio-technical facilitations for the project, the Indian embassy in Kathmandu appointed the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The agreements were signed between Ajay Kumar, deputy chief of mission of Embassy of India, Kathmandu, on

behalf of the Indian government; and Renaud Meyer, country director of the UNDP, Nepal; and Sanjay Mathur, regional director of the UNOPS Asia Region. Under the agreements, India is to provide the total \$16.2 million to the two UN agencies (\$8.79 million to the UNDP, Nepal, and \$7.41 million to the UNOPS). The UNDP is to provide facilitation to 26,912 house owners in Gorkha, while the UNOPS will

cover 23,088 houses in Nuwakot. Bijay Sah, UNDP's Nepal assistant country director, said quake resilient homes would be built in collaboration with local governments as part of the project. Sophia Kimkhadej, deputy country director of UNDP, Nepal, said mason training would be provided to the house owners. Failure to implement

the project in time has affected the quake-hit victims in Gorkha. "Many quake victims are left with no options than to live in makeshift tents. Some have started building their homes on their own, weary of apathetic responses from the concerned authorities for their rehabilitation," said Ashok Kumar Gurung, coordinator of Gorkha district coordination committee.

### Government serious towards rights of Shikh community: Home Minister



Lalitpur: Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa has said the government is serious towards protecting rights of the Shikh community and ensuring their security. Attending a programme organised by the Guru Nanak Satsang Management Committee on the occasion of the Nepali

New Year 2075 BS and birth anniversary of the Shikh Guru Khalsa, the Home Minister urged the people from the Shikh community to do their roles confidently. He said the Shikh community had an important role in safeguarding Nepal's independence in the past. On the occasion, he vowed to make initiation to take the issue relating to providing land to the community at Balaju ahead. India's Ambassador to Nepal, Manjeev Singh Puri, was of the view that the Shikh people had a significant contribution to consolidating the Nepal-India ties.

### India's three former envoys tour Dolpa

Kathmandu: India's three former ambassadors to Nepal have arrived Dolpa to tour religious heritage sites in Dolpa district. Former Indian ambassadors Ranjit Raya, Deb Mukherjee and Shyam Saran have arrived here on a 15-day tour. The former envoys said Dolpa's scenic natural beauty and the biodiversity attracts nature lovers.

Former ambassador Raya said Dolpa district's has a wealth of natural beauty, cultural and religious heritage sites that have a huge potential for tourism. Raya visited the Goddess Shreebala Tripurasundari Temple at Tripurakot in Tripurasundari Municipality. He said Dolpa's tourism lags behind due to lack of publicity. The Indian Embassy in Nepal's

contribution of Rs 33.3 million enabled the construction of Goddess Bala Tripurasundari Temple in Dolpa. Dolpa's attractions include Lake Shey Phoksundo, Bala Tripurasundari Temple, Lake Jagdulla, the Dho Takshi Valley, the Shey Phoksundo National Park, Yarsagumba and abundant terrain for trekking.

### Terai's Siruwa festival in full swing

Biratnagar: The Siruwa festival is being marked in an upbeat mood from Sunday morning hours in the Terai districts. The festival held to mark the start of New Year sees revelers seeking blessings from elders, worship of the cooking stove and cleaning up the streets and

maintaining environmental hygiene. The specialty of the festival is the worship of the cooking stove and daubing the kitchen floor. In the festival widely celebrated by the Maithili community it is believed that kitchen should also be given rest for at least one night. So the foods are

cooked in the day and eaten in the evening. The household gods are also worshipped and presented with food cooked a day before along with curd and sugar. The revelers also clean up the streets, wells and water the trees so as to keep them hydrated during the dry month.

## Foreign Minister Gyawali to leave for China today



**Pradeep Kumar Gyawali**

Kathmandu: Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali is leaving for People's Republic of China from April 16.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gyawali is leaving for China on an official visit at the invitation of his

Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. Foreign Minister Gyawali and Chinese Foreign Minister Yi will hold bilateral talks on April 18 which will be followed by a joint press address, according to the MoFA.

The Foreign Affairs Minister will also call on the State Leader of China and address a round-table meeting of Chinese think-tanks.

On April 20, Gyawali will meet with the provincial leaders of Sichuan and address a programme at the Sichuan University.

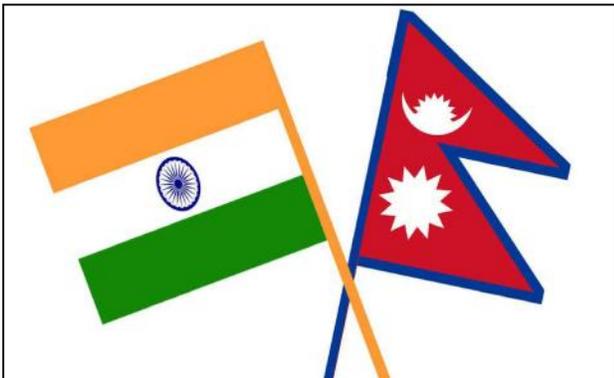
The Nepali delegation includes Ambassador of Nepal to China Leela Mani Paudyal and other Foreign Ministry officials. Minister Gyawali will return on April 21.

## 8th EPG meeting in positive note

Kathmandu: The eighth meeting of the Eminent Persons Group on Nepal-India Relations has concluded in New Delhi in positive note.

The meeting, which was focused on finalising the report to be

ends in July this year, has been mandated to come up with a comprehensive report on anything that needs to be updated, adjusted or amended in all exiting bilateral treaties, agreements, understandings,



presented to both the governments, made further progress on bilateral issues under discussion and the next meeting has been fixed for June 1 to 3 in Kathmandu, according to Rajan Bhattarai, an EPG member representing Nepal. "We were able to narrow down the perspectives in this meeting and will try to make the next meeting the last one to finalise the report," said Bhattarai. The EPG, whose two-year tenure

including the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950. At the end of the seventh meeting in Kathmandu, the EPG members had said they were giving final touches to the report to be presented to both the governments. During Prime Minister KP Oli's recent India visit, Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi had also said that the recommendations put forth by the EPG would be accepted.

## Pakistan could face U.S. aid cuts over human trafficking

Washington : The Trump administration is warning Pakistan it could lose U.S. civilian aid worth tens of millions of dollars this year if Washington finds that the South Asian nation has not done enough to combat human trafficking, U.S. officials said. An aid cutback would deal a fresh blow to U.S.-Pakistan relations following President Donald Trump's suspension in January of some \$2 billion in U.S. security assistance over what Trump said was Islamabad's failure to crack down on Afghan insurgent sanctuaries used for attacks into Afghanistan.

A large portion of U.S. civilian aid - \$265 million in 2017, according to a source at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad - could be withheld if the State Department puts Pakistan on a list of worst global offenders in

human trafficking in an annual report due out in June.

The funding is relatively modest for the size of Pakistan's economy. But Islamabad could suffer a heavier jolt if Washington also decides to oppose new assistance from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

By making good on its threat against Pakistan, the Trump administration would raise questions about whether it was using the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report to pressure Islamabad to do more on counter-terrorism.

Pakistan has long rejected U.S. accusations that it provides Afghan Taliban and allied Haqqani network militants with sanctuaries from which they attack the Kabul government and U.S.-led foreign forces in Afghanistan.

**Are You In The Search Of Any Conference Hall ?**

Combating Media For Madhesh  
**MADHESH MEDIA HOUSE**  
Hanumansthan Chwok, Anamnagar, Kathmandu

जनजास्था बहुउद्देशीय सहकारी संस्था लिमिटेड  
JANAASTHA MULTIPURPOSE CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

**Please Contact Us**  
Phone No - 01-4266142/01-4255431  
Hanumansthan Chwok, Anamnagar, Ktm.

**Our Features:**  
**Modern Sound System, Battery as the option of Load shedding, Media Link, Capacity of 70 Seats,**