

India-Nepal relations

Why in news?

Amidst Nepal's political chaos, Nepal's Foreign Affairs Minister visited New Delhi for the 6th meeting of India-Nepal Joint Commission.

What was discussed in the meeting?

- It was more focused on confidence-building measures- exchange of remarks on progress made since last meeting, how to take forward several bilateral initiatives.
- They discussed about the expanding the **Motihari-Amlekhganj petroleum pipeline** to Chitwan & establishing new pipeline on the eastern side connecting Siliguri to Jhapa in Nepal.
- They discussed about the operating procedures for commencing the upgraded 1st passenger railway line between India & Nepal from Jaynagar to Kurtha via Janakpur.
- Other cross-border rail connectivity projects, including Raxaul-Kathmandu broad gauge railway line were also discussed.
- Nepal expressed its support for India's permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council.
- It also emphasised on the need for facilitating cross-border movement of people & goods leading to sub-regional cooperation.
- However Nepal's demand to include the boundary issue in the Meeting was not supported by India.

How is India-Nepal relationship on the development front?

- The recently inaugurated Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at Birgunj and Biratnagar helps in seamless movement of people and trade between two countries.
- The construction of 3rd ICP at Nepalgunj was already commenced & the new ICP at Bhairahwa will begin shortly.
- Since Nepal relies on India's seaports for trade and its goods are transported by road, ICP are expected to ease trade and transit.
- India supported to develop 2 more cultural heritage projects in Nepal- Pashupatinath Riverfront Development & Bhandarkhal Garden Restoration in

Patan Durbar.

- This is significant at the time when China is exploring all avenues to disrupt Nepal's natural choice in policy-making.
- The joint hydropower projects, including the proposed Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, will get positive momentum following this round of meeting.

How is Nepal's democracy functioning?

- There is growing disenchantment among the Nepali masses over the increased centralisation of power.
- The failure of the Provincial System to address developmental issues, misuse of Presidential authority & unprecedented corruption calls for re-setting Nepal's democracy.
- Large sections of the people wish to restore the cultural Monarchy in place of Presidential system and to re-establish the certain traditional ways to governance.
- In late December 2020, he dissolved the House of Representatives which was termed unconstitutional by the experts.
- The country's Supreme Court is hearing writ petitions against Mr. Oli & the Court has called for serious constitutional interpretation.

What is the way forward?

- Democracy in Nepal is achieved but not ascribed & the people of Nepal deserve a better deal than what is offered by the present government.
- Like many other democracies across the world, Nepal's democracy has been affected with an extreme rise in majoritarian sentiments.
- It cannot afford to enter in another round of political instability and the commanding authorities need to spearhead the India-Nepal bilateral relations.

Source: The Hindu