Revamping India-Nepal ties

Why in news?

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Nepal PM is about to visit India.

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What is the situation in Nepal?

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- Nepal made a transition from monarchy to republic in 2006.
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- Since then, there has been one of uncertainty with the country seeing almost 9 PMs being appointed in as many years.
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- This has ruined the economy and paralysed the functioning of the government.
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- The process of drafting a new constitution dragged for long for lack of consensus on critical issues.
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What has been India’s Nepal policy?

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- India played a critical role in bringing the Maoist insurgency in Nepal to an end in 2006.
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- In the period thereafter, India was alleged of micro-meddling in Nepal’s internal affairs.
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- Ex: New provincial boundaries were attempted to be demarcated according to Indian interests on behalf of the people of the plains (Madeshis & Janajathis).
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- The border blockade in the Terai region in 2016, was also suspected to have the support of India.
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- This attitude of interventionism has backfired of late and hence calls for a course correction.
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- **Chinese Influence -**Following the 2015 earthquake, Nepal increasingly looked towards China for assistance.
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- It is also now better connected to China through air & other intellectual forums than to India.
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- The Nepal PM’s upcoming visit is an opportunity to set things right.
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What are the areas of possible co-operation?

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- **Flood Management -**Flooding in the Nepal plains that have also affected downstream areas across the border needs to be addressed.
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- The Kosi Barrage and attendant embankments have the possibility of wreaking havoc because siltation of six decades has raised the riverbed within the levees far above the outlying tracts.
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- While it is easy to demand a high dam in the hills of Nepal, it is important to study the other ecologically & socially sustainable alternatives.
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- **Power Purchase -** Nepal has since long planned to sell electricity to India once it has a hydropower surplus.
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- But the Indian government has directed that it will not allow import of electricity other than from power companies with more than 51% Indian equity.
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- This has to be reviewed.
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- **Monetary & Financial Issues** - Demonetisation and GST have affected Nepal’s economy.

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- Assistance is to be provided for better adaptation.
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- **Border Management -** There are border disputes pending between the two countries at Susta, Kalapani, and the ‘tri-junction’ of Lipulekh is another delicate point.
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- The arbitrary blockages and the selective use of quarantine for the export of Nepali agricultural produce are issues of concern.
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- A robust border management regime needs to be commissioned.
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- **Migrant Rights -** The rights of migrant labours in both the countries is a topic that rarely comes up but could potentially get sensitive in future.
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- Increasing high-handedness of the Sashastra Seema Bal (India’s frontier force in this sector) in dealing with Nepalese crossing the border needs to change.
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Source: The Hindu

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