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**'Our Overarching
Goal is to Help Nepal
Connect With Global
Capital Markets'**

H.E. ROB FENN

British Ambassador to Nepal





Where Diplomacy Meets Wisdom



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Editor's Note



The Kingdoms of the Gulf: Nepal's Untapped Development Partners

This is the moment for Nepal to rethink and reshape her global development partnerships. Situated between India and China, Nepal has long relied on aid from its traditional partners – the two immediate neighbors, and the West.

However, with nearly two million Nepali migrant workers living and working in the Gulf monarchies, Nepal has viewed these nations primarily through the narrow lens of labor migration and remittances.

But times have changed. The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman – are no longer simply labor destinations. They have emerged as major global investors, investing wealth into developed, developing, and least developed economies. For Nepal, which receives around 25 percent of its GDP from remittances, largely from GCC nations and Malaysia, this underscores just one aspect of a much larger opportunity.

In today's multipolar world, the GCC states have diversified their image far beyond oil production centres. They have transformed into influential donors, global investors, and are now rising geopolitical players. Their sovereign wealth funds are among the most active in the world, driving investments in technology, infrastructure, energy, and even sports. Taking into account the Gulf's shift from purely labor-importing nations to key global power centers, Nepal must also alter its approach towards the Gulf states and shift its strategy as they now offer opportunities beyond labor migration, including increasing foreign investments across sectors.

Nepal should broaden its engagement with GCC countries and actively pursue bilateral agreements across

sectors including tourism, hydro-power, health, education, sports, culture, investment, trade, and broader development cooperation. Despite occasional regional tensions, the Gulf countries have established themselves as zones of peace, security, prosperity, and economic development. Since its formation in 1981 as a political and economic alliance, the GCC has continuously fostered regional cooperation as a means to achieve lasting peace and stability. At present, Sovereign wealth funds in the GCC countries have been playing a significant role in global investment.

Interestingly, there has been a rise in diplomatic exchanges between Nepal and the Gulf nations in recent years. Nepal has hosted dignitaries such as the Emir of Qatar, the UAE's Deputy Prime Minister, and foreign ministers from various Gulf states, reflecting a shared interest in deepening ties. Likewise, Nepali leaders have also engaged in high-level visits to GCC nations, signaling growing mutual engagement.

The time is ripe to elevate Nepal's diplomatic and economic outreach to the Gulf to achieve its aspirations of economic development and prosperity. Nepal can attract GCC capital to fuel its own growth by creating an investor-friendly climate. This would transform longstanding labor ties into a strong, multi-dimensional partnership that advances Nepal's journey toward sustained economic development and prosperity.

Jagdishor Panday
Editor
The Diplomat Nepal

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JAGDISHOR PANDAY

Nepal and the European Union (EU) celebrated the golden jubilee of their relations in 2024. Since 1974, Nepal has been a trusted partner of the EU. The EU, a 27-member regional organization, has long supported Nepal's economic and development goals by aligning with the country's priorities and upholding shared values

such as democracy, human rights, transparency, and accountability. Since Nepal adopted the Constitution in 2015, the EU has also been instrumental in supporting Nepal's transition to federalism.

Moreover, the political and economic relations between Nepal and the EU date back to 1994, which was followed by a cooperation agreement in 1996. The European Economic Community evolved into the European Union in 1993 and developed

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli met the EU Heads of Mission in Nepal, Ambassador Veronique Lorenzo, and 21 EU ambassadors and representatives in May 2025. Photo: MoFA.

“The EU and its member states have long provided development aid to Nepal, either through the EU or directly from respective countries.”

its common foreign and security policy by 2010. Nepal, a SAARC member, engages with the EU bilaterally, regionally, and multilaterally. The EU has been an observer in SAARC since 2007, fostering regional collaboration. Bilateral relations have grown, boosted by the Nepali diaspora in Europe.

According to Ambassador of the EU to Nepal, Veronique Lorenzo, the EU is trying to promote regional integration. “We are friends, and we have common fundamental values. Proud and attached to law, democracy, and

human rights. These are the things which unite us,” Lorenzo added. The ambassador also commented that the EU's relationship with Nepal has progressed and will evolve further.

Post-Brexit, four EU countries have embassies in Kathmandu – Finland, France, Germany, and Switzerland – alongside the EU mission. The United Kingdom, Norway, and Russia also have residential embassies, while Denmark, which once had a residential mission, withdrew it in 2017. The EU mission in Nepal coordinates with resident embassies and Honorary Consul Generals' offices in Kathmandu to strengthen relations.

Similarly, Nepal has eight resident missions in Europe, including two UN Permanent Missions to the UN in Vienna and Geneva. Other missions are in Brussels (which also serves as the mission to the EU), Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, and Lisbon. Nepal has two more missions – London and Moscow – in Europe besides the EU.

The EU first opened its Technical Office in Kathmandu in 1992. Nepal, too, established its Brussels embassy the same year. The EU Delegation in Nepal was established in 2002 and upgraded to ambassadorial level in 2009.

“Nepal-EU relations have remained friendly and cooperative, based on mutual understanding and support in economy, trade, humanitarian, and development issues,” notes Nepal's Foreign Ministry. The EU has been a development partner since 1973, with frequent official exchanges. The next year, in 1974, Nepal-EU (the then European Community) established diplomatic relations.

Dr. Rupak Sapkota, former advisor to Nepal's Prime Minister, stressed that Nepal can strengthen the partnership by aligning shared priorities that advance Nepal's goals, including LDC graduation, sustainable development, and green economic growth, while addressing global challenges.

Growing High-Level Engagements

There have been frequent high-level exchanges between the EU and Nepal in recent times. Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli recently attended the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) in Sevilla, Spain. The event took place between June 30 and July 3 of 2025.



Golden Jubilee of Nepal-EU Relations:
**Progressed and
 Will Evolve Further**



▲ The President of Nepal, Ram Chandra Poudel, met the President of the Swiss Confederation, Viola Amherd, in Geneva in 2024.



◀ The Foreign Minister of Nepal, Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, met German Foreign Minister, Dr. Johann David Wadepful, in Berlin in July 2025. Photo: MoFA.

During his visit to Spain, PM Oli met Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to discuss bilateral ties. He also met Portugal's Prime Minister Luís Montenegro and Estonia's President Alar Karis to discuss ways to deepen ties and expand cooperation.

PM Oli had previously visited Europe in June 2019, attending the ILO Centenary Session in Geneva and visiting France and the UK.

Simultaneously, the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, visited Europe to attend the 44th Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) session in Rome. She then visited Germany where she met with German Foreign Minister Dr. Johann David Wadepful in Berlin. Their discussions focused on trade, development, tourism, climate change, and multilateral cooperation. Dr. Rana expressed her gratitude to Germany for its long-standing development partnership in economic, social, and other sectors.

Similarly, Nepal's President Ram Chandra Poudel visited the EU in 2024 during the 112th session of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. During the visit, he held bilateral talks with the President of the Swiss Confederation, Viola Amherd. Later, he also visited Germany where he held a meeting with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, discussing bilateral relations, while expressing gratitude for Germany's continued support to Nepal.

In January 2020, the visiting Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn, held bilateral talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in his two-day official visit to Nepal. The same year in June, Foreign Minister Gyawali spoke by phone with Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, discussing Nepal-EU



▲ The 21 Ambassadors and representatives from European Union Member States based in New Delhi for their annual Heads of Mission (HoM) visit to Nepal. Photo: EU in Nepal

cooperation amid COVID-19. Issues related to Nepal-EU relations and cooperation, particularly in the context of COVID-19, were discussed. In 2018, Foreign Minister Gyawali met with Federica Mogherini, Vice President of the European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in Brussels.

From the EU side, Paola Pamaloni, Deputy Managing Director for Asia and Pacific of the EU External Affairs Service, visited Nepal thrice in 2019, 2021, and 2024 for the 11th, 13th, and 15th Nepal-EU Joint Commission meetings, respectively, focusing on political, development, air safety, and LDC graduation issues.

In September 2022, four Members of the European Parliament, led by

Vice-President Evelyn Regner, visited Nepal, engaging with government and civil society leaders. In February 2023, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen became the first European Commissioner to visit Nepal, meeting Nepal's President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister, emphasizing green recovery, nutrition, education, and EU programs.

Development, Global Gateway, and Trade

The EU and its member states have long provided development aid to Nepal, either through the EU or directly from respective countries. The Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020, signed during EU Development Commissioner Andris



▶ Ambassador of the EU to Nepal, Veronique Lorenzo, met Vice-President of Nepal Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav in Kathmandu.



▲ Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli met Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in Spain in July 2025. Photo: PM Office, Nepal

Piebalgs' visit in 2015, focused on Sustainable Rural Development, Education, and Strengthening Democracy and Decentralization.

At the 15th EU-Nepal Joint Commission in 2023, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, human rights, good governance, SDGs, investment promotion, and addressing global challenges such as climate change. Nepal shared its progress and challenges in realization of the SDGs.

The EU welcomed Nepal's Transition Strategy for LDC graduation and committed to continuing cooperation through the new MIP 2021-2027, aligned with Nepal's national plans. The meeting also acknowledged the Sub-commission meeting on development cooperation held on 6 March, while Nepal appreciated the MIP for aligning with the plans and priorities of the Government of Nepal.

The EU's Global Gateway initiative, launched in 2021, aims to mobilize 300 billion globally by 2027 in support of digital, energy, education, and health infrastructure. In Nepal, it supports climate-resilient growth, education, and green energy.

Notable initiatives include:

- 'Quality Education for All' (50 million) – focusing on teacher training

and local education governance.

- Efficient Transmission of Electricity (2.4 million) – a joint project with KfW and EIB in Bagmati province to reduce fossil fuel reliance and improve grid efficiency.

- GREEN (4 million) – promoting private sector investment in renewable energy across multiple provinces.

- Green Resilient Energy for Economic Prosperity (23.6 million) – enhancing power evacuation in Bharatpur, Butwal, and Pokhara.

- SASEC Electricity Transmission Project (20.9 million) – expanding grid coverage in Karnali and Lumbini to reduce energy poverty and support cross-border trade.

Moreover, Former Ambassador of Nepal to Denmark, Yuba Nath Lam-sal, noted the long history and strong bonds of Nepal-EU relations. However, with geopolitical shifts and conflict in Europe, he says the EU may focus more internally, possibly reducing foreign aid. "Since they are expected to focus more on their own defence, foreign aid is likely to dwindle. This will have an impact on Nepal as well. Though friendly relations will continue, the volume of economic cooperation from the EU as such and EU countries is likely to be slashed in the future," he added.



▲ Deputy Managing Director of the EU External Affairs for Asia and the Pacific Paola Pampaloni.

The EU is one of Nepal's major trading partners. As per government data, Nepal mainly exports handmade carpets, textiles, gems, jewelry, wood, paper, and leather products to the EU, while importing engineering goods, telecom equipment, chemicals, metals, and agricultural products.

Support for the Peace Process

On July 14, German Ambassador Dr. Michael Koch met with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) team, led by Chairperson Mahesh Thapa, to discuss the ongoing Transitional Justice process. At the

meeting, Ambassador Koch reaffirmed Germany's continued support and expressed hope for further progress in ensuring truth, justice, and reconciliation in Nepal.

The EU and its member states continue to support Nepal's Transitional Justice process and closely follow the activities of the TRC and the Commission on the Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP). The two commissions were established in 2015 to address human rights violations from the 1996–2006 Maoist conflict. However, nearly two decades after the peace accord between the government



▲ The delegation is led by Evelyn Regner (Austria) the vice president of the European Parliament and comprise Ulrike Müller (Germany) Tomáš Zdechovský (Czechia) and Maximilian Krahl (Germany).

“ As per government data, Nepal mainly exports **handmade carpets, textiles, gems, jewelry, wood, paper, and leather products to the EU** ”

and the Maoists, Nepal has yet to conclude the process.

Political disagreements and differing positions among victims have delayed progress. In an effort to move forward, Nepal's Federal Parliament endorsed the amended TJ law on August 14, 2024. A week later, the bill was unanimously passed. Nine countries and the EU welcomed the law's passage, expressing readiness to support its implementation and highlighting the importance of victim participation in decision-making.

In a joint statement, the USA, Switzerland, Australia, UK, Norway, Japan, Finland, EU, Germany, and France expressed support for the amendment to the TRC Act. "The undersigned welcome the Investigation of Disappeared Persons, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2071 (Amendment) Bill passed with consensus by both houses of the Federal Parliament of Nepal," the statement read. They stressed that now is the time for all stakeholders to work together to bring this chapter of Nepal's history to a close. With new officials appointed to both commissions, the TJ process has now regained momentum.

Moreover, the EU has also contributed to Nepal's peace process through the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF). The EU has provided around Rs. 2.22 billion (22 million EURO) financial support for Nepal. The support was provided through the Ministry of Finance of Nepal. The EU also provided additional funding for specific projects under the NPTF. In 2009, additionally, the EU provided Rs. 652 million (EURO



The 21 Ambassadors and representatives from European Union Member States based in New Delhi hold a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba. Photo: MoFA.

5.95 million) for the peace process. The Nepal government had formed NPTF, where multi-donor agencies can contribute. The responsibility of NPTF was focusing on four key areas-- Social Dimensions/Conflict Affected Peoples (CAPs), Transitional Justice and Reconciliation, Access to Security, and the Political dimension.

Regarding the development of the TJ process, EU Ambassador to Nepal, Veronique Lorenzo, acknowledged the presentation of Nepal's peace process. Chiranjibi Bhandari, an Assistant Professor at the Central Department of Conflict, Peace and Development

Studies of Tribhuvan University and also the principal investigator of the Research Report "Transitional Justice in Nepal: Stumbling Blocks and Way Forward—2024," emphasized the shared responsibility of government and civil society to support victims. He also urged reflection on why the commissions failed in the past and how to improve future efforts.

He added, "It is the stakeholders' collective responsibility to explore why both commissions failed in the past to accomplish their tasks and how upcoming commissions can better ensure the smooth operation of

the process." Nepal must continue engaging with the EU to resolve the long-pending TJ process.

Air Safety and Tourism

The EU has banned Nepali airlines since December 2014, raising aviation safety concerns, a ban that remains in place to this day. This affects not only air access to Europe but also the arrival of EU tourists in Nepal.

The ban followed Nepal's failure to meet international aviation safety standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). EU has also shown concern over the structure and dual role of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) as both regulator and service provider, leading to a conflict of interest.

To address the issue, the Government of Nepal introduced a safety program. However, the EU and its technical team remain unsatisfied with the attempt. As a result, the ban remains. EU Ambassador to Nepal Lorenzo noted that the EU wants Nepal to grow in tourism and to receive tourists from the EU. "That is a small irritant in the relationship. But we want Nepal to grow in tourism. To be able to get our tourists." She further added that measures still need to be adopted by CAAN to meet minimum standards, as it is all about passenger safety. "Our joint

objective is to remove Nepal from the air safety list," stressed the EU Ambassador.

During her visit to Germany in July, Nepal's Foreign Minister Dr. Rana raised the issue with German Foreign Minister Dr. Johann David Wadephul. She requested Germany's support in establishing direct air connectivity and urged support in lifting the EU ban on Nepali airlines. She informed that Nepal has introduced two new bills in parliament to reform its civil aviation sector in line with EU and ICAO recommendations, and appealed to Germany, as a key EU member, to advocate for the ban's removal. Minister Wadephul responded positively and assured Nepal of Germany's assistance on this matter.

Despite the ban, Nepal welcomed more European tourists in 2024 than the previous year. Tourists from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands reached nearly 95,000 in total, according to Nepal Tourism Board data.

The 15th EU–Nepal Joint Commission in Kathmandu last year also underlined air safety as a key area of cooperation. Nepal assured the EU it would address the findings of the 2023 EU assessment mission. Both sides agreed to continue engagement at the technical level, and it is expected that

more tourists will arrive in Nepal from the EU following the lifting of the issue.

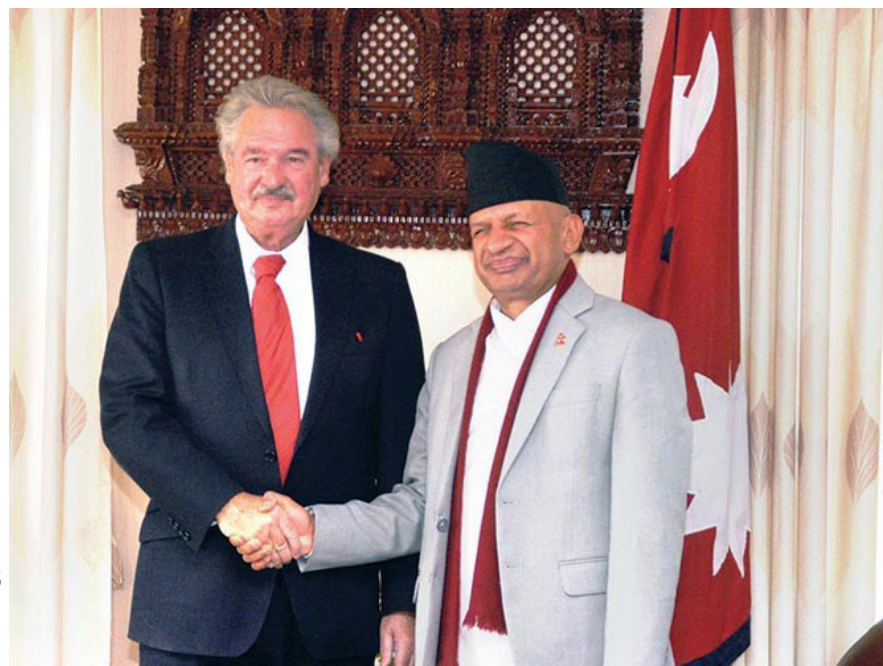
Conclusion

Beyond aviation, the EU has stood with Nepal during major crises, including the 2015 earthquake, the 2023 Jajarkot earthquake, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU also provides Erasmus fellowships for young Nepali students. Likewise, the growing Nepali diaspora in the EU plays a growing role in bilateral ties, with many returning to invest in Nepal. Unofficially, around a hundred thousand Nepalis are residing in European countries, including the UK.

Former Ambassador to Denmark Yuba Nath Lamsal noted, "There is no problem in Nepal's relations with the EU at present and none is expected in the near future. Goodwill and friendship between Nepal and the EU will continue even in the future. However, Nepal is yet to receive the level of cooperation from the EU and its member countries that it deserves."

He added that due to its global and geopolitical importance, Nepal must strengthen its diplomatic efforts in Europe to attract greater attention and support. He further said that if Nepal performs well diplomatically, European focus on Asia, which has shifted from the region in recent times, can return. ■

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn met Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in 2020.





Nepal in Parliamentary Diplomacy: Expanding Role in a Changing Global Order

Diplomacy is as old as civilization itself. Historical records indicate that as early as 3,000 years ago, civilizations like the Sumerians and Assyrians engaged in diplomatic exchanges, forging treaties between kings and empires. The Treaty of Kadesh (1258 BC) between ancient Egypt and the Hittites is widely recognized as the world's first written diplomatic agreement. In South Asia, diplomacy evolved through the strategic doctrines of Kautilya (Chanakya) in India, the interplay between statecraft and war in ancient China, and the balance of religion, commerce, and political power during the medieval period.

Nepal too has a rich history in diplomacy. In the medieval era, King Yaksha Malla attempted to build friendly ties with neighboring states, reflecting our long-standing diplomatic heritage.

The modern diplomatic era began around 1500 AD, marking the emergence of national sovereignty as a guiding principle in foreign affairs and laying the groundwork for today's nation-state system. With the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920, multilateral diplomacy was



RT. HON. DEVRAJ GHIMIRE
The writer is the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nepal.

introduced as a mechanism for world peace. Since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, this organization has been regarded as the largest forum for world diplomacy.

Nepal has maintained friendly relations with neighboring countries since ancient times. After joining the United Nations in 1955, Nepal began engaging in modern diplomacy and is currently active in many diplomatic forums such as NAM, SAARC, and BIMSTEC along with the United Nations. In the 21st century, new trends began to emerge, such as parliamentary diplomacy,

public diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, and climate diplomacy. The rising role of digital media and social media has also brought about changes in diplomatic practices.

Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy refers to diplomatic activities conducted by members of a country's parliament or legislature, as an alternative to diplomacy conducted by traditional diplomats or government officials. It involves building relationships, exchanging ideas, and expanding dialogue between parliaments and parliamentarians of different countries to advance common goals, address global challenges, and foster mutual understanding between nations.

Such diplomacy is often conducted through bilateral or multilateral meetings, parliamentary assembly conferences, and other institutional programs. Such programs help parliamentarians share their experiences and advocate for their national interests. In addition to formal meetings, informal networking and dialogue also play an important role in parliamentary diplomacy. Conferences such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),

the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), and others are excellent examples of parliamentary diplomacy.

Nepal in Parliamentary Diplomacy

Over the past few decades, the Federal Parliament of Nepal has expanded parliamentary diplomacy practices. The two Houses of the parliament have made a significant presence while engaging actively in international forums such as the IPU on issues such as democracy, sustainable development, gender equality, peacebuilding, etc. Foreign visits by parliamentarians to participate in various forums, establishment of parliamentary friendship groups, and participation in multilateral dialogues are important practices of parliamentary diplomacy. For a developing country like Nepal, parliamentary diplomacy serves as an effective tool to promote the country's prosperity, development, and international relations.

Since joining the IPU in 1967, Nepal has maintained a continuous high-level presence. Beginning with the 86th IPU Assembly in 1991, Nepal has sent delegations led by the Speaker and Chair of the National Assembly. Recently, Nepal marked a historic achievement of being represented for the first time in the standing committees under the Inter-Legislative Union (IPU). At the 150th IPU General Assembly held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, National Assembly Member Dr. Anjan Shakya was elected as a member of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development. Likewise, Sobita Gautam, a member of the House of Representatives, was elected to the Health Committee. MP Shakya had won the election representing the Asia-Pacific region. This achievement marks the first time that Nepal has held such policymaking and decision-making roles within the IPU.

This achievement has broadened the scope of parliamentary diplomacy for Nepal. Compared to previous participations, Nepal now has access to understanding the internal workings of the IPU and contributing to leadership development. Our lawmakers have been able to present their views and experiences on global agendas such as health and sustainable development on the international stage, enhancing Nepal's presence and

influence. This achievement indicates that Nepal's parliamentary diplomacy has now progressed from 'formal participation and opinion-making' stage to the 'decision-making' process.

To advance the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we are going to organize a regional seminar in Nepal. During that seminar, the IPU President and Secretary General for Asia-Pacific are visiting Nepal. Simultaneously, we are also working to host the General Assembly of the IPU. For that, an exchange program has been held with the Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (INTER PARES) and Ireland, where the high-ranking officials of the Secretary-General of the Federal Parliament Secretariat of Nepal have visited. Moreover, a visit to Australia and Malaysia has been led by the Chair

My goal is to develop Nepal's Parliament into a strong institution that plays an effective role in diplomatic activities through active engagement.

and Vice-Chair of the National Assembly, in which the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly also participated. Furthermore, Nepal is being represented at the Speakers Conference while also organizing the Hindu Kush Himalaya Conference next month. The coordination of this has been given to the Agriculture Committee of the Parliament.

My priorities

Since being elected to the House of Representatives on January 19, 2023, I have highly prioritised parliamentary diplomacy as a mechanism to make parliamentary practice more effective. Efforts have been made to ensure Nepal's leadership participation in international forums such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Nepal's achievements at the 150th IPU

General Assembly are the results of the coordinated efforts, including my initiative to reach out to the Speakers of 35 countries to ensure Nepal's active presence. The goal of involving Nepali parliamentarians in international committees and advancing their leadership roles has been highly fruitful.

Meanwhile, I believe Nepal should not only participate in these bilateral and multilateral parliamentary forums, but also host such events. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia has already visited Nepal, as have the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Ireland and the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Parliamentary visits and experience exchange programs have been held with friendly countries including India, China, the European Union, and the United States. Parliamentary friendship groups with 44 countries are being established, aiming to create a sustainable platform for cooperation. I believe such groups can be a great tool for expanding parliamentary diplomacy.

The visit of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to Nepal in October 2023 and his address to the Parliament held much significance and gained global attention. In particular, issues such as climate change and regional peace have been highlighted in international forums. Efforts have been made to internationalize Nepal's impact on climate change by developing forums such as the Climate Parliament.

Priority has been given to courtesy visits and exchange of visits between parliamentary officials and high-ranking officials with diplomatic representatives of various countries. In such meetings, Nepal's experience of inclusive democracy, including peace process, constitution-making, and federalism, has been highly promoted.

My goal is to develop Nepal's Parliament into a strong institution that plays an effective role in diplomatic activities through active engagement, strategic partnership, and clear vision. Parliamentary diplomacy not only reflects a nation's foreign policy, but also contributes to its formulation. For Nepal, the evolving practice of parliamentary diplomacy is not just complementary to traditional diplomacy, it is also becoming an indispensable part of how we engage with the world. ■

Shifting from Rhinos to Elephants



The tradition of wildlife diplomacy in Nepal dates back to the Rana regime in the mid-1800s, when it was customary to host Western elites and royals for big game hunting in the Tarai.



GOBINDA PRASAD POKHAREL

(The writer is a former science and environment journalist currently working as a conservation officer at the National Trust for Nature Conservation.)

Nepal's wildlife diplomacy has taken a new turn with the decision to gift two elephants – Khagendra Prasad and Rudrakali – to Qatar. This will mark the first time Nepal has gifted elephants to another country. In the past, Nepal has gifted rhinos, leopards, red pandas, and other wild species.

Nepal continued its tradition of wildlife diplomacy during K.P. Sharma Oli's first term as Prime Minister. On July 10, 2016, his cabinet decided to gift rhinos to China, making it the first live animal gift since Nepal became a federal democratic republic. Previously,

such gestures were mostly made by the Royal family during the monarchy. The decision followed a meeting in January 2016 between then Forest Minister Agni Sapkota and Zhang Jianlong, Director of China's National Forestry Administration. Nepal gifted two pairs of rhinos to China in 2018. However, one died after the transfer. Later, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal decided to gift another pair of rhinos. Some media sources suggest that in return, China agreed to help Nepal construct the Suryabinayak Zoo in Bhaktapur, though this has not been officially confirmed.

The latest decision to gift a pair of elephants stems from a commitment made by former President Bidhya Devi Bhandari to the Emir of Qatar during her four-day state visit in November 2018. The elephants selected – Khagendra Prasad (male) and Rudrakali (female) – were identified by a technical team formed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). Both were born and raised at the Elephant Breeding Center (EBC) in Sauraha, Chitwan, and are the offspring of Ronaldo, a notorious tuskier involved in human-elephant conflict in Chitwan for over a decade.

Photo: NTNC.



▲ Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli handing over documents to the then-Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Yu Hong, for presenting a couple of rhinos, Bhadra and Rupasi, to China on July 12, 2018. Photo: NTNC

Established in 1985 at Chitwan National Park, EBC was created to boost elephant populations through breeding, support scientific research, and assist in forest patrols. Initially, the center had six males and 14 females brought from India, Thailand, and Myanmar. According to Manipuran Chaudhary, who oversees elephant management at EBC, the center now has 58 elephants, including 12 calves.

Transporting elephants internationally is a complex and risky task. It requires specialized enclosures, experienced wildlife technicians, veterinarians, trained mahouts, and a skilled field team. The elephants must be transported from Chitwan to the international airport before being flown to Qatar. Interestingly, it will take less time to fly them to Qatar than to move them from Chitwan to the airport.

Wildlife Diplomacy: Then & Now
The tradition of wildlife diplomacy

in Nepal dates back to the Rana regime in the mid-1800s, when it was customary to host Western elites and royals for big game hunting in the Tarai. After the fall of the Rana regime, the practice of gifting wild animals became more common.

Since the 1950s, Nepal has gifted over 50 wild animals to various countries. These include gharial and mugger crocodile eggs to Japan, six rhinos to the US, four each to China and India, and two each to the UK, Japan, Thailand, Austria, Germany, and Singapore.

In return, Nepal has received elephants, lions, zebras, chimpanzees, kangaroos, bears, Chinese alligators, and other exotic species. All such exchanges occurred during the monarchy, before the federal democratic republic was established in 2008.

This shift is likely due to evolving international conventions and animal protection laws. In Nepal, wildlife exchanges are governed by the

National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Rules, 1973 (amended in 2019), which allow the gifting of wild animals. In 2006, Nepal's last crown prince, Paras Bikram Shah, gifted a pair of rhinos to the Vienna Zoo.

Soft Power Through Wildlife

Elephant diplomacy is gaining traction in South and Southeast Asia. In 2025, Myanmar gifted five female and one male elephant to Russia as a symbol of strengthening ties between the two nations. These elephants were reportedly gifted in return for six fighter jets that Russia had gifted to Myanmar. In 2010, Sri Lanka gifted two elephants to South Korea. Sri Lanka has gifted more than 35 elephants to countries like New Zealand, Canada, USA, etc.

Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and India are also active practitioners of elephant diplomacy. This symbolic exchange of wild animals reflects each country's soft power signalling greater political ties.

Elephants are listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List. In Nepal, they are protected under Schedule I of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (1973) and are included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Appendix I species are threatened with extinction, and their trade is strictly regulated. Both import and export permits are required, and the exporting country must confirm that the transfer will not harm the species and that the recipient has the capacity to care for the animals. The exchange must also be non-commercial.

Emeritus Professor Thomas R. Trautmann of the University of Michigan, in his book *Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History*, explains the deep historical relationship between rulers and elephants. According to Trautmann, elephants have long served as emblems of power and eminence and were used in royal sacrifices, grand hunts, military campaigns and public displays. He further argues that royal fascination with elephants indirectly contributed to the preservation of their habitats and population in the Indian subcontinent.

As Nepal prepares to gift elephants to a Gulf nation for the first time, it should strategically lobby for



Transporting elephants internationally is a complex and risky task. **It requires specialized enclosures, experienced wildlife technicians.**

investment in its conservation sector from Qatar. Back in 1998, Nepal had gifted two leopard cubs to Malaysia, presented a pelt and skull of gaur and tiger, skull and hide of sambar deer and sloth bear, and skin and feathers of a peacock to Prince Khalid Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia. As thousands of Nepali immigrant

workers are employed in these countries, this form of wildlife diplomacy should be used as an opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties and secure much-needed support for Nepal's economic development and biodiversity conservation efforts.

With its strong biodiversity conservation investment and output, Nepal can position itself as a regional leader in conservation diplomacy, using wildlife exchanges to advocate for long-term partnerships, capacity-building programs, and joint investment in protected areas, ecotourism and wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure. Gifting wild animals is more than a ceremonial gesture. It is a reminder that Nepal holds significant biological wealth. If planned and leveraged wisely, the new 'Elephant Diplomacy' could become a proven and powerful tool to attract new interests and investments, for Nepal's long-term developmental goals at a global scale. ■

SAMBA

THE GOAL MACHINE

Shattering Records from Nepal to France

Sabitri Bhandari 'Samba' is rewriting possibilities for Nepali football, one electrifying goal at a time.

Photo: ANFA & Subash Humagain

TDN CORRESPONDENT

In the quiet hills of Lamjung, about 190 kilometers northwest of the country's capital city, Kathmandu, lies the small village of Simpani, officially known as Pamchowk, in Marsyangdi Rural Municipality-9. From these humble surroundings emerged one of Nepal's most celebrated sporting icons – Sabitri Bhandari, fondly known as Samba.

At 28, Samba's journey from the winding trails of Lamjung to the Nepal national team, a top-tier European league, and Australia and New Zealand

based premier A-League competition is more than just a story of sporting triumph. It is a testament to resilience, hunger, and an unshakable belief in dreams that stretch beyond the hills. She has now proven herself at local and national levels in international tournaments. There seems to be no team that can stop her, whether in international matches or club tournaments across different parts of the world. Samba is not just Nepal's top scorer. She is a symbol of possibility, proving that talent born in any corner of the world can rise to claim the global stage.

Just recently, in the first week of July, Nepal missed out on qualifying

for the AFC Women's Asia Cup 2026 after losing 4-2 to Uzbekistan in Tashkent in the final Group F fixture of the qualifiers. Even then, Nepal's superstar Samba shone brightly, scoring nine goals during the qualifiers, including a hat-trick in the final against Uzbekistan. It was also her first time captaining Nepal. She scored two goals to bring Nepal level at 3-3 in regular time. Unfortunately, Nepal lost in the penalty shootout. A win would have given Nepal a chance to play in the Asia Cup for the fourth time. Earlier, Nepal had competed in the tournament in 1986, 1989, and 1999 without playing any qualifiers.





Prior to the final match, Samba had already scored seven goals. In her first match as captain, she netted four goals in Nepal's 9-0 win over Laos. She then scored a hat-trick in an 8-0 victory over Sri Lanka. Overall, Samba has played 60 games for Nepal and has scored a remarkable 64 goals, the highest by any Nepali footballer in international matches. In comparison, the top goal tally in Nepali men's football is 13, shared by three strikers – Hari Khadka, Niranjana Rayamaji, and Anjan Bista.

Samba is a star not only for Nepal but also celebrated in South Asia, Europe, and West Asia. She has excelled wherever she's gone. A player for Nepal's Armed

Police Force Club, Samba made her international debut in 2014 against Bhutan during the SAFF Women's Championship, where she scored in her very first match.

In 2019, she joined India's Sethu FC. Her impressive performance helped the club win the Indian Women's League in her first season. Later, she moved to Gokulam Kerala, where she guided the team to league titles in 2019-20 and 2022-23. She also finished as top scorer in both seasons, with 16 and 29 goals respectively. In 2023, she moved to West Asia.

Speaking to The Diplomat Nepal, Samba shared, "Cristiano Ronaldo is my inspiration and playing football is my passion. I want to give my 100 per cent during the game. I want to win for the team. I don't think about records. But after scoring and winning, records just happen."

Samba then went on to play for Israel's Hapoel Raanana Women's Football Club, becoming the first Nepali woman to play club football in Europe. In 2024, she joined French Division 1 side En Avant Guingamp Féminines, proving herself yet again as one of the best strikers.

After departing from French Club En Avant Guingamp Féminines after a two-year journey, Samba signed a two-year contract with Wellington Phoenix, a New Zealand-based Club, in July this year. She will now play in Australia's A-League Women. She became the 17th player signed by Wellington Phoenix for the 2025/26 A-League Women's season.

Sanjeev Mishra, a Nepali football expert, who has followed her career from the start, commented, "Samba is one of the best players Nepal has ever produced. She's a threat to any team in South Asia, in Asia, and now, in Europe too. She's shown her talent wherever she's played." He added, "Samba can score from the centre, left, or right against any team. If defenders make a mistake, she'll score. She can also create chances for others." With every match and every goal, Samba continues to inspire young Nepalis to follow their dreams and chase possibilities beyond hardships. ■

Photo: En Avant Guingamp Féminines

Nepal wins the ICC Digital Fan Engagement of the Year Award

TDN CORRESPONDENT

Kathmandu: The Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) has won the ICC Digital Fan Engagement of the Year Award for the Asia regional category of the ICC's 2024 Development Awards. The award was presented during the ICC Annual Conference 2025 in Singapore.

The announcement of the winner in this category came a month prior, securing CAN its first two consecutive awards, the first one being in 2023.

The Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN), established in 1946, became an Associate Member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 1996. Additionally, Nepal has also appeared in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup twice in 2014 and 2024.

Jay Shah, ICC Chair, celebrated the winners of the accolades while also emphasising the importance of these awards. "It is a pleasure to announce the global winners of the ICC Development Awards. This is a celebration of global exceptionalism, with all winners worthy of the accolades they have received in their mission to grow the game in emerging nations," added Shah.

According to the International



Cricket Council (ICC), CAN's strategic expansion across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, and their newly launched CAN Domestic Facebook accounts resulted in a total reach of approximately 117 million and an overall follower increase from a little more than 1.17 million to over 1.59 million, gaining more than 420,000 new followers.

Moreover, on Facebook (CAN Official), video minutes viewed doubled to more than 13.4 million, while the

new CAN Domestic account achieved over 4.4 million minutes, showcasing domestic cricket's appeal. YouTube watch time surged by 277% to more than 2.13 million hours, and Instagram views leaped above 40 million, captivating fans with highlights, player stories, and live updates.

Alongside Nepal, other countries included Bhutan, Indonesia, Namibia, Scotland, Tanzania, the USA, and Vanuatu, which were among the eight Members receiving top honours.

CAN Secretary Khadka Presents Nepal Cricket at ICC Annual Conference in Singapore

Kathmandu: Paras Khadka, Secretary of the CAN, presented Nepal Cricket and the Nepal Premier League (NPL) to the global cricketing community at the ICC Annual Conference 2025 in Singapore.

"On behalf of Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN), we would like to thank the ICC – International



Cricket Council for giving us this opportunity to showcase the impact that the NPL made last year and the progress we are making towards growing into a full-fledged cricketing nation," said Khadka during his presentation.

His 10 minutes long remarks highlighted Nepal's growing presence in international cricket and its ambition to rise as a competitive force in the global arena.



LANGTANG

Where Nature Meets Culture

PHOTO AND TEXT BY MANISH ARYAL

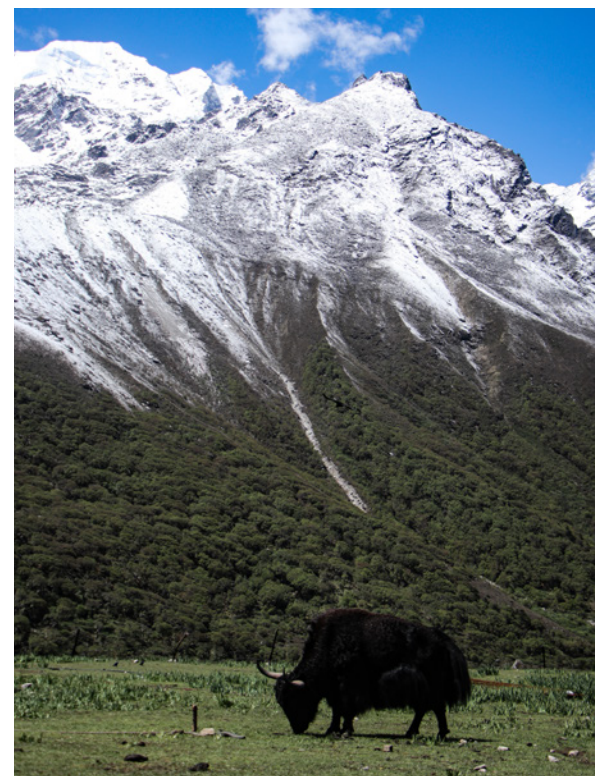
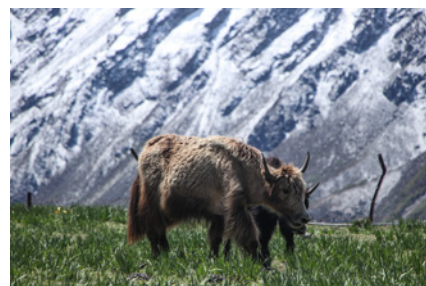
One of Nepal's most captivating destinations, Langtang region sits in the northern part of Rasuwa district, near the border with Tibet. The region is famous for its stunning landscapes, rich heritage and adventure tourism.

Moreover, Langtang's heart is the Langtang National Park, which is rich in wildlife and nature. The Langtang National Park is the home to rare species like the red panda, Himalayan black bear and snow leopard, as well as many birds and alpine plants. In addition, the region has Langtang Lirung, which is at 7,227m elevation and is the highest peak of the Langtang Himal. People living in Langtang are mostly

of the Tamang community, known for their warm hospitality, vibrant traditions and deep spiritual roots. Cultural landmarks such as Kyanjin Gumpa and local cheese production centers offer visitors a glimpse into the everyday life and resilience of the mountain communities.

Located about 120 kilometers from Kathmandu, the region is accessible by road up to Syabrubesi and Sherpa Gaun, serving as starting points for deeper exploration. Langtang is an ideal destination for trekking, mountaineering, wildlife observation or simply a spiritual retreat.

Whether it's the snow-capped mountains, quiet villages, or the still waters of Gosainkunda Lake, Langtang has a way of leaving a lasting impression on each visitor. ■





RAMESH ADHIKARI

The writer is a freelance development consultant specializing in democracy, governance, and foreign affairs.

▲ Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and his Spouse Radhika Shakya with President of the United States Donald Trump and his Spouse Melania at the reception hosted by President Trump in New York.

Friendship, Challenges, and Opportunities

Nepal and the United States are set to celebrate 80 years of diplomatic ties in three years, a relationship that began in 1948. Despite being more than 7,000 kilometers apart, Nepal was one of the first South Asian countries to formalize relations with the US, a landmark development in regional diplomacy. Over the decades, this relationship has remained amicable and largely free of major conflict, evolving into a multifaceted association with government-to-government (G2G), people-to-people (P2P), economic, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions.

Geopolitics, the Nepali diaspora, and Nepal's development have all contributed to this special bond. As the relationship extends into areas such as development, democracy, human rights, education, health, agriculture, disaster management, climate change, trade, and security, new challenges and opportunities are emerging amid shifting global dynamics and evolving US policies.

Historical Background

A Foundation of Collaboration: Nepal-US relations began in 1945 with the arrival of American emissary

George R. Merrell, who later served as the first US ambassador (from New Delhi) in 1947. The US diplomatically recognized Nepal as a sovereign nation that year and honored Gurkha soldiers who fought in World War II by awarding them the Legion of Merit. By 1959, the US had opened its embassy in Kathmandu, affirming its commitment to Nepal's development.

Since 1951, the US has been a leading bilateral donor to Nepal, contributing over one billion dollars through programs such as the Point Four Program, which focused on technical assistance, and the

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), established by President Kennedy in 1961. USAID has supported Nepal in sectors like education, health, agriculture, and democratic governance for over seventy years.

The US Peace Corps, initiated in Nepal in 1962, has advanced grassroots development by placing volunteers as English teachers, health professionals, and development advisors, primarily in rural areas. Though temporarily suspended during Nepal's Maoist conflict, the program later resumed, continuing its legacy of capacity building. Additionally, the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation has supported the conservation of Nepal's cultural heritage, while US agencies such as the Department of Justice (DOJ), the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have funded various sectors.

However, policy shifts under the Trump administration have threatened this bilateral cooperation. The proposed suspension of USAID operations, with an estimated \$131 million cut for 2025, jeopardizes crucial programs in education, health, agriculture, climate change, governance, democracy, and women's empowerment. The UK's decision to reduce its aid commitment from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI adds to this potential double setback, highlighting the need for strategic resilience.

A Multifaceted Partnership

Nepal-US relations thrive at both governmental and civil society levels. On the G2G front, the US has traditionally supported Nepal's democratic processes, economic development, and regional stability. A key example is the 2017 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact - a \$500 million grant for energy and transport infrastructure. Proposed by the Nepali government and tailored to its interests, this initiative aims to bolster Nepal's infrastructure development. Nepal's strong negotiating stance and commitment to partnerships with the US were evident in the MCC's approval by the Nepali parliament in 2022, despite domestic opposition. The MCC's extension until 2025 further stabilizes this collaboration.



▲ Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba and the US Under Secretary for Political Affairs John Bass signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a bilateral consultation mechanism between Nepal and the USA.

An estimated 350,000 Nepalis currently live in the United States, forming the backbone of the P2P relationship between the two nations. Data from 2023-24 indicates that 16,742 Nepali students were studying in the US, making Nepal the tenth-largest source of international students. Organizations such as the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) are working to strengthen ties through public engagement and cultural preservation.

Geopolitical Challenges

Nepal's geopolitical position between India and China presents diplomatic balancing challenges, as demonstrated by the recent MCC controversy. Critics, especially those with pro-China leanings, framed the MCC as part of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy and counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), sparking domestic debates and drawing Chinese objections. In 2022, US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu warned that the US might reconsider bilateral relations if the MCC was not ratified, raising concerns about Nepal's foreign policy autonomy. However, the MCC's eventual approval enabled significant investments in power transmission lines and road upgrades, reinforcing mutual trust.

The Trump administration's "America First" and transactional foreign policy in 2025 prioritizes larger nations over smaller ones like Nepal. Combined with aid cuts, this shift challenges Nepal to navigate a complex foreign policy landscape while maintaining strong ties with the US.

Opportunities and a Roadmap for the Future

A strategic roadmap centered on four pillars can enhance Nepal-US relations and address 21st-century challenges:

Strategic Dialogue and Coordination: Institutionalizing regular high-level strategic dialogues can enhance Nepal's diplomatic influence and promote regional stability. Collaborating with the US, China, and India can help Nepal balance competing interests and safeguard its sovereignty.

Strengthening Education, Technology, and Economic Interdependence: Expanding university exchanges and research partnerships can deepen educational and technological ties. Improved coordination between federal, provincial, and local governments in programs like the MCC can enhance governance and drive economic growth.

Institutionalizing People-to-People Relations: Creating long-term connections between the Nepali diaspora and US institutions will foster cultural exchange and sustained collaboration, strengthening grassroots relationships.

Governance and Negotiation Capacity Building: To maximize Western aid effectiveness, Nepal must strengthen its internal governance and negotiation capacity. Transparent, mutually respectful partnerships will ensure aid aligns with national priorities and promotes self-reliance.

The Nepal-US relationship, spanning more than 75 years, is a rich tapestry of cooperation, cultural ties, and shared aspirations. From USAID's early initiatives to the MCC's investments, the friendship has underpinned Nepal's development. The vibrant Nepali diaspora in the US, serves as a living bridge between the two nations. As new challenges emerge from shifting geopolitics and foreign aid uncertainties, strengthening this relationship through dialogue, education, governance collaboration, and institutionalized P2P engagement is key. Beyond diplomatic protocol, enduring trust, transparency, and cooperation focused on development will determine the future of Nepal-US relations. The true potential of this partnership can only be realized in a world where political will and mutual respect prevail. ■



H.E. ROB FENN
British Ambassador to Nepal

“Our Overarching Goal is to Help Nepal Connect With Global Capital Markets”

Few foreign diplomats have embraced Nepal with as much heart and soul as His Excellency Rob Fenn, the British Ambassador to Nepal. Since his appointment as the ambassador to the Himalayan nation in August 2023, he has celebrated his 22nd wedding anniversary at the sacred Janaki Temple in Janakpur, ridden his bike through the hills of Kathmandu, relished selroti with chiya, and joyfully spoke in Nepali across his social media. Doing that, he has made himself a part of Nepal’s vibrant tapestry, blending diplomacy with genuine cultural immersion.

H.E. Fenn previously served as the UK’s Deputy Head of Mission in Indonesia from 2018 to 2022. Moreover, he joined the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) in 1983 and subsequently held a variety of roles, with diplomatic assignments in Cyprus, Rome, and New York. He was also the British High Commissioner to Brunei from 2009 to 2013.

Since his arrival in Nepal, Ambassador Fenn has become one of the most active and popular ambassadors. Therefore, The Diplomat Nepal sat down with him to talk about Nepal-UK relations, opportunities in investment and trade, and his deeply personal experience of discovering and embracing Nepal.

Nepal and the UK share a bilateral relationship that spans over 200 years. How do you view this longstanding friendship between the two nations?

I see it as a precious legacy. Our partnership has deep foundations. But we are building something modern.

You arrived in Nepal in August 2023. After spending nearly two years here, how would you describe your experience so far?

The most rewarding chapter of my career. And the most fun I have ever had “at work”.





▲ H.E. Rob Fenn at the launch of 'Unlocking Data with AI,' a UK-backed project introducing 'Sita,' an AI system supporting Nepal's digital transformation in health data, in April 2025. Photo: UK in Nepal

You recently visited the UK and attended the Nepal-UK Tech Forum organized by the Nepali Embassy in London. How was the program, and what were your key takeaways from the event?

Brilliant. Ambassador Chandra Ghimire is a skillful exponent of economic diplomacy. He assembled a roomful of potential investors in Nepal, from the diaspora and beyond. And he brought knowledgeable speakers, such as Sushil Gyewali (Investment Board Nepal's CEO), to explain the economic opportunities here.

What are the current priorities of the UK in Nepal?

Our overarching goal is to help Nepal connect with global capital markets, escape a low-employment paradigm and fulfil its whole potential, without damaging the things it is already famous for. Since that is also the goal of the government, you will find the UK active in most sectors of

the National Plan, and collaborating with all Nepal's development partners, bilateral and multilateral.

Are there any plans to expand the UK's presence or investment in Nepal?

- You bet! Our latest recruit from the UK is a digital expert. We aim to raise our game in the IT/Tech sector, developing both technical cooperation and trade.

As Nepal's oldest friend, the UK has consistently supported the country during challenging times, from earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic to other crises. Today, Nepal is also facing the growing impacts of climate change. Could you share what role the UK is playing in supporting Nepal's efforts toward climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Helping Nepal adapt to climate change and access climate finance

is a top priority. We do this through our bilateral programme: Resilience, Adaptation and Inclusion in Nepal (RAIN); through our regional programme Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA), under which we collaborate with ICIMOD; and through diplomatic support. For example, Baroness Hayman's attendance at the recent Sagarmatha Sambaad.

How do you see the human rights situation in Nepal, and what is your comment on the evolving transitional justice process?

Protection of human rights starts from a high base: an admired constitution, vigorously defended by the Supreme Court, with separation of powers – between parliament and the executive – and freedom of speech. Like many countries, Nepal sometimes struggles to enforce these values, and like all post-conflict countries, Nepal is finding Transitional Justice the hardest test of all. Given all the socio-economic



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn and Baroness Hayman, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom, at Nepal's Sagarmatha Sambaad in May 2025. Photo: UK in Nepal

“
The Nepal / UK Tech Forum in London led to the creation of a bilateral Digital Working Group with an ambitious agenda; and useful meetings between the Investment Board of Nepal and UK Export Finance (UKEF).”

progress Nepal has made since the civil war, Nepal's friends would like to see the country travel this “last yard”.

Have there been any new initiatives taken to strengthen UK-Nepal trade relations?

The Nepal / UK Tech Forum in London led to the creation of a bilateral Digital Working Group with an ambitious agenda; and useful meetings between the Investment Board of Nepal and UK Export Finance (UKEF). That was built on a UK-Nepal Business Forum in February, and a strong British showing at the National Investment Summit. All these initiatives reflect the UK Government's “growth mission” and the work of the Kathmandu-based office of our Department of Business and Trade. Most recently, the UK government has simplified its Developing Countries' Trading Scheme (DCTS). Countries eligible to trade with the UK without tariffs, such as Nepal, no longer need to prove their goods do not

include components from countries which do face a UK tariff.

Are there any UK investments or private sector collaborations in key Nepali industries like hydropower, tourism, or other sectors?

On the public sector side (ODA), in April, British International Investment (BII) took a \$22mn stake in NMB Bank's green bond (Nepal's first international bond) – investment, which will reinforce the hydro sector. The Embassy has also recently unveiled our “Nepal in Business” programme, which seeks to invest capital and advice in medium sized enterprises, to help them grow and generate employment. On the truly private side, we hope that the Dolma Impact Fund will very soon be permitted successfully to exit its first venture capital fund in Nepal (in order to concentrate on its second and third, etc.), establishing Nepal's reputation as a profitable destination for foreign investment.

“ Nepali culture has deep roots in the past. Many of my friends know this is not their first incarnation. The Director of Shambhala parried a question at the Berlin Film Festival by saying that part of his film was probably inspired by a previous lifetime.”

What steps has the UK been taking to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Nepal?

Inclusion is at the heart of all our work, in Nepal and globally. Here, we find fantastic collaborators in government and civil society. It's hard to single out highlights, but our most recent innovation has been the launch – by the Embassy and UN Women – of a programme we call RIVA. On this platform, women and girls can network and collaborate, on their own agendas and on intersecting forms of exclusion, such as disability. The British Council also does a fine job, for example, by bringing the “Women of the World” (WOW) festival to Nepal. I'm also very proud of what my colleagues do in their own spare time to mentor

(and be mentored by) female Nepali professionals.

Moving on to your personal experience in Nepal, how would you describe the country and its geography?

Nepal has “more geography” than anywhere else, but ends up being experienced as a spiritual landscape. I continue to travel, and have now visited all seven provinces, including many trips to the three provinces which are priorities for our development partnership: Madhesh, Lumbini, and Karnali. Upper Mustang provided my best photographs; a helicopter trip to Namche Bazaar provided my best stories; and a visit to the Mahakali River crossing into India provided my most exciting glimpse into the future. Next stop, Dolpa. After all that, however, I expect my longest journeys will turn out to have been mental ones.

You have worked, collaborated, and interacted with many Nepali people. How would you describe them?

Nepali culture has deep roots in the past. Many of my friends know this is not their first incarnation. The Director of Shambhala parried a question at the Berlin Film Festival by saying that part of his film was probably inspired



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn met K.P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal, at the historic Belayati Baithak in January 2025. Photo: UK in Nepal

by a previous lifetime. It's hard not to feel juvenile in such company. And yet, Nepalis' ageless smiling faces and high levels of physical fitness can also make me feel very old.

Do you enjoy Nepali cuisine? Which dish do you like the most, and why?

In my experience, the best dish at a Nepali buffet is always at the very end of the table – by which time I have already filled my plate. Do you want to name it?

Have you celebrated any Nepali festivals? Which one do you enjoy the most, and why?

So many festivals. My family adores getting covered in paint at Holi. The complexity of Teej has also stayed with me, with its interplay of feminism and tradition. Tihar is simply uplifting. Who doesn't like light? And, come to

think of it, who doesn't like to see half the population of Patan pull a ten-ton rain god round the city? But – if I had to choose – I would nominate one of those festivals, like Tharu New Year, or any of the pageantry in Bhaktapur, which I have been admitted to through the generosity of friends and would not have known about otherwise. That makes me feel that Nepal has “taken me into its confidence”.

Do you listen to Nepali music? Is there any particular song you like the most, and why?

Mero Euta Saathi Chha, by Sugam Pokharel. It's a great song. And it captures something about the unique friendship between the UK and Nepal.

What is your impression of Nepal's weather?

It depends, of course, on location



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn and his spouse, Julia Fenn, visited Janakpur in December 2024 to celebrate their 22nd wedding anniversary. Photo: UK in Nepal



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn celebrated Maghe Sankranti with traditional delicacies in Kathmandu. Photo: UK in Nepal



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn rode his bike around the Kathmandu valley.

and time of year. Sometimes the climate here is perfectly described by the word for weather itself: “Hawapani”. You get wind. Or rain. Or both! Nevertheless, in my personal experience, the weather here is preferable to that in the UK (even in Marpha, where the climate feels similar to that in UK, and the farmers grow “British vegetables”). On a good day, Kathmandu Valley feels like the “Garden of Eden”. On a bad day, I can’t breathe.

How would you describe Nepal from an art and culture perspective?

As the cliché goes, there are many Nepals. The country’s diversity is its highest common factor. What stands out for me, however, is that the creativity of many Nepali artists and artisans has a strong devotional component. Art and culture here is not so much “made” as “lived” (experienced in a myriad of ways, from private prayer or public performance). There is extraordinary attention to detail, as well as tolerance for improvisation and personal interpretation. Since it all takes time, collectors of Nepali art need patience.

How is the UK supporting the preservation of Nepal’s cultural heritage and tradition?

A question for the British Council, to whom your readers should apply for details. But I work closely with the Council. Together, as it happens, we are engaged in an in-house audit of the people-to-people links which bind our countries together – and help conserve their heritage and traditions - more effectively than any government policy could. That said, the UK’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport funds cultural conservation projects. The current crop includes: a regional cookbook; a new take on Mithila art; materials to help bring back from the brink an almost extinct language, and – the one I most want to see for myself – an intergenerational dialogue in Dolpa on the subject of the built environment; helping young people speak up and old people listen.

I would also include here the many programmes of nature conservation funded by the UK’s Environment Ministry (DEFRA), which have played a big part in Nepal’s biodiversity and conservation success story. ■



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn with singer Sugam Pokharel. Photo: UK in Nepal



▲ H.E. Rob Fenn participated in the Rato Machhindranath Jatra with his son in Lalitpur, embracing Nepal’s rich cultural heritage. Photo: UK in Nepal

India Evacuates Nepali Citizens During International Crises

TDN CORRESPONDENT

India, one of Nepal's closest neighbours since before its independence in 1947, has long been a major supporter of the Nepali people during times of crisis.

Despite some ups and downs in political relations, both countries share deep values, close ties, and warm relations. Few countries in the world enjoy an open border and visa-free travel like Nepal and India do.

More importantly, India has consistently assisted the government of Nepal and helped rescue Nepali citizens in difficult times, whether during earthquakes, climate disasters, or international conflicts. During times of need, New Delhi has stepped in to

evacuate Nepali workers, students, or other professionals stranded abroad and brought them safely home.

According to former Foreign Secretary Madhu Raman Acharya, India's support during international crises is a reassuring sign for Nepal. "India has the capacity to rescue Nepali citizens from abroad during crises. On the other hand, Nepal lacks the means and medium to do so," Acharya said. "So, Nepal has been requesting India's help during such times, and they have supported us. It is reassuring for Nepalis to be able to rely on India."

The recent example of India's support to Nepali citizens during a crisis was the rescue of 11 Nepalis from Iran after tensions rose between Israel and Iran. Under Operation Sindhu, India evacuated Indian, Nepali,



and Sri Lankan citizens from Iran at the requests of Kathmandu and Colombo. The crisis was sparked by Israel's Operation Rising Lion against Iran's nuclear program, which led to Tehran's response.

Earlier, in 2022, India evacuated both Indian and Nepali citizens from Ukraine under Operation Ganga after Russia-Ukraine tensions escalated. Likewise, in 2018, India helped rescue seven Nepali and three Indian girls from traffickers in Kenya. They were victims of an organised crime syndicate involved in human trafficking, freed with the help of the Kenyan police.

India also evacuated nine Indian citizens and 118 Nepalis from Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in 2021. Under Operation Devi Shakti, the Indian Air Force operated multiple military and chartered flights from Kabul, rescuing many Nepalis who had been working as security guards at embassies and international organisations.

With the onset of civil war in Yemen in 2015, India evacuated over 170 Nepalis under Operation Raahat. In total, India rescued about 5,600 people,

India's ongoing support in evacuating Nepali citizens during crises highlights the strong ties between the two neighbors.

including 960 foreign nationals from more than 40 countries. During that time, Air India planes and navy ships were used to carry out the operations.

A decade ago, in 2014, during sectarian violence in Iraq, India agreed to evacuate Nepalis trapped there. "India is ready to assist Nepali nationals caught in Iraq strife at the request of the Nepal government," said Syed Akbaruddin, then spokesperson at India's Ministry of External Affairs. Nepal does not have a mission in Iraq,

so a request was forwarded to India seeking help to evacuate its citizens.

That same year, at least 126 Nepalis were evacuated from Libya to neighbouring Tunisia with the help of the Indian Embassy in Tripoli. Since Nepal has no embassy in Libya, the Embassy in Egypt coordinated with the Indian Embassy to make this possible. In 2006, Nepal also requested India's help to evacuate Nepalis stuck in Lebanon, which India successfully did.

Former Ambassador to India, Deep Kumar Upadhaya, noted that India has repeatedly helped Nepal rescue its people from abroad during international crises. "We share strong relations with India, they have helped us many times to bring our people back home during times of crisis," he said. "This shows the strong bond between our two countries."

India's ongoing support in evacuating Nepali citizens during crises highlights the strong ties between the two neighbors. New Delhi's timely assistance has provided crucial help to many Nepalis abroad, reflecting its regional role, and the deep trust in Nepal-India relations. ■



▲ Santiago Velo de Antelo, Presidente Ejecutivo of the Academia de la Diplomacia, and Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, President of The Diplomat Nepal by Ambassadors Club and Former Ambassador of Nepal to Spain and Oman, signing MoU in Madrid.



Historic Partnership Signed in Madrid

Spain's Academia de la Diplomacia and Nepal's Diplomatic Initiative Join Hands to Promote Global Dialogue and Cultural Diplomacy

TDN CORRESPONDENT

In a remarkable step towards strengthening cultural diplomacy and global understanding, the Academia de la Diplomacia del Reino de España and The Diplomat Nepal by Ambassador's Club signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Madrid, Spain, on July 8, 2025.

Held in the historic halls of the Instituto de Ingenieros de España, a prestigious institution founded in 1905 under the honorary patronage of His Majesty King Felipe VI, the ceremony was attended by almost fifty dignitaries, including the Ambassador of Nepal to Spain, Shanil Nepal, and Dean of the Asia-Pacific Ambassadors and Ambassador of India to Spain, Ambassador Dinesh Patnayak. Distinguished guests included ambassadors, senior government officials, board and executive members of the Academy, and respected figures from diplomatic, cultural, and academic fields.

The agreement was signed by Santiago Velo de Antelo, Presidente Ejecutivo of the Academia de la Diplomacia, and Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, President of The Diplomat Nepal by Ambassadors Club and Former Ambassador of Nepal to Spain and Oman.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Dhakal shared her vision, "Diplomacy is ultimately about connecting hearts and building understanding beyond borders. Through this partnership, we aim to amplify small voices and show how even the smallest nations can inspire peace, dialogue, and trust."

Likewise, Antelo highlighted the importance of shared cultural diplomacy in today's divided world, sharing, "This MoU is more than an agreement—it is a commitment to work together to promote dialogue, knowledge, and respect among people and nations."

Under this MoU, the two institutions will collaborate on: (a) Joint conferences, publications, and research on diplomacy and international affairs; (b) Academic and cultural exchanges between Spain and Nepal; (c) Training programs for young diplomats and scholars; (d) Promotion of moral, cultural, and economic diplomacy to foster peace and people-to-people ties;



▲ The Academia de la Diplomacia and The Diplomat Nepal teams after signing the MoU.

and (e) The partnership aims to position Nepal, not only as a breathtaking destination for travelers, but as a neutral, peaceful hub for dialogue and reflection on global challenges.

Founded by senior Spanish ambassadors and plenipotentiary ministers, the Academia de la Diplomacia del Reino de España plays a vital role in preserving the legacy and prestige of Spanish diplomacy, while bridging worlds through publications like *Diplomacia Siglo XXI*, academic events, and cultural initiatives.

By joining forces with The Diplomat Nepal by Ambassador's Club – a dynamic platform telling Nepal's

stories to the world – the two institutions signal that diplomacy today belongs not only to ministries and embassies but also to civil society, scholars, cultural leaders, and everyday people.

The evening was also deeply personal. Dr. Dhakal thanked her family—especially her daughter Bashana—and praised the warmth of Spain that feels like a second home. "Spain will always be in my heart," she declared.

With cultural diplomacy rising as a soft power tool worldwide, this partnership reflects a shared commitment to peace, dialogue, and global citizenship. As the sun set over Madrid, the message resonated clearly: "Diplomacy today is not just between governments, but between people, cultures, and ideas." ■

Nepal - China

The age-old and deep-rooted relationship between Nepal and the People's Republic of China has always remained friendly and cordial. The historic and multi-faceted relations between the two countries have evolved since the days of Nepali monk and scholar Buddhahadra (early 5th Century), princess Bhrikuti (first half of the 7th Century), and Araniko (Anige, Second half of the 13 Century), and early visits of Chinese monks and scholars like Monk Fa Xian (Jin Dynasty), Monk Xuan Zang (Tang Dynasty) among others.

The two countries formalized their relations on August 1, 1955, by establishing diplomatic relations. The relationship between the two countries has been marked by friendliness, understanding, mutual support, cooperation, and respect for each other's aspirations and sensitivities. Both countries have relentless faith in the ideals of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.



Nepal - Austria



There exists an excellent state of bilateral relations that have been happily subsisting between Nepal and Austria since the establishment of diplomatic relations on August 15, 1959. The nearly six-decade-long relationship between the two countries is based on trust, mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. The year 2019 marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Austria.

The Residential Embassy of Nepal in Vienna was established in 2018. The opening of the Nepali Embassy in Vienna has brought the two friendly countries further closer together in the coming days. This can help Austria explore the possibilities of establishing its residential Embassy in Kathmandu. Austria has its Honorary Consulate in Kathmandu.

Nepal - Italy



Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Italy on 31 August 1959, the relationship has been based on friendliness, mutual interest, and cordiality. The Nepali Ambassador to Switzerland is concurrently accredited to Italy. Likewise, the Italian Ambassador resident in New Delhi is accredited to Nepal. Nepal and Italy both maintain honorary consulates in Rome and Kathmandu, respectively. Nepal had operated its residential Embassy in Rome from 1961 to 1967. Italy also had its residential Embassy in Kathmandu from 1971 to 1997. Nepal and Italy share common views on various issues and have worked together in multilateral forums.

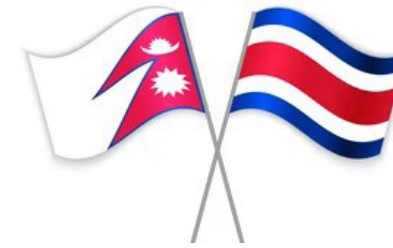
Nepal - Lebanon



Nepal maintains a vital diplomatic presence in Lebanon through its Honorary Consulate General Office of Nepal in Beirut. This mission plays a crucial role in fostering bilateral relations between Nepal and Lebanon, focusing on promoting cultural exchange and collaboration across various sectors, including trade, tourism, and education.

The two countries formalized their relations on 18 August 1963. The Consulate General Office offers essential services to Nepalese citizens living in or visiting Lebanon, ensuring their welfare through support and emergency assistance. This diplomatic footprint reinforces Nepal's commitment to nurturing international ties and engaging in cooperative ventures, reflecting the shared values and interests of both nations.

Nepal - Costa Rica



Nepal and Costa Rica established diplomatic relations on August 16, 1977. Costa Rica is the 75th country to establish bilateral ties with Nepal. The Embassy of Nepal, Washington D.C, USA, is concurrently accredited to Costa Rica, maintaining an Honorary Consul. As of 2025, Costa Rica does not have any diplomatic missions in Kathmandu, Nepal. However, as part of the North American nations and the South Asian nations, both nations share a common ground at the United Nations, subsequently interacting through the UN frameworks. Both countries continue to explore opportunities for enhanced collaborations.

Nepal - Jordan



Nepal and Jordan have maintained strong diplomatic ties since August 20, 1965. Both nations work together in various international forums and support each other on matters of mutual interest.

The Office of the Honorary Consul of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Nepal serves as the primary diplomatic representation of Jordan in Nepal. Serving essential functions, including facilitating diplomatic relations, providing consular services to Jordanian citizens, and promoting bilateral cooperation in trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

Nepal - Belgium



Nepal and Belgium established diplomatic relations on 19 August 1963. The relations between Nepal and Belgium have been marked by goodwill, trust, and mutual respect. Both countries share common views on many issues and have been supporting each other in various international fora, including the United Nations.

Nepal opened its residential embassy in Brussels in 1992. The Embassy of Belgium in New Delhi is concurrently accredited to Nepal. Belgium has its Honorary Consulate in Kathmandu.



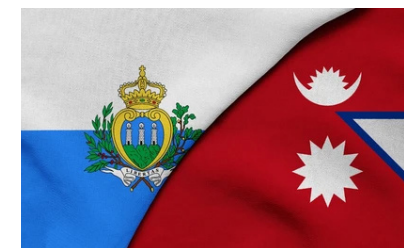
Nepal - Paraguay

Nepal and the Republic of Paraguay established diplomatic relations on 2 August 2006. The Embassy of Nepal in Brasilia, Brazil, is currently accredited to the Republic of Paraguay, and the Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay in New Delhi, India, is accredited to Nepal.

Furthermore, Nepal's relations with Paraguay are marked by friendship, mutual respect, and understanding. Contacts between the

two countries primarily take place in international forums such as the United Nations. Paraguay and Nepal have shared common concerns in many international meetings and conferences as landlocked and developing countries. As active members of the NAM and G-77, both countries have been advocating the just cause of the developing world. Paraguay has strategic importance due to its central location in South America.

Nepal - San Marino



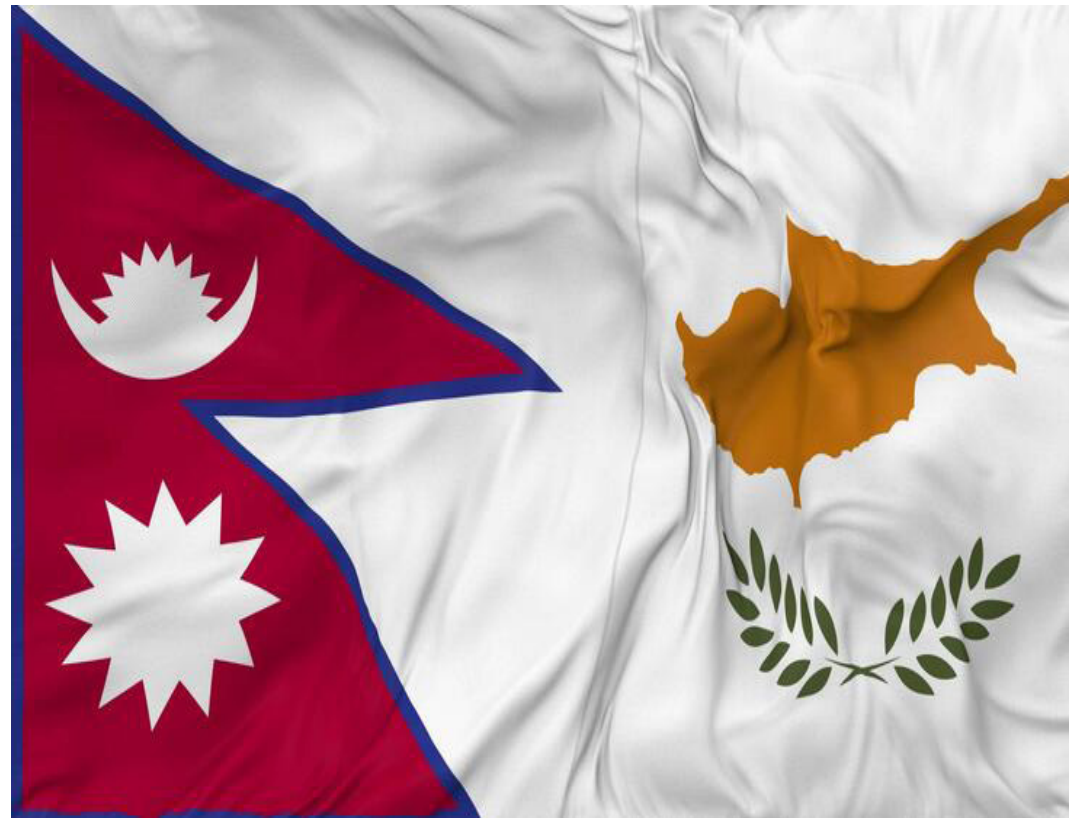
Nepal established its diplomatic relations with San Marino on 10 August 2005. The Embassy of Nepal in Geneva, Switzerland, is concurrently accredited to San Marino. Bilateral relations between the two countries have always been cordial since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Nepal and San Marino share similar views on many international issues, as there have been contacts and cooperation between the two countries in the United Nations, international organizations, international conferences, and meetings.

Nepal - Cyprus

Nepal and the Republic of Cyprus established diplomatic relations on 18 August 1980. The relations between the two countries have always been warm, friendly, and cordial, marked by mutual respect, trust, and understanding of each other's views and interests. The Nepalese Ambassador to Israel is concurrently accredited to Cyprus, and the Ambassador of Cyprus in New Delhi, India, is concurrently accredited to Nepal. Both governments have appointed Honorary Consuls in each other's capital cities.

There have been no significant exchanges in the economic field between the two countries, given the importance of Cyprus as an EU member, there exists scope for further expanding and deepening cooperation between the two sides, especially in tourism, investment, and foreign employment sectors.



Nepal - Guatemala



Nepal and Guatemala established diplomatic relations on August 8, 2006. The Ambassador of Nepal to the USA serves as the non-resident Ambassador for the Republic of Guatemala. While the relationship is based on goodwill and friendship, investment and development cooperation are currently limited. Both countries share similar views on many international issues. Nepal upholds the primacy of multilateralism and the multilateral decision-making process, like Guatemala.

Moreover, at present, investment, development cooperation, and other sectors of economic relations are almost non-existent. However, there are prospects to explore possible areas of cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels, including climate change and as well as tourism cooperation.

Nepal - Saint Lucia



Nepal and Saint Lucia established formal bilateral diplomatic relations on 27 August 2019. The relations between the two countries have remained cordial since. This was formalized through a joint communiqué signed by the Permanent Representatives of both countries to the United Nations. The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation and promote mutual understanding between the two nations.

Nepal and Saint Lucia are members of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement and have worked together in the United Nations on agendas of common concerns.

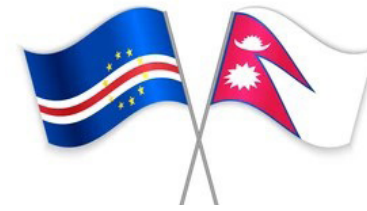
Nepal - Honduras



Nepal and the Republic of Honduras established diplomatic relations on 18 August 2006. Bilateral relations between the two countries have always been cordial since the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Nepali Ambassador to the United States of America is concurrently accredited to Honduras. Similarly, the Ambassador of Honduras to India is concurrently accredited to Nepal.

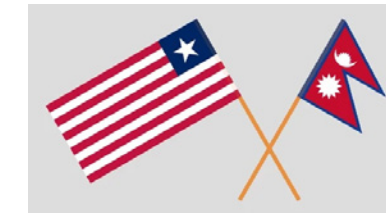
Additionally, Nepal and the Republic of Honduras are members of the NAM and G-77 and have worked together and hold common positions on many international issues in the UN and other international forums. Bilateral trade is minimal at the moment. Nepal imports plastic and plastic materials from Honduras, with the export figure being nil for the last few years.

Nepal - Cabo Verde



Nepal and Cabo Verde have a bilateral agreement in place for diplomatic relations. This agreement was established on August 4, 2017, and formalized by the Permanent Mission of Nepal in New York. The agreement has been a foundation for broader cooperation between the two nations, particularly in multilateral forums like the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77.

Nepal - Liberia



Nepal and Liberia established formal diplomatic relations in 2017. This agreement is based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and a shared desire to strengthen friendship and cooperation. The joint communiqué was signed by Nepal's Permanent Representative to the UN and Liberia's Permanent Representative to the UN.

Nepal - Ireland



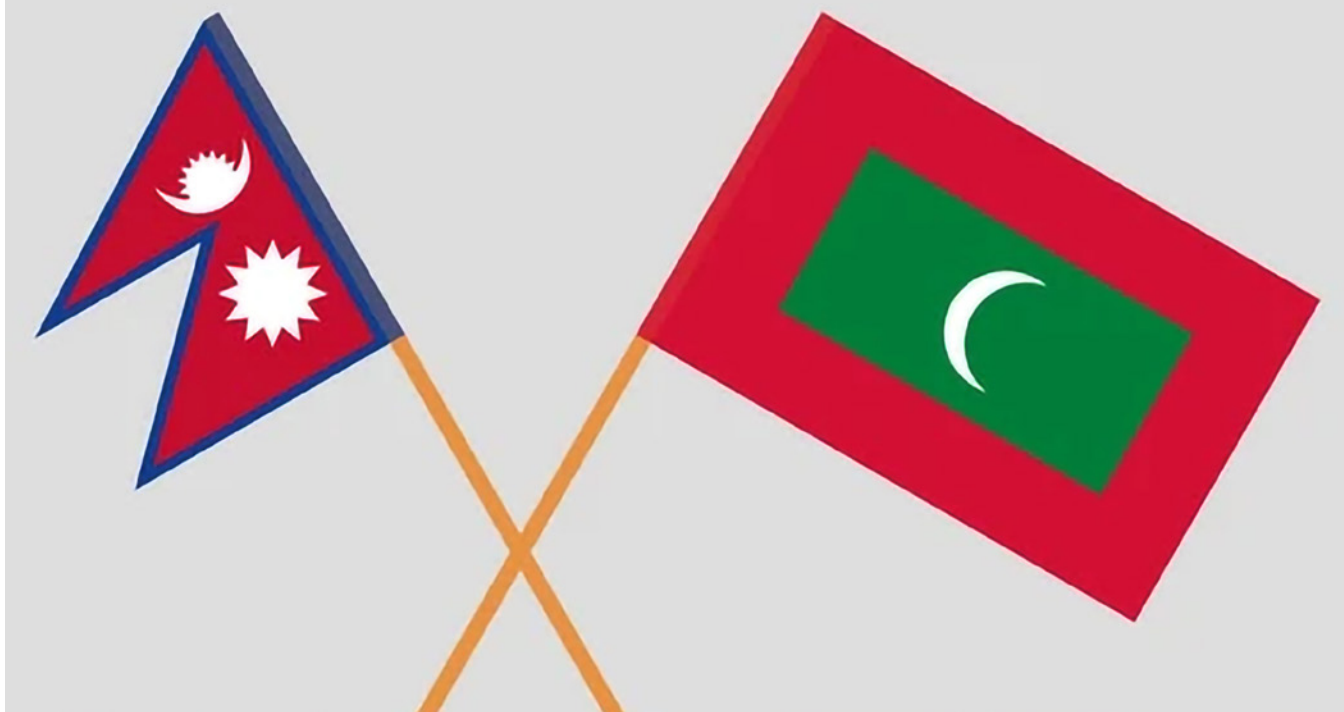
Nepal and Ireland established diplomatic relations on 19 August 1999. The total trade between Nepal and Ireland is worth 189 million Nepalese rupees in 2016, and the trade is heavily in Ireland's favor. Nepal's exports to this country stand at around 12 million only. A considerable number of tourists from Ireland visit Nepal every year. Forty-four mountaineers received permission for mountaineering in 2015.

Nepal - Maldives

Diplomatic relations between Nepal and the Maldives were established on 1 August 1980. These relations are marked by goodwill, cooperation, and mutual understanding.

They are further strengthened by the exchange of visits at various levels. As the founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), both Nepal and the Maldives have

been playing instrumental roles in the evolution of regional cooperation in South Asia and in institutionalizing the SAARC process. The two countries share similar views on many international issues and work closely at various international forums. The Embassy of Nepal in Colombo has been accredited to the Maldives, and the Maldivian High Commission in New Delhi is accredited to Nepal.



'Investing in Nepal Can be More Beneficial Than in Other Countries'



Without financial resources, there are always limitations to executing a project. That was an important realization for me.

SUSHIL GYEWALI
CEO, Investment Board Nepal

In September 2024, the Government of Nepal appointed Sushil Gyewali as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Investment Board Nepal (IBN). The IBN is tasked with a crucial responsibility of promoting economic development by creating an investor-friendly environment, and attracting both domestic and foreign investments. As CEO, Gyewali currently holds the responsibility to run the institution to help achieve Nepal's economic ambitions and long-term development goals. Prior to this role, Gyewali served as the CEO of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). Following the devastating earthquake of 2015, he led efforts to coordinate recovery at the NRA, overseeing large-scale reconstruction and rehabilitation initiatives across the country.

Before joining the NRA, he served as the Executive Director of the Town Development Fund (TDF) for nearly six years. He also served as Executive Secretary of the Municipal Association of Nepal (MUAN), where he played a significant role in advocating for local governance during the drafting of Nepal's federal constitution. With over 28 years of experience in local governance, urban planning, infrastructure financing, and development, CEO Gyewali brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to IBN.

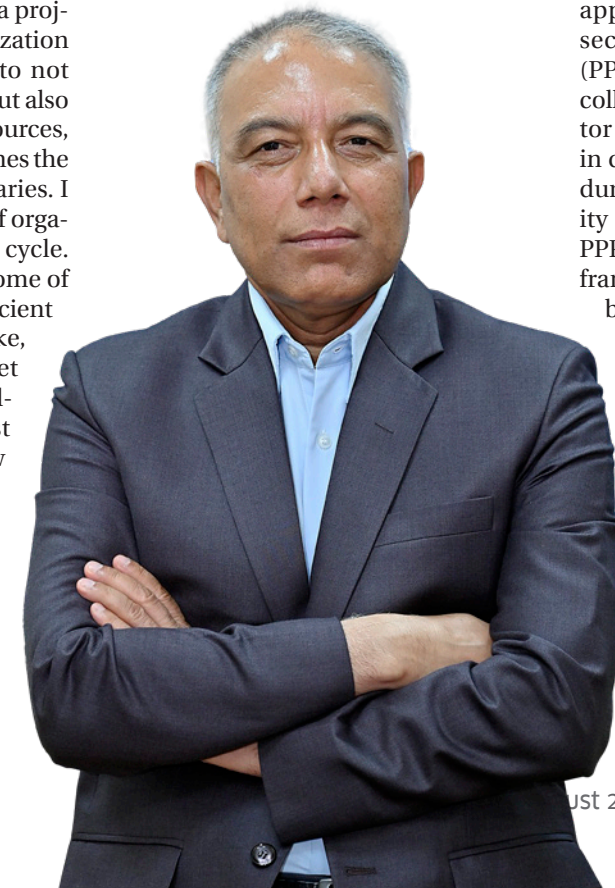
In this conversation with The Diplomat Nepal, CEO Gyewali shares the Investment Board's priorities, plans, and his message to the global investment community on why Nepal is ready for meaningful partnerships.

1 You effectively led the National Reconstruction Authority during one of Nepal's most challenging times after the 2015 earthquake. Having successfully completed that responsibility, you're now at the helm of Investment Board Nepal. What inspired you to take on this new role?

I come from an engineering background. As engineers, we do cost estimation, project design, and planning. But no matter how many plans we make, they are meaningless without assurance of financial resources. Without financial resources, there are always limitations to executing a project. That was an important realization for me. It meant that we had to not only plan and design a project but also raise the necessary funds or resources, implement it, and ensure it reaches the people or its intended beneficiaries. I used to think about what kind of organization works in a complete cycle. At the NRA, we had to reduce some of our programs because of insufficient resources. After the earthquake, we had to cut the NRA's budget from Rs. 936 billion to Rs. 538 billion, and later it dropped to just Rs. 400 billion. This shows how we couldn't get the resources we needed.

The Investment Board Nepal is an organization that also plans and designs projects. Moreover, it decides whether or not to implement them. Importantly, IBN also raises resources. It delegates

FIVE QUESTIONS



responsibilities to investors and developers. They invest, build, operate, manage, and generate results—and ultimately earn returns on their investments. After that, the project becomes long-term and operational. Institutional structures and financial arrangements are also managed. Because IBN handles all aspects—from planning to investment—it inspired me to join. The second reason is that in other organizations, I had to wait for budget approvals. But here, I can work proactively, making decisions to ensure funding without waiting for allocations.

The third reason is its unique approach to mobilizing the private sector. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be promoted through collaboration between the private sector and the government. My interest in development-oriented work began during my time in Butwal Municipality in 2054–55 B.S., where I piloted a PPP model project. There was no legal framework at that time, but I worked based on the Public Procurement Act and regulations. All of these experiences inspired me to serve the country through IBN.

2 The Investment Board Nepal is one of Nepal's key institutions, playing a key role in shaping the country's economic landscape. What are its current top priorities, and where is the Board focusing its efforts right now?

Our priorities are aligned

with national priorities. We select projects based on the government's agenda. Our current focus is the 16th Five-Year Plan. We determine priorities accordingly. Achieving the goals set in the national plan is our top priority. Let me share a statistic. The 16th Five-Year Plan includes programs that focus on boosting GDP growth, reducing poverty, promoting socio-economic development, and fulfilling the national aspiration of a 'Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali'. One key question is: how much investment is needed to achieve all this? The estimate is Rs. 112 trillion. Out of that, the national goal is to bring in Rs. 7,400 billion from the private sector.

To realize this, the IBN—under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and responsible for government projects worth more than Rs. 6 billion—plays a vital role in attracting Rs. 7.4 trillion in investments over five years. Therefore, our priority is to implement the projects and programs identified in the government's work plan to meet that target. These priorities include both planning and sectoral focus areas. Based on this, IBN has developed its overall strategy and action plan.



Nepal has significant potential in tourism-related areas for foreign investment.

3 Are there any specific sectors where the Investment Board Nepal is actively seeking international investment?

We attract international investors based on our national priorities. One of the most natural sectors for both domestic and international investment is energy—particularly hydro-power projects, electricity generation, distribution, transmission, and related infrastructure.

The second sector is tourism. Nepal has significant potential in tourism-related areas for foreign investment. Another key sector is information technology. Nepal currently enjoys a demographic dividend—a large, young, and tech-savvy population that speaks English and understands information technology. This makes it an ideal place for developing human resources and growing the IT sector. Agriculture is another priority. It contributes significantly to Nepal's GDP. Our diverse geography—mountains, hills, and the Terai—supports a wide

range of crops and plants. Agriculture and related activities remain high on our list of investment priorities. These are our primary focus sectors.

4 How are the Government of Nepal and the IBN working together to create a more conducive and secure environment for international investors?

To create a favorable environment for foreign investment, the first requirement is a sound legal framework. Without proper laws, nothing can move forward. As you may know, ahead of the 2023 Investment Summit, IBN facilitated the amendment of nine different laws. More recently, we have also introduced ordinances to improve the investment climate. Secondly, institutional structure is critical. We are streamlining procedures and strengthening institutions, such as by establishing a One-Stop Service Center to expedite investor services.

The third key area is financial management. To attract investment, we need to ensure access to funding. While banks offer financing options, long-term project finance needs more diverse instruments. That's why we've proposed the creation of a Sovereign Wealth Fund—also referred to as the Alternative Development Financing Fund. A draft bill to establish and structure the fund has already reached Parliament. It's only within 9 months that the draft was submitted by IBN/GoN to the parliament.

After nine years of discussions at IBN, and further consultations with the government, private sector, and investors, the bill is finally in Parliament. It includes various financing models—PPP, guarantee-based, debt financing, equity financing, and blended financing—all designed to channel investments into priority sectors. Fourth, we are working to strengthen and make the Investment Board more autonomous. We are also improving human resource management to support our institutional capacity.

5 Lastly, as the CEO of the Investment Board Nepal, what message would you like to convey to the international community and potential investors looking at Nepal as an investment destination?

Nepal is an excellent destination for investment. I invite all of you to come and explore opportunities here. Nepal offers diverse sectors for profitable investment. Beyond Nepal, we are strategically located between two massive markets—India and China—with a combined population of nearly three billion. Investors can use Nepal as a hub for exporting goods and services to these regions. Investors in Nepal can expect good returns. Our political system has also become more stable. Currently, a coalition of two major parties is leading the government, which sends a message of political stability. This has created a favorable legal, political, and institutional environment for investment. Nepal is not only open to foreign investors—we welcome their ideas, technologies, and capital. The IBN is ready to support and facilitate your investment journey. I warmly invite all of you to come and invest in Nepal. ■

IRGDD-AECID Aims Advancing Development Through Diplomacy

TDN CORRESPONDENT

Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, President of the International Relations & Global Diplomacy Dialogue (IRGDD) and former Ambassador of Nepal to Spain and Oman, met with Mr. Antón Leis García, Director General of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) on July 11.

Mr. Leis García congratulated Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal on her visionary leadership and the flagship initiatives under IRGDD, aimed at advancing development through diplomacy, among many, empowering women in technology, and promoting inclusive international cooperation.

The meeting focused on exploring practical collaboration to train and empower Nepali women in the technology sector, advancing science & technology diplomacy—reflecting the shared commitment of both institutions to sustainable development and people-centered impact.

Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal also expressed appreciation for the longstanding friendship between Spain and Nepal, emphasizing the importance of building connections between people, ideas, and opportunities.

Discussions concluded positively, with openness to deepen dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest. ■



Amb. Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal Met with Mr. Antón Leis García, Director General of AECID in Spain.



Ghanta Karna Festival

Bhaktapur's Fiery Tradition of Demon Defeat

PHOTO/TEXT: BEEJU MAHARJAN / TDN

Every year on the Chaturdashi of Shravan Krishna, the vibrant and symbolic Ghanta Karna festival also known as Gathemangal is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Bhaktapur and across the Kathmandu Valley. Deeply rooted in the traditions of the Newar community, this festival commemorates the defeat of the mythical demon Ghanta Karna, a figure believed to have terrorized ancient settlements.

The heart of the celebration takes place in Bhaktapur, where homes are ritually cleansed and sacred rites are performed. In the morning, families bathe and purify their houses. A unique iron nail with three heads is hammered into new homes to ward off evil spirits. At crossroads especially at the Dobato, a symbolic site of the demon's reign effigies of the demon are crafted using green reeds, straw, and wheat stalks.

As evening falls, the community gathers to burn incense and chase away negative energies. The effigy of Ghanta Karna is then set ablaze in a public ceremony, symbolizing the cleansing of evil and the victory of good over darkness. The burning figure is dragged to the riverbank, where its remains are left for seven days. During this time, villagers mock the demon with loud, obscene songs—an age-old tradition said to be rooted in the belief that vulgar language repels malevolent forces.

The legend tells of a terrifying demon who once stood guard at the crossroads, robbing passersby and devouring whatever he could find. His defeat is celebrated as a liberation from fear, and it is even believed that this ritual helps reduce mosquitoes in the area.

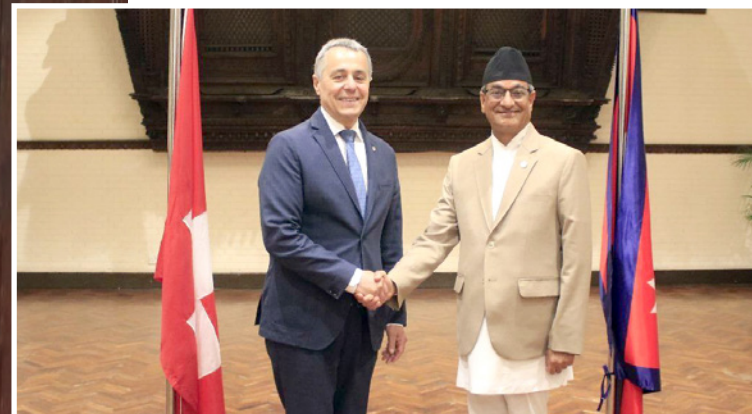
Through fiery symbolism, community rituals, and age-old customs, Ghanta Karna remains one of the valley's most colorful and meaningful festivals a reminder of resilience, unity, and the power of good to triumph over evil. ■



Nepal-Swiss Relations: Old Friend, Reliable Development Partner



Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis of Switzerland with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. Photo: MoFA.



▲ Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis of Switzerland with Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak in Kathmandu. Photo: MoFA.

TDN CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis of Switzerland made a key bilateral visit to Nepal from July 6-8, underscoring close and trusted ties between the two nations. During his visit, the Swiss Foreign Minister called on Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. The two leaders discussed ways to strengthen Nepal-Switzerland ties and enhance cooperation in key development areas. Likewise, he held a bilateral meeting with Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, also the acting Foreign Affairs Minister, to discuss ways to further deepen cooperation.

In a symbolic gesture of friendship and shared commitment to sustainability, Minister Cassis also planted a tree during a ceremony attended by the Swiss Ambassador to Nepal, Dr. Danielle Meuwly. Ambassador Meuwly emphasized the long-standing partnership and mutual respect that has characterized relations between the two nations. Cassis also visited the headquarters of the Chaudhary Group (CG) to celebrate the success of the ENSURE program, a Swiss-backed initiative to boost youth employability in Nepal.

The two landlocked countries formally established diplomatic ties in 1956, following which Nepal and Switzerland have continued to work closely. One of the wealthiest countries

in Europe, Switzerland has been supporting Nepal through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) since the establishment of bilateral relations. Switzerland has, for long, prioritized development cooperation with Nepal. Long before opening its embassy in Kathmandu in 2009, Switzerland had already established a consular agency in 1956. Meanwhile, Nepal continues to manage relations with Switzerland through its permanent mission in Geneva.

To commemorate the upcoming 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2026, Foreign Minister Cassis also encouraged the staff of the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal to host a special gathering. Former Ambassador to Switzerland and UN representative Shambhu Ram Simkhada described the relationship between the two countries as 'historic and without strategic conditions'. "Switzerland was one of the first countries to provide aid to Nepal, and it has done so without strategic interests," he remarked.

Simkhada noted that as Nepal transitions out of LDC (Least Developed Country) status in 2026, traditional aid models will evolve. He emphasized the need for Nepal to focus on economic diplomacy more strategically, by drawing lessons from Switzerland's balanced development approach that focuses on agriculture, banking, small enterprises, and public investment tailored to geography and local needs. "Learning from the Swiss experience for Nepal is a good approach to move forward. The Swiss government invests in their people based on the country's geography and the people's needs. Nepal should learn from that to make better relations between the two countries," he added.

Switzerland's most impactful contributions to Nepal have come through the SDC. Under programs such as the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP), Switzerland helped construct more than 10,000 trail bridges across Nepal's hills and mountains. These trail bridges not only facilitated travel, they also transformed access to education, healthcare, and markets in remote areas. Beyond infrastructure, Swiss support has extended to reintegrating returnee migrant workers and strengthening agriculture and vocational training. Through its 2023-2026



▲ Foreign Minister of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, and Ambassador of Switzerland to Nepal, Dr. Danielle Meuwly, at the Swiss Embassy in Kathmandu. Photo: Swiss Embassy

General Cooperation Programme, Switzerland has committed CHF 154 million for a range of development initiatives in Nepal. Prior to ending the construction of the trail bridges program in 2023, the SDC provided technical expertise to the local government and communities of Nepal to help manage the infrastructure.

Beyond infrastructure, Switzerland also provided 10 million Swiss Francs (approximately NRs. 1.09 billion) for the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) II, in 2013. The LGCDP II was a national programme focused on strengthening local governance and community development with the goal of contributing to poverty reduction under the the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA).

The Swiss support has also extended to reintegration of returnee migrant workers, for which Nepal received a budget of CHF 6.8 million (Rs. 861.3 million). Nepal also received CHF 28.34 million for development of agriculture and human skills. The Swiss government has also introduced the General Cooperation Program (2023-26), under which 154 million Swiss Francs will be provided

for various development initiatives. Switzerland has stood by Nepal not only during normal times but also in moments of great need. During the 2015 earthquake, Swiss citizens donated CHF 32.5 million in relief efforts. As many as 11 Swiss NGO, in coordination with 8 local organisations, helped rebuild over 3,200 homes, 61 schools, and 57 water cisterns. Likewise, 42 irrigation systems were repaired, 31 water mills reconstructed, and 8 health centres were rebuilt. They also provided tents and blankets, water and food, and basic medical care under emergency aid.

Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland delivered 144,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and 30 tonnes of essential medical supplies. Nepal has been receiving assistance from the Swiss government in other sectors such as local governance, gender, climate, and education, from 1956 through Helvetas, a Switzerland based international development organisation.

In 2015, the two countries established a Bilateral Consultations Mechanism to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, and development. Parliamentary dialogue has also expanded, with a high-level Nepali delegation attending Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) sessions in Switzerland last October. President Ramchandra Paudel's state visit to Switzerland in June further reinforced the shared commitment to deepen relations.

During the presidential visit, he met with Swiss counterpart, President Viola Patricia Amherd. At the meeting, they discussed several aspects of bilateral relations, including development cooperation and potential for enhanced cooperation.

The discussions on Nepal-Swiss relations would be incomplete without mentioning Toni Hagen, the Swiss geologist and development pioneer. Hagen first came to Nepal in 1950 as a member of a technical assistance team sent by the Swiss government. He trekked over 14,000 km on foot to conduct geological surveys. His work not only introduced Nepal's geography to the Western world but also laid the groundwork for future cooperation. His seminal book *Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalayas* remains widely respected both in Nepal and internationally. ■



Guardians of the Green

Five Decades of Nepali Army in Nature Conservation

Photo: Nepali Army

TDN CORRESPONDENT

For five decades, the Nepali Army has not only defended the nation's sovereignty and contributed to international peacekeeping but has also played a pivotal role in protecting Nepal's rich biodiversity and natural heritage.

In the late 1970s, the World Bank predicted that Nepal's hilly forests would vanish by the 1990s. Defying those odds, Nepal nearly doubled its forest cover from 26% in 1992 to 45% by 2016. This success is largely attributed to two key efforts: the community forestry program and the Nepali Army's protection of national parks.

According to Major General (Retired) and author Dr. Purna Bahadur Silwal, the Army's consistent and dedicated contributions to conservation have yielded significant results. "The forest area hasn't just expanded, the populations of endangered animals like tigers and rhinos have also increased. Nepal has received global recognition for achieving zero poaching of three flagship species— tigers, rhinos, and elephants. A major reason behind this is the crucial role played by the Nepali Army," he commented.

Nepal's commitment to tiger conservation has been especially noteworthy. At the 2010 Global Tiger Summit in St. Petersburg, Nepal pledged to double its tiger population by 2022.



From just 121 tigers in 2009, the country reached 235 within eight years and 355 by 2022, becoming the first nation to fulfill the ambitious pledge.

Looking back, the Army's conservation journey began in 2018 BS (1961 AD) with rhino patrols, after the one-horned rhino population had dropped from 800 to just 100. The number of rhinos has since risen to 752, according to the 2021 census. In 2030 BS (1973 AD), Chitwan was declared Nepal's first national park, and two years later, the government officially handed over its protection to the Nepali Army.

Interestingly, Nepal's conservation history dates back even further than that of Yellowstone National Park in the U.S. An inscription in



Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park indicates that public heritage conservation began in 1869, during the reign of King Surendra Bir Bikram Shah, three years before Yellowstone was established in 1872.

At present, about 8,000 army personnel are deployed across 14 protected areas, including 12 national parks, one wildlife reserve, and one hunting reserve. They operate under eight battalions, seven independent units, and one dedicated Nature Conservation Training School.

The Army's conservation duties include park patrolling, preventing encroachment, combating illegal poaching, and controlling deforestation. "Besides patrolling, army personnel also engage with local communities through seminars to gather feedback about buffer zone management," said Brigadier General Raja Ram Basnet, spokesperson for the Nepali Army and director of the Directorate of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves. "They assist in wildlife censuses, provide key information for conservation planning, and help rehabilitate species in collaboration with local and international partners."

To prevent illegal activities, daily patrols are conducted on foot, by bicycle, in vehicles, by boat, and even on elephants—across terrains that range from the +42°C heat of the Tarai to the -20°C chill of the Himalayas. Conservation efforts have also been modernized using drones, CCTV, Smart Eye systems, vehicle tracking, and real-time patrol monitoring technology.

Special campaigns such as Operation Mahahunt and the ongoing Operation Sanrakshan are regularly conducted during festivals, dry seasons, and periods of heightened risk. Currently, Operation Sanrakshan-11 is

underway to increase security and surveillance across protected zones.

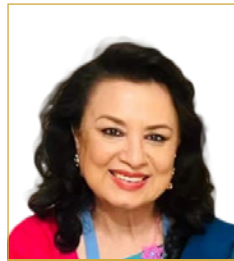
While the Army's role has been vital, conservation isn't without challenges. Local communities often seek fewer restrictions, while the Army must enforce rules. This sometimes leads to tension over issues like foraging wild plants or grazing livestock in buffer zones.

Cross-border conservation adds another layer of complexity. Nepal shares an open border with India, allowing both wildlife and poachers to move freely. Effective conservation demands bilateral cooperation—especially in intelligence-sharing and law enforcement. "There is a pressing need for advanced scientific tools and closer coordination with Nepal Police, given the organized nature of poaching networks," noted Spokesperson Basnet.

To strengthen conservation capacity, the Nature Conservation Training School was established in Kasara, Chitwan National Park, on July 12, 2014. It serves as a training hub for army personnel and other conservation partners. So far, 2,304 soldiers and 236 civilians have received specialized training, with plans underway to expand this to include ranger-level instruction for non-military participants.

Nepal has celebrated multiple Zero Poaching Years—in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019. Several army units have been honored with the Abraham Conservation Award, while Bardiya National Park received the prestigious TX2 Award for outstanding efforts in tiger conservation.

"These awards recognize the exemplary grassroots contributions made by army units with passion and dedication. The outcomes they've achieved are truly commendable," Dr. Silwal concluded. ■



BANDANA RANA

The writer is a Member (Former Vice Chair), UN CEDAW Committee

From Advocacy to Accountability: My Journey as a CEDAW Committee Member

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), widely referred to as the international bill of rights for women, stands as one of the most powerful instruments of international human rights law. It obligates

State Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres—legal, social, political, economic, and cultural—and provides a comprehensive framework for achieving gender equality.

As a gender activist in Nepal, I had long regarded CEDAW as a powerful

advocacy tool. Over the years, I actively engaged in mobilizing civil society to use the Committee's Concluding Observations to advocate for progressive reforms. From the passage of the Domestic Violence Act to ensuring gender-responsive provisions in Nepal's 2015 Constitution and pushing for reforms on harmful practices and reproductive rights—CEDAW was at the heart of our advocacy.

My first direct engagement with the Committee dates back to 1999, when Nepal presented its first periodic report. I was part of the NGO delegation to New York, helping to prepare and present the shadow report. The experience left a lasting impression. I never imagined that nearly two decades later, I would sit on the other side of the table as a member of the very Committee I once lobbied.

In early 2016, shortly after retiring as the Executive President of Saathi—a leading Nepali NGO working on violence against women—I was encouraged by international colleagues to stand for CEDAW elections. At first, I hesitated. No Nepali had ever served on the Committee, and I had little understanding of the diplomatic and political maneuvering involved in the election process. Yet, with time on my hands and a lifetime of experience behind me, I decided to take the leap.

Navigating the nomination process was not easy. It took numerous follow-ups with Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, persistent advocacy, and ultimately, a Cabinet-level decision to put forward my candidature. What followed was a whirlwind of lobbying missions—New York, Geneva, Delhi, Istanbul. On June 21, 2016, I was elected to the CEDAW Committee with 106 votes, ranking 6th among the elected candidates.

Today, I am proud to be serving my third term on the Committee. In my second election in 2020, I received 136 votes, ranking third, and in the most recent election in June 2024, I secured the highest votes—146—testament to the trust and confidence of Member States in my work. These re-elections reflect not only deeper familiarity with the Committee's processes but also a strengthened ability to contribute substantively, including through key leadership roles. My sustained re-elections are in part due to the substantive roles



I have played. I chaired the Task Force on Afghanistan, which was instrumental in responding to the unprecedented rollback of women's rights. As Co-Chair of the Working Group on Gender Stereotypes, I am presently contributing to transformative work on challenging entrenched norms that continue to hold women back. These responsibilities require not just legal acumen, but political sensitivity, cultural understanding, and deep commitment to feminist values.

What I bring to the Committee is shaped by over 30 years of work on the frontlines—engaging in saving lives, promoting equality, building peace, and creating opportunities. From grassroots initiatives to high-level policymaking, I've consistently worked to address the legal, economic, and political constraints on women's advancement. I have advised states on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda under UNSCR 1325 and collaborated with civil society networks to localize these commitments in conflict-affected settings.

Throughout my journey, I have remained grounded in the belief that international human rights mechanisms must not remain distant from the realities on the ground. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, I initiated a series of national and regional dialogues between governments and civil society to highlight and address the disproportionate impacts on women. These dialogues enabled holistic, rights-based responses during an unprecedented crisis.

One of the most challenging and impactful moments in my tenure came during the most recent session in June 2025, when I led the constructive

dialogue on Afghanistan. Given the grave and systematic violations of women's and girls' rights under the de facto authorities, it was an emotionally and politically charged responsibility. The Afghan women's voices—many speaking from exile—echoed a heartbreaking reality of erasure and oppression. Despite the challenges, we were able to draw global attention to the alarming situation and consolidate a comprehensive list of Concluding Observations. These included concrete recommendations addressed not only to the de facto authorities but also to the international community, UN agencies, and other stakeholders. The process reaffirmed the role of CEDAW as a critical platform for global accountability and solidarity with women in crisis.

Serving on the CEDAW Committee has been a humbling and transformative experience. It has deepened my conviction that when women's voices are heard in international forums, global standards become more inclusive, responsive, and just. It has also reminded me that the struggle for gender equality is not linear—it requires constant vigilance, renewed solidarity, and tireless effort.

As I continue my work, I carry with me the voices of countless women and girls from the villages of Nepal and Asia to the corridors of the United Nations. Their resilience fuels my resolve. CEDAW is not just a treaty—it is a promise. A promise to every girl that her dreams are valid. A promise to every woman that she will be treated with dignity and equality. And as long as I serve, I will do my part to keep that promise alive.

The Journey Continues... ■



Nepal Must Place AI as a Foreign Policy Priority



MAHESH KUMAR KUSHWAHA

The writer is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Innovation and Foreign Policy (CESIF), Nepal.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made significant progress in machine learning, neural networks, and natural language processing over the years. However, the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 revolutionized the field, bringing AI to millions of people worldwide and making it a hot topic of discussion. This mainstreaming of AI further proliferated its innovation, development, and deployment, with global leaders quickly realizing its immense transformative potential. Since then, tech companies and states alike have poured billions of dollars into AI research, innovation, and infrastructure, triggering what many see as a global AI race. In early 2025, when a lesser-known Chinese tech lab DeepSeek released its R1 model at a fraction of the cost of OpenAI's ChatGPT, many saw it as AI's "Sputnik Moment," where China appeared to offer a credible challenge to the U.S. dominance of AI development despite export

restrictions on the most advanced AI chips by the U.S. Undoubtedly, this episode highlighted superpowers' growing acceptance of AI supremacy as a key strategic national interest.

This realization has been widely acknowledged because, unlike most other technological innovations of the past, AI has displayed an

unprecedented potential to transform society, politics, and the economy, both positively and negatively. While its application in healthcare, scientific research, education, agriculture, technology, and other service sectors has provided fresh optimism for progress and productivity, its potential to disrupt social cohesion

and increase political polarization with the help of AI tools and techniques, including deepfakes and coordinated disinformation campaigns, has alarmed many. Automation-led job displacement, ethical concerns stemming from bias and data privacy issues, and technological limitations of recommender algorithms in search engines, job portals, and e-commerce platforms are some other commonly cited grievances against AI. From a security perspective, advanced AI models and tools provide countries with strategic and tactical advantages

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Nepal's national strategy for AI is still at a nascent stage. The country unveiled its first-ever Concept Paper on Artificial Intelligence in July 2024, following which it released the National AI Strategy in February 2025.”

through military modernization; the widespread use of drones and precision-guided munitions in the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas war, and the Iran-Israel war offers good examples of how AI technology has not only been transforming the nature of wars but making AI dominance essential for geopolitical supremacy.

Consequently, the broader strategic competition between the U.S. and China features AI as an increasingly crucial factor. The two countries' respective efforts around AI, including their separate UN resolutions on AI and the formation of loose alliances, signal a world roughly polarizing into two blocs: the U.S.-led democratic model versus China's state-driven approach. While more resourceful countries like India, the UK, and France have adopted a more cautious approach—developing their own AI capabilities while also pursuing necessary collaborations—smaller countries like Nepal, caught in the middle of this competition, have had to navigate their strategic choices between the competing AI ecosystems. This underscores a particular urgency for Nepal to strategize, develop, and implement a robust policy around AI.

At CESIF, I recently led a research project on Artificial Intelligence and Diplomacy: A Case for Nepal's AI Diplomacy, which explored some of these issues and made a case for AI diplomacy for Nepal. Despite AI's immense potential for economic growth and development, Nepal's limited digital infrastructure, lack of skilled workforce, and data scarcity necessitate effective bilateral cooperation with regional and global powerhouses, as well as active diplomacy at multilateral platforms, to benefit from AI's advancement. Proactive AI diplomacy is also essential to ensure that Nepal's interests and concerns are appropriately addressed in global AI regulatory and governance efforts from the very beginning. For this, Nepal should leverage its geopolitical position, clean (hydro) energy potential, and LDC leadership to not only attract foreign direct investment in AI and collaborate with key players, but also lobby to establish AI as a public good. This endeavor should pay particular attention to the geopolitical complexities surrounding AI and adopt a neutral approach that prevents Nepal from falling into any exclusive bloc.

Nepal's national strategy for AI is still at a nascent stage. The country unveiled its first-ever Concept Paper on Artificial Intelligence in July 2024, following which it released the National AI Strategy in February 2025. Its vision for AI-driven digital transformation—with sectoral emphasis on agriculture, healthcare, education, tourism, and governance—is a welcome step toward AI adoption. Similarly, its effort to promote AI research, innovation, and ethical regulation nationally, as well as to encourage FDI and public-private partnerships, is commendable. However, a lack of a clear roadmap for implementation, infrastructure and skill gaps, and little emphasis on diplomacy and international cooperation around AI risks poor materialization of the stated goals. Instead of treating it as just a tech issue, Nepal must place AI as a foreign policy priority and push for a cohesive AI strategy that links domestic AI innovation, development, and regulation with international diplomacy. ■

IRGDD-NCC Join Hands to Boost Nepal's Economy Through Economic Diplomacy



TDN CORRESPONDENT

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the International Relations and Global Diplomacy Dialogue (IRGDD) and Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) on July 1, 2025, in Kathmandu.

The signing ceremony took place during NCC's Diamond Jubilee Celebration, marking 75 years of its contribution to Nepal's private sector development.

According to the Press Release, the MoU was signed by President of IRGDD Amb. Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal and NCC President Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, during a formal ceremony attended by representatives from both institutions and dignitaries. The agreement formalizes a shared vision to advance Nepal's

1. President of IRGDD Amb. Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal and NCC President Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, after signing MoU between two organizations.

2. [From left] Krishnaman Shrestha (NCC Executive Member), Surendra Shrestha (NCC Vice President), Nilkantha Chaoulagain (NCC Vice President), Kamalesh Kumar Agrawal (President of NCC), Amb. Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal (President of IRGDD), Bimal Dhakal (Publisher of The Diplomat Nepal Magazine) and Amb. Kali Prasad Pokhrel after signing the MoU.

global economic presence through collaborative efforts in trade diplomacy, diaspora engagement, research, policy advocacy, and strategic promotion.

IRGDD is a diplomatic and development platform committed to promoting economic diplomacy, peace, and inclusive partnerships for Nepal and other small states. Through its mission, IRGDD aims to amplify Nepal's global voice while contributing to local economic development by advocating for women, artisans, youth, and SMEs for a better economic future.

NCC is one of Nepal's oldest and most respected private sector institutions, dedicated to advancing national economic growth, business innovation, and international trade.

The signing event featured the ceremonial exchange of The Diplomat Nepal magazine and the NCC publication, along with a visit to the Raj Bahadur Memorial Hall, paying tribute to NCC's founding legacy.

In her keynote remarks, Dr. Dhakal emphasized the importance of aligning diplomacy with national economic objectives. She said that the "economy is vital to boost country's development" and proposed that Nepal's future lies

in leveraging economic diplomacy as a core tool of international engagement. Introducing the term "Eco-politics," she added that the economy now leads politics in shaping global agendas. She also underscored the need to improve the marketability of Nepali products through enhanced quality control, adherence to global standards, and better promotion.

NCC President Mr. Agrawal echoed this vision, highlighting Nepal's untapped economic potential in sectors like tourism, IT, hydropower, and natural resources. He pointed out that Nepal is already part of a global economic ecosystem that does not recognize political boundaries, urging stronger and more actionable engagement with the international community.

The MoU outlines a five-year non-binding partnership focused on strengthening Nepal's role in global trade and investment networks. It calls for the formation of a Joint Coordination Committee to oversee progress and conduct a mid-term review within six months. This partnership reflects a broader national commitment to contribute meaningfully to Nepal's growth through coordinated diplomatic and private sector engagement. ■



▲ The members of the Parliamentary Hearing Committee of Nepal, Former ambassadors, and members of the Ambassadors Club, during the discussion program with former ambassadors.

In Coordination With Ambassadors Club, PHC Organises a Discussion Program With Former Ambassadors

Amb. Yuba Nath Lamsal



TDN CORRESPONDENT

In coordination with the Ambassadors Club, the Parliamentary Hearing Committee of Nepal organized a discussion program with Former Ambassadors on July 6. PHC is the joint committee of the Federal Parliament with members from the House of Representatives and the National Assembly. The PHC's role is to scrutinize and vet individuals nominated by the cabinet and the constitutional council for high-level public offices, including ambassadors.

The discussion meeting was chaired by



▲ Amb. Madhu Raman Acharya



▲ Amb. Kali Prasad Pokhrel

the Chair of the PHC, Ishwari Devi Neupane, whereas former Ambassadors Madhu Raman Acharya (Former Foreign Secretary) and Yuba Nath Lamsal presented papers focusing on Parliamentary Hearing in Nepal and practices in the world.

During his presentation, Amb. Acharya suggested the parliamentary committee should come up with a mid-term evaluation to follow the work of the ambassadors. He also mentioned leaving a few politically important appointments, the government should not call back the ambassadors from foreign countries immediately after the change of the government. "After all the ambassadors were endorsed by the parliamentary hearing committee, where all the members of political parties were present," he added, "So, we should not call back all the ambassadors from the foreign countries after a change of government in the country."

Another paper presenter, Amb. Lamsal suggested that the parliamentary committee should form an expert team with the help of former ambassadors to facilitate the committee. "Otherwise, if the parliamentary hearing goes like this, it will be useless," he said, "The mid-term consultation should be there to know the condition of the work of the ambassadors." The Chair

“we should not call back all the ambassadors from the foreign countries after a change of government in the country.”

of the PHC Neupane said the purpose of this discussion is to know the shortcomings and learn from them. She also added that the committee should learn from the slip to improve in future.

Moreover, former Finance Minister and member of the hearing committee Janardhan Sharma supported the statement of Chair Neupane. He also said that there are shortcomings and slips, and we should learn from them and do better in future. Other members of the PHC Jiwan Pariyar, Ishwari Gharti, and Jag Prasad Sharma, commented that we need to learn from the past to improve in the future.

Former Ambassadors Madam Kumar Bhattari (former foreign secretary), Kali Prasad Pokhrel, Mohan Krishna Shrestha, Dinesh Bhattarai, Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada,

Mahendra Prasad Singh Rajput, Madhuban Paudel, and Bhagirath Basnet also raised issues to improve the parliamentary hearing system to contribute to Nepal's national interest through a proper diplomatic channel. The respective ambassadors gave the examples of their appointment and requested parliamentarians to work on those key issues to improve the hearing. In addition, Pashupati Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana, member of Parliamentary Hearing Committee, was also present during the event.

In the discussion program, General Secretary of the Federal Parliament Secretariat Padma Prasad Pandeya, officials of PHC and officials from the Ambassadors Club also presented.

Furthermore, Amb. Pokhrel, who says he was wearing two hats, shared his experience of being an ambassador to Canada, while also highlighting the mission and vision of the Ambassadors Club. He said, "The Ambassadors' Club is Nepal's first exclusive platform that brings together resident and non-resident Ambassadors, Heads of Mission, and Diplomats. It fosters global dialogue, cultural exchange, and international cooperation through high-level engagements. The Club promotes diplomatic collaboration, supports peace and development, and works to enhance Nepal's global presence." ■

Prashiddha Jaishi scored a stunning hundred against Indonesia. Photo: CAN

Nepal Triumphs ACC Under-16 Men's East Zone Cup 2025

Nepal's tournament win at the ACC Under-16 Men's East Zone Cup 2025 is a testament to the rise of cricket in the country, driven by grassroots efforts from both the government and the private sector.

Nepal U-16 cricket team celebrating the trophy after the finals. Photo: CAN



TDN CORRESPONDENT

Nepal Under-16 Cricket Team won the recently concluded ACC Under-16 Men's East Zone Cup 2025 in Malaysia. The tournament, played in a 50-over format, saw Nepal play a fearless and dominating brand of cricket, winning all the matches they played. Placed in Group A along with Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, and Bhutan, Nepal won all their group matches comprehensively.

The squad for the ACC Men's U16 East Zone Cup included Bipin Prasad Sharma (Captain), Suryanshu Koirala (Vice-Captain), Shiwansh Bajgai (Wicketkeeper), Parimarjan Yadav (Wicketkeeper), Raunak Shrivastav, Abhay Yadav, Sachin Bhatta, Sugam Bhudhathoki, Suyog Bhattarai, Sushil Rawal, Shubham Khanal, Prasiddha Jaishi, Joy Thapa, and Roshan Shahi.

On June 22, Nepal played the first game against Singapore at YSD UKM Oval, Bangi. They restricted Singapore batsmen to just 138 runs in 36.1 overs, and later chased down the total in 33.3 overs at the loss of 4 wickets. In the second game against Japan, played on June 24 at Kolej Tuanku Jaafar Oval, Kuala Lumpur, Nepal continued to dominate as they bowled out Japan for just 80 runs. Nepali batsmen chased down the total winning by 9 wickets.

Nepal's third game against Indonesia on June 29 at the Selangor Turf Club, Kuala Lumpur, was for the record books. Batting first, Nepali batsmen posted a hefty 420 runs in 50 overs with the loss of 5 wickets. Opening batsman Prashiddha Jaishi scored a brilliant 132 runs off 114 balls, along with his opening partner Parimarjan Yadav scoring 71 off just 28 balls. The Nepal batting innings also saw the brilliance of Raunak Srivastav (88 runs off 71 balls), Joy Thapa (57 runs off 41 balls), and Sugam Budhathoki (39 runs off 34 balls).

Later, Nepali bowlers restricted Indonesian batsmen to only 50 runs in 24.3 overs. Nepal captain Bipin Prasad Sharma led from the front with an outstanding spell, claiming an incredible 6 wickets for just 12 runs from 7.3 overs, while Sugam Budhathoki and Shubham Khanal also picked up a wicket each. The team replicated a similar performance on July 1 when they



President of Nepal, Ramchandra Paudel, with Nepal Under-16 players and officials. Photo: CAN

played their last group match against Bhutan at Selangor Turf Club, Kuala Lumpur. A stunning 168 runs off 132 balls from Raunak Srivastav ensured Nepal posted 358/5 in 50 overs. Shiwansh Bajgain (54 runs off 52 balls), Sugam Budhathoki (35 runs off 33 balls), and Joy Thapa (61 runs off 67 balls) contributed to the huge total.

However, Bhutan's batsmen couldn't come close to the target as they were all out for 60 runs in 32.4 overs. Captain Sharma again led from the front as he picked up 4 wickets in 10 overs, giving away just 7 runs. Suyog Bhattarai and Sachin Bhatta picked up two wickets each to help Nepal win by 298 runs and reach the semi-finals.

Moreover, the semi-finals against the host nation Malaysia, on July 3, was a walk in the park for the Rhinos. Nepali bowlers bundled out Malaysian batsmen for 90 runs in 43.1 overs, and successfully chased down the total in 11.4 overs with the loss of just one wicket. Abhay Yadav bagged the Man of the Match in the semi-finals for his bowling efforts of 4 wickets in 10 overs.

In the finals, on July 5, Nepal faced Singapore, whom they played against in the first group match of the tournament. Bowling first, Nepal showed another clinical performance with the ball, as they bowled out Singapore for 113 runs in 40.5 overs.

The match got interesting when Nepal lost wickets one after another during the run chase and were at 92 for 8 at one stage. But the young Rhinos kept their nerves to eventually win the thrilling final against Singapore Under-16 at the UKM-YSD Oval in Bangi by 2 wickets.

A complete domination throughout the tournament meant Nepali batsman Raunak Srivastav, who was the tournament's highest run scorer with 296 runs, earned a well-deserved Man of the Tournament award. Likewise, Nepal's captain and bowler Bipin Prasad Sharma was the leading wicket-taker of the tournament with 17 wickets in 6 games.

President of the Asian Cricket Council, Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, who was impressed with Nepal's performance, shared, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Nepal U-16 team for their outstanding performance and well-deserved victory at the ACC Men's U16 East Zone Cup 2025. Your dedication, talent, and team spirit were truly inspiring."

Upon reaching Nepali soil after the triumph, the President of Nepal, Ramchandra Paudel, invited the Nepal Under-16 Cricket Team to the Rashtrapati Bhawan in Kathmandu to extend congratulations. The congratulatory ceremony was also attended by the Minister of Youth and Sports of Nepal, Teju Lal Chaudhary, the Secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal, Paras Khadka, and other dignitaries.

This championship, especially at the age-level cricket, implies the growth of cricket in Nepal. In the associate as well as regional circuits, Nepal has now announced themselves as a tough competitor. And this has been possible because of the growing interest in sports in the country, leading to the development of cricket infrastructure, even at the grassroots level, from both the government and the private sector. ■

Dhakal Handed Over Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal Deanship to Thapa

“The growing role of Honorary Consuls in promoting Nepal’s economic diplomacy”

TDN CORRESPONDENT

Chandra Prasad Dhakal, Dean of the Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal (HCC-N) and the Honorary Consul of Indonesia, handed over the Deanship to Bhola Bikram Thapa, Honorary Consul of Bulgaria. During the 18th General Assembly and Charter Day of HCC-N on July 23 in Kathmandu, Dhakal, who also chairs the IME Group and leads the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), finished his one-year tenure. The new Dean

of the Honorary Consular Corps Thapa will lead the organization for a one-year term. There are around 60 Honorary Consuls in Nepal.

Addressing the program, Dhakal said that Honorary Consuls are active agents of Nepal’s economic diplomacy. “We are not just ceremonial figures. We are active, capable, and committed contributors to Nepal’s diplomacy and development,” Dhakal said. He also stressed that the importance of economic diplomacy is growing rapidly in today’s interconnected world. “Economic diplomacy is no longer an option—it is a necessity in today’s

globalized world,” he added. Dhakal reaffirmed the Corps’ commitment to support Nepal’s national interests. As Nepal moves toward graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category, he urged Honorary Consuls to act as “voluntary envoys” for economic transformation. He expressed confidence that HCC-N is more united and aligned with national priorities than ever before. He also highlighted the partnership between HCC-N and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and shared that groundwork has been laid for Nepal’s first-ever Economic Summit, in collaboration with FNCCI. Dhakal recalled the workshop held in Chandragiri with the Ministry, where Honorary Consuls committed to promoting foreign investment, innovation, trade, tourism, and diaspora engagement.

New Dean of HCC-N Thapa stated that economic diplomacy is no longer optional, but it is necessary. “I am guided by the clear

vision, and we will collectively achieve common goals,” he added.

In addition, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, appreciated the growing role of Honorary Consuls in promoting Nepal’s economic diplomacy. She said Honorary Consuls can serve as important bridges between Nepal and the international community, particularly in attracting trade, tourism, and investment. She added, “You have been playing a crucial role in introducing the world to Nepal and Nepal to the World.”

She also shared that in today’s world, there is a growing need to advance bilateral cooperation and partnerships for shared prosperity. “Your contributions are essential and significant in areas such as trade promotion, attracting foreign investment, ensuring market access, enhancing Nepal’s image internally and advancing matters of mutual interest and benefit,” Foreign Minister Rana stated. ■



(Top) In-coming Dean of the Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal, Bhola Bikram Thapa, handed over the token of love to out-going Dean of Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal, Chandra Prasad Dhakal. Dean of the Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, handed over the token of love to the Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Amrit Bahadur Rai.

Dean of the Honorary Consular Corps-Nepal, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, handed over the token of love to the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba.





Malaysian Businesspersons Meets PM Oli

Kathmandu: A delegation of Malaysia-Nepal Business Council met Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on July 5. During the meeting, they discussed investment potential in Nepal.

The meeting was held at PM's residence Baluwatar. According to the PM Secretariat, the 20-member delegation led by Executive Chairperson of the Paradise Group Company of Malaysia, Pradip Kumar Kukreja, informed PM Oli that they had arrived in Nepal

to learn about business atmosphere here in detail and for the meaningful trade relations between the two countries.

PM Oli informed foreign businesspersons that Nepal government had made legal and structural reforms to encourage and facilitate foreign investment. PM Oli also stated the investment climate in Nepal was improved and favourable at present. The delegation showed interest in pouring

money in waste (plastic) management, IT park and tourism. The issues like tourism, agriculture, IT, workforce and garment also featured during the discussion.

The delegation arrived in Nepal for three days at the coordination of Nepali Embassy in Malaysia. Also attending the discussion were PM's chief Advisor, Bishnu Rimal, and Advisor on Economic Affairs, Dr Yubraj Khatiwada.



New WFP Country Director Lodhi Presents Credentials in Nepal

Kathmandu: Riaz Lodhi, the newly appointed Country Director and Representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Nepal, presented his credentials to Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba.

Expressing admiration for Nepal's strength, spirit, and potential, Lodhi conveyed his commitment to deepening collaboration with the Government of Nepal. Discussions focused on enhancing food security, strengthening humanitarian response, and building climate resilience.

Lodhi expressed enthusiasm about working closely with both communities and authorities across Nepal.



Rwandan Ambassador Mukangira Pays Courtesy Call on Nepal's Foreign Secretary Rai

Kathmandu: Jacqueline Mukangira, non-resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to Nepal, paid a courtesy call on Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai at his office on July 11.

During the meeting, they discussed various matters related to Nepal-Rwanda bilateral relations.

Five Nepalis Repatriated from Iran Following Diplomatic Efforts

Kathmandu: Five Nepali nationals who were imprisoned in Iran have been safely repatriated to Nepal following coordinated diplomatic efforts led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to a press statement, the return of the Nepali citizens was facilitated in cooperation with the Nepali Embassy in Tehran and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The five Nepali nationals arrived in Kathmandu on July 24, 2025.

The Ministry stated that tensions between Israel and Hezbollah since June 13 have disrupted peace and security in the region, affecting normal life and creating challenges for foreign nationals, including Nepalis. In light of the evolving situation, the Ministry had earlier issued a travel advisory urging Nepali citizens to avoid conflict-affected areas and

remain in contact with Nepali missions in Tel Aviv, Tehran, and neighboring countries.

In a parallel effort, nine other Nepali nationals stranded in Israel were evacuated under India's Operation Sindhu through Indian flights, according to the Ministry. They were later assisted in returning to Nepal.

The Ministry acknowledged the support of the Government of India, the Iranian authorities, IOM, and officials from Nepali missions abroad for their roles in facilitating the safe return of Nepali nationals. It also extended appreciation to media outlets for their role in disseminating timely information.

The Ministry reiterated its commitment to the safety and well-being of Nepalis abroad and called for continued cooperation among national and international partners in such efforts.

PM Oli Meets Nepali Diaspora in Europe



Kathmandu: Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, on the final day of his visit to Spain, held a brief discussion with representatives of the Nepali community in Europe, on July 4. During the discussion, Prime Minister Oli urged the Nepali diaspora to contribute to Nepal's development by investing their knowledge, skills, and capital.



ECOSOC Vice-President Ambassador Thapa Chairs Opening of HLPF 2025

Kathmandu: Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa, Vice President of the UN Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC), on behalf of Bob Rae, President of the UNECOSOC, chaired the Opening Segment of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025.

“We gather here not merely to measure progress but to reignite purpose,” said Ambassador Thapa in his opening remarks.

Moreover, Thapa highlighted the urgent need to move beyond conventional approaches to address persistent and emerging global challenges. He stressed the importance of renewed commitment and innovation, noting the limited progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with only five years remaining until the 2030 deadline.

“We need renewed commitment to multilateralism and coordinated action based on trust, harmony, and solidarity to restore momentum and deliver on our shared commitments. Let’s harness this HLPF to catalyze bold action to advance the SDGs,” remarked Thapa.

Ambassador Thapa Attends Launch of 2025 UNOSSC’s Global Report

Kathmandu: The Permanent Representative of Nepal and the Vice President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa, attended the launch of the Global Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (UNOSSC).

“The Global South now contributes over 50% of global economic growth,” mentioned Vice President Thapa, on behalf of Bob Rae, the President of ECOSOC.

Moreover, Vice President Thapa emphasized the power of solidarity, urged treating SSTC as a core pillar of multilateralism & called for proactive efforts to recognize & champion it as a strategic enabler of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



US Embassy in Nepal Celebrates US Independence Day

Kathmandu: The U.S. Embassy in Nepal celebrated the 249th U.S. Independence Day with a special event attended by the Vice President of Nepal, Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav, along with other distinguished delegates and guests.

July 4th marks the day the U.S. Declaration of Independence was signed and the United States of America was declared an independent nation.

“On America’s Independence Day, I’m reminded of the symbolism of



our flag’s colors: red to honor sacrifice, white to reflect the purity of our principles, and blue for unwavering

resolve and justice,” said Dean R. Thompson, the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal.

45th Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) between the U.S. and Nepali Armed Forces.

Kathmandu: U.S. Ambassador Dean Thompson attended the opening ceremony of the 45th Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) between the U.S. and Nepali Armed Forces.

The training, which runs from July 14 to August 15, focuses on life-saving techniques and technical skills needed for disaster

response, peacekeeping, and crisis management.

Marking 78 years of diplomatic relations, the program highlights the continued partnership between the two nations. The United States remains committed to supporting Nepal in strengthening its crisis response and ensuring future stability.



33 Nepali Students Receive Full Erasmus Mundus Scholarships for Master's Studies in Europe

Kathmandu: A total of 33 Nepali students, 17 women and 16 men, have been awarded full Erasmus Mundus scholarships to pursue two-year Master's degrees in Europe for the 2025/26 academic year.

The prestigious Erasmus+ program, funded by the European Union (EU), allows students to study at multiple universities across Europe in a multicultural environment. The scholarship covers tuition fees, airfare, and a monthly stipend, ensuring students can fully focus on their academic goals.

With this new group, over 800 Nepali students have now benefited from the Erasmus+ program.

On July 16, the Delegation of the



European Union to Nepal, in partnership with the Erasmus Mundus Association Nepal, held a pre-departure orientation for the new scholars. EU Ambassador to Nepal, Veronique Lorenzo, congratulated the students and said, "This marks the beginning of an exciting journey of learning and growth. The Erasmus scholarship is about more than academics, it builds

connections and friendships between Europe and Nepal."

She also encouraged students to return to Nepal after completing their studies and contribute to the country's development. The 33 students will study a wide range of subjects, including cybersecurity, engineering, agriculture, biology, food technology, and flood risk management.

Vice-President Yadav Attends French National Day Reception in Kathmandu



Kathmandu: Vice-President Ram Chandra Paudel met with French Ambassador to Nepal, Virginie Corteval, during a reception hosted by the French Embassy in Kathmandu to mark French National Day, also known as Bastille Day.

On the occasion, Vice-President Yadav extended warm wishes to Ambassador Corteval, expressing his

heartfelt greetings for the continued peace, prosperity, and well-being of the French people.

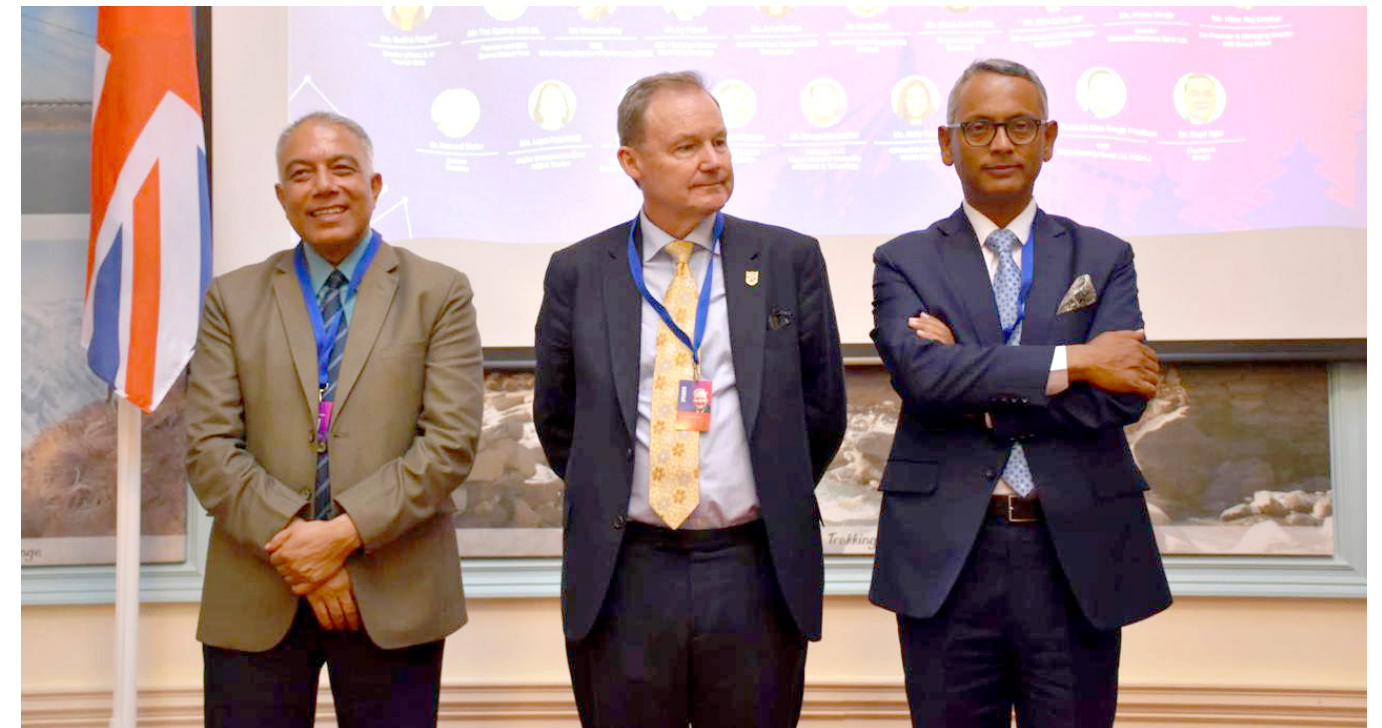
The event was attended by government officials, diplomats, international community members, and other distinguished guests, underscoring the enduring friendship and cooperation between Nepal and France.

Nepali Ambassadors to Denmark and UK Assigned Additional Roles in Finland and Ireland

Kathmandu: President Ram Chandra Paudel has appointed two Nepali ambassadors with additional responsibilities as non-resident ambassadors to neighboring European countries.

On the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, Ambassador to Denmark Sumnima Tuladhar has been appointed as the non-resident ambassador to Finland, while Ambassador to the United Kingdom Chandra Kumar Ghimire has been designated as the non-resident ambassador to Ireland.

The appointments were made in accordance with Article 282 of the Constitution of Nepal, which empowers the President to appoint ambassadors based on government recommendations.



Nepal-UK Tech Forum Agreed to Explore Investment and Forward Cooperation Between Countries

Kathmandu: The Nepal-UK Tech Forum, held on July 4 in London, brought together policymakers, diplomats, investors, and IT professionals from both countries to explore investment opportunities and foster collaboration in Nepal's growing digital economy.

Organized by the Embassy of Nepal in the UK, the forum focused on attracting British investment in Nepal's IT sector and promoting the export of Nepali digital services. Nepali Ambassador to the UK, Chandra Kumar Ghimire, highlighted Nepal's emergence as an energy-exporting and digitally active country, citing recent reforms and an improving business climate.

British Ambassador to Nepal, Rob Fenn, emphasized that the timing was right to expand UK investment in Nepal, especially in IT and renewable energy. He underscored the importance of smooth dividend repatriation and the upcoming double taxation avoidance agreement to boost investor confidence.

British MP Alex Baker, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Nepal, called for direct air connectivity between the two nations to support deeper economic engagement.

Nepal Investment Board CEO Sushil Gyawali shared that Nepal permits 100% foreign direct investment in IT, offers tax exemptions for up to seven years, and is planning to establish IT parks across all seven provinces. He also announced plans to form an IT Promotion Board chaired by the Prime Minister.

More than 100 participants attended panel discussions on artificial intelligence, digital trade, digital diplomacy, and investment prospects. Tim Gochar of Dolma Impact Fund pointed out Nepal's potential to host world-class data centers, leveraging its cool climate, clean energy, and digital workforce.

FNCCI President Chandra Prasad Dhakal invited joint ventures and partnerships in e-governance and tech development, while Anjani Phuyal, CEO of UK-based Genese Solution, praised the quality of Nepali IT services and stressed the need to expand digital infrastructure across provinces.

Santosh Koirala of NAS-IT noted that Nepal's IT sector employs around 90,000 youths and generates approximately \$800 million annually, with a strong focus on the U.S. market and plans to expand into the UK.

The forum concluded with the decision to establish a Nepal-UK Digital Working Group to follow up on key areas of cooperation, aiming to boost tech exports and attract FDI into Nepal's digital sector.

British Embassy Drives Female Leadership Forward at Ellevate Nepal

Kathmandu: The British Embassy, as part of its Ellevate Conference 2025, geared towards shaping future female leaders in Nepal, hosted the final pitch event in conclusion of its week-long conference.

The final pitch event presented young women from across Kathmandu who pitched business ideas for real-world change, delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Nepal-India

Nepal-India Home Secretary Level Talks Concluded in New Delhi

Kathmandu: The Home Secretary Level Talks between India and Nepal was held on July 22, 2025, in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Govind Mohan, Home Secretary of Government of India, and the Nepali delegation was led by Gokarna Mani Duwadee, Home Secretary of Government of Nepal.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs of India, both sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral security cooperation as well as border management and agreed to strengthen it further. “Their deliberations included issues related to the repair and maintenance of boundary pillars, transborder criminal

activities, working of Border District Coordination Committees, strengthening of border infrastructure particularly ICPs, roads and railway networks, empowerment and capacity building of various security related institutions, and ways to strengthen cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management,” the statement reads.

The talks welcomed the finalization of the text of the Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and agreed to work towards early conclusion of the revised Extradition Treaty. It was agreed that the next Home Secretary Level Talks will be held in Nepal at a mutually convenient date.

UNFPA Nepal and Qatar Strengthen Cooperation on Gender Equality and SRHR

Kathmandu: UNFPA Nepal Representative, Sriram Haridass, met with Mishal M. Al Ansari, Ambassador of Qatar to Nepal, for a meaningful exchange focused on shared development priorities.

The discussions centered around advancing gender equality, strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and promoting community empowerment in Nepal. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to collaborative efforts in support of inclusive and sustainable development.



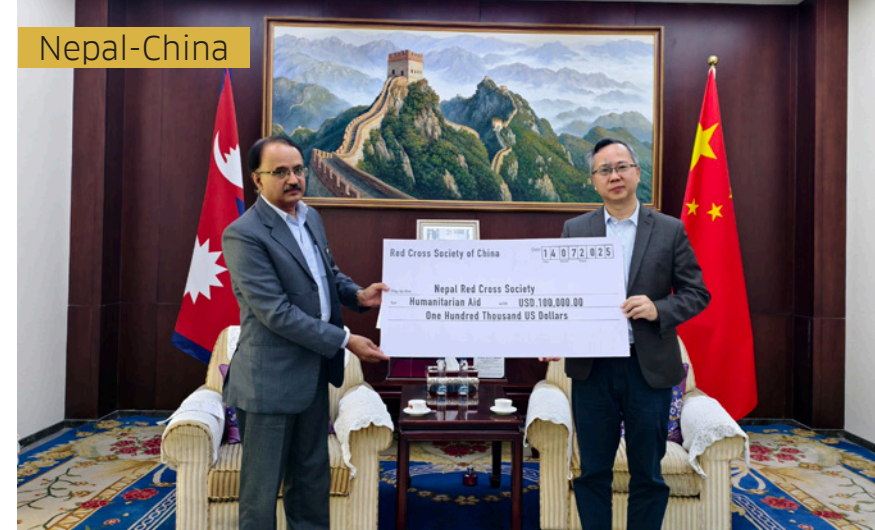
Nepal-Qatar

Ambassador Sharma Highlights Nepal’s Tourism Growth at Diplomatic Conclave 2025

Kathmandu: Nepal’s Ambassador to India, Dr. Shankar P. Sharma, spoke on heritage tourism and cultural diplomacy at the Fifth Edition of the Diplomatic Conclave 2025, held at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport. The event, hosted by TravelJingles, brought together representatives from over 36 embassies.

The conclave featured two key panel discussions: Heritage Tourism and Bilateral Trading, offering a platform for diplomats to share ideas on strengthening global connections through culture and commerce.

Ambassador Sharma expressed optimism that Nepal’s tourist arrivals in the fiscal year 2024–25 are set to surpass the previous year’s figures. He also highlighted that India remains the top source of international tourists to Nepal.



Nepal-China

Chinese Red Cross Provides Emergency Aid for Rasuwa Flood Relief

Kathmandu: The Chinese Embassy in Nepal, on behalf of the Red Cross Society of China, has handed over USD 100,000 in emergency humanitarian assistance to the Nepal Red Cross Society to support ongoing disaster relief efforts in Rasuwa. Chinese

Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, handed over the money to the Representatives of the Nepal Red Cross Society.

The Chinese Embassy expressed support, stating, “Our hearts are with the people of Nepal.”

Chinese Ambassador Song Calls on Minister Dahal, Nepal-China Bordering Bridge Likely to be Restored Before Dashain

Kathmandu: China’s Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, paid a courtesy call on Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Debendra Dahal, to discuss ongoing and future infrastructure collaboration between the two countries.

During the meeting held at the Minister’s office in Singha Durbar, the two sides discussed the urgent need to restore the Syphrubesi-Rasuwadghi road and the Miteri Bridge, both vital cross-border links damaged along the Nepal-China border in Rasuwa. Ambassador Chen expressed China’s willingness to assist in the restoration and confirmed plans to construct a temporary structure to facilitate border movement. Other infrastructure projects backed by China,

including the Tokha-Chhahare Tunnel, Hilsa-Simkot Road, and Khandbari-Kimathanka Road, were also discussed. Ambassador Chen further informed that expansion work on the second section of the Kathmandu Ring Road (Chakrapath) will begin soon.

Minister Dahal welcomed China’s ongoing support and emphasized the importance of continued cooperation for Nepal’s infrastructure development. Secretary of the Ministry, Keshab Kumar Sharma, added that efforts are underway to complete the Rasuwa border bridge restoration before Dashain, by the end of September.

The meeting reaffirmed both nations’ commitment to advancing bilateral infrastructure initiatives in the spirit of mutual cooperation.

Nepal-Japan

Nepal Pavilion Finally Opens at Osaka Expo



Kathmandu: More than three months after the Osaka Expo began in April, Nepal officially opened its pavilion on July 19. With this, all 158 countries and regions, along with seven international organizations, participating in the Expo, now have their pavilions open.

The Nepal pavilion opened to the public, drawing many visitors eager to see “the last pavilion” of the Expo.

Nepal chose the “Type A” pavilion format, where countries build their own structures. However, construction was delayed due to payment issues with contractors, halting work in January. It resumed on June 16. Nepal’s Ambassador to Japan, Durga Bahadur Subedi, said delays in materials and labor shortages contributed to the late opening.

Despite the delay, the ambassador expressed happiness that Nepal is now part of the global event.

The pavilion showcases Nepal’s Himalayan landscapes, rich culture, Buddhist art, and its 70-year diplomatic relationship with Japan. Visitors can ring traditional “singing bowls” and enjoy Nepalese food at the pavilion’s restaurant.



Nepal-Bahrain

Nepal Embassy hosts Tourism and Business Networking Event in Bahrain

Kathmandu: On July 13, the Embassy of Nepal in Bahrain hosted the “Nepal Tourism and Business Networking Event” to promote Nepal’s tourism and business sectors at the Crowne Plaza in Manama.

The event focused on promoting Nepal’s tourism sector and business industries through networking and engagement with the Bahraini government officials, business leaders, investors, tour/ travel companies, journalists, and media representatives.

The event was joined by the members of the Bahrain Chamber, Bahrain Businessmen’s Association, Bahrain Small and Medium Enterprises Society, and key Bahraini officials such as MP Mohamed Husain Janahi from the Council of Representatives, Ahmed J. Al-Haiki, Assistant Undersecretary for Labour Affairs, and Fahd AlBinali, Director of Partnerships and Outreach at LMRA.

Anju Sharma Marasini, Country Manager of Nepal Airlines in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, was also present as the event saw an attendance of around 100 participants, including investors, academics, and friends of Nepal.

Speaking at the event, Tirtha Raj Wagle, the Ambassador of Nepal to the Kingdom of Bahrain, highlighted the untapped business potential between Nepal and Bahrain. Ambassador Wagle also encouraged Bahraini business leaders and private sector stakeholders to explore investment opportunities in Nepal and proposed the creation of a Nepal-Bahrain Business and Friendship Forum.

Emphasizing the growing interest in Nepal as a travel destination and underlining the importance of improving air connectivity, Wagle highlighted Nepal’s rich cultural diversity and its potential in tourism, recreation, trade, and investment.

Adding on to the event, Sujana Aryal, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Nepal Embassy, delivered a presentation titled “Investment Opportunities and Tourism in Nepal,” providing an overview of the business, investment, and tourism prospects in Nepal, and disseminating the key points of contact for those interested.

The event featured displays of Nepali arts and culture, including traditional Nepali musical instruments, traditional woodworks, and cultural artifacts. The guests also viewed promotional banners and videos showcasing diverse tourist destinations and Nepali products such as tea, coffee, pashmina, herbs, and spices.

The guests were also presented with Nepali tea, brochures, and tourism photographs as souvenirs, concluding the program with a dinner featuring traditional Nepali cuisine.

Bangladesh Ambassador Rahman Addressing the International Climate Camp, Urges Regional Cooperation

Kathmandu: Bangladesh’s Ambassador to Nepal, Shafiqur Rahman, emphasized the need for regional cooperation to tackle climate change during his closing remarks at the opening ceremony of the International Climate Camp 2025: Symposium on Climate Change in South Asia, held at Tribhuvan University.

The event gathered key figures, including BRAC University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Ainun Nishat, senior officials from Bangladesh’s Economic Relations Division, and representatives from Tribhuvan University, UNDP, WaterAid Nepal, ICIMOD, and the Ministry of Environment.

Ambassador Rahman highlighted the increasing impact of climate change across South Asia and called for inclusive and collaborative action among regional countries. He stressed cooperation between Nepal and Bangladesh in clean energy, hydropower, and knowledge-sharing. He also reaffirmed Bangladesh’s commitment to climate leadership and expressed readiness to partner with Nepal and other nations in the region on shared climate goals. Addressing youth participants, Rahman urged them to become advocates and collaborators for climate action at all levels.

The five-day International Climate Camp, running from July 4 to 8 across Nepal, brings together over 100 participants from Bangladesh and Nepal. It serves as a platform for youth and professionals to develop regional strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation.



Nepal Issues First-Ever Seaman’s Record Book

Kathmandu: Nepal has officially issued its first Seaman’s Record Book through the Department of Passports (DoP), marking a key milestone in supporting overseas employment for Nepali seafarers.

The first recipient is Amit Kumar Sinha, employed by Delta Corp Ship Management DMCCO. The internationally recognized document will facilitate easier mobility and job placement for Nepali maritime

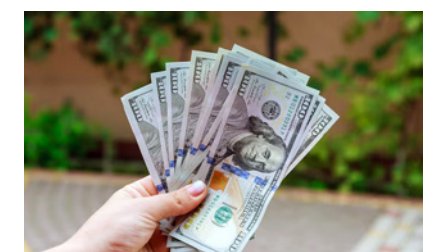
workers. This initiative follows the government’s 2022/23 decision to begin issuing the document domestically. Previously, Nepali seafarers had to rely on foreign-issued documents, which were often difficult to access and not always accepted internationally. With the launch of this system, Nepal aims to simplify verification procedures, enhance credibility, and reduce barriers for its citizens in the global maritime industry.

Tirtha Raj Aryal, Director General of the DoP, congratulated Sinha and expressed hope that the record book will benefit many more Nepali seafarers seeking employment abroad.

Nepal Increases Foreign Travel Currency Limit to USD 3,000

Kathmandu: Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has raised the foreign currency limit for Nepali travelers to 3,000 US dollars, up from the previous limit of \$2,500. The announcement was made by Governor Prof. Dr. Bishwo Nath Poudel during the release of the monetary policy for fiscal year 2025/26.

NRB also plans to add currencies of countries with growing foreign exchange transactions, such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, to its list of convertible currencies. To better manage foreign exchange risks and attract investment, the central bank will implement new measures



through commercial banks and amend the Foreign Investment and Foreign Debt Management Regulations, 2021.

The policy also proposes reviewing the remittance exchange rate (Fedan rate), simplifying the process for declaring foreign currency at customs, and easing the submission of foreign currency holding details.

Additionally, NRB aims to review gold trade regulations and introduce a classification system for remittance companies.

Nepal-UAE



UAE-Nepal Trade Ties Set to Strengthen Through Economic Collaboration

Kathmandu: The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kathmandu hosted an “Economic Promotional Event on Invest in Emirates” on July 17, aiming to strengthen bilateral trade and investment ties between

the UAE and Nepal. Speaking at the event, UAE Ambassador Abdulla Al Shamsi emphasized that resolving issues like double taxation and finalizing pending agreements could significantly boost UAE investments in Nepal.

He also referenced the momentum created during the recent visit of UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. FNCCI President Chandra Prasad Dhakal highlighted Nepal’s favorable investment

climate under a stable government, while NUAECCI President Pawan Agrawal called for UAE investments in tourism, energy, and agriculture. He also proposed setting up skill stations and outsourcing IT services to Nepal.

The event included presentations on the UAE’s economic transformation, investment opportunities in the Emirates, and potential sectors for investment in Nepal, promoting mutual economic growth and sustainable development.

Nepal-Bangladesh

‘Sea to Summit’ Photo Exhibition in Dhaka

Kathmandu: Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Nepal in Bangladesh, Lalita Silwal, inaugurated a three-day photography exhibition titled ‘Sea to Summit’ at the Bangladesh National Museum on July 11.

The exhibition features photographs by two inspiring Everest summiteers, Ikramul Hasan Shakil from Bangladesh and Tashi Gyalzen Sherpa from Nepal.

Silwal congratulated both climbers, highlighting their joint feat as a symbol of courage, determination,



and the strong ties between Nepal and Bangladesh. Shakil completed an extraordinary journey from Cox’s Bazar to the top of Mt. Everest, covering 1,372 kilometers in 84 days. Sherpa

set a rare record by summiting Everest four times within just 15 days. The exhibition, organized by the Bangladeshi Mountaineering Trekking Club, runs from July 11 to 13.

Nepal-Egypt

Photo Exhibition on Nepal in Cairo

Kathmandu: A three-day photo exhibition titled ‘Faces from Nepal’ began at the Opera House in Cairo, Egypt, in coordination with the Nepali Embassy. Nepali Ambassador to Egypt Sushil Kumar Lamsal inaugurated the exhibition on July 1. A total of 30 photographs taken by Egyptian photo-journalist Yasser Ala Mubarak on the occasion of Mahashivaratri 2024 in the Pashupatinath premises in Kathmandu are also displayed at the exhibition.

According to the Nepali Embassy in Cairo, on the occasion, Ambassador Lamsal described the importance of the Pashupatinath Temple area, which is on the World Heritage List, and expressed the view that the photo



exhibition gives the audience a glimpse of Nepal’s indigenous and ancient cultural heritage. Journalist Mubarak, while sharing his experience of taking photos in Nepal, said that Nepal is a center of great attraction for photographers due to its immense and diverse cultural heritage. He expressed confidence that activities such as the photo

exhibition would further strengthen the foundation of Nepal-Egypt cultural exchange. The embassy has stated that around 100 people including photographers and journalists, representatives of diplomatic missions and students participated in the inaugural session and observed the photo exhibition.

Entrepreneurship

Ethnic Style Muse: Art Over Algorithms

Kathmandu: Anusha Raya Chhetri is not your typical entrepreneur. She didn’t have investors, a big team, or a perfect plan. But what she did have was a purpose, the support of her family, and the courage to start with whatever she had in her little pocket.

Now the founder of Ethnic Style Muse, a fashion brand she runs with her best friend Liza Maharjan, Anusha was born in Udayapur and raised in Lalitpur. Growing up, she wanted to become a doctor — a dream built on the desire to help others. But life had different plans. Due to financial difficulties, she had to let that dream go. Still, she stayed close to the field and studied healthcare management, eventually completing her MBA in Kathmandu.

But that wasn’t enough for her. She wanted to do something meaningful — something of her own. That “something” turned into Ethnic Style Muse, a brand rooted in sustainability, culture, and handcrafted clothing. Inspired by



the traditional wooden block prints and vibrant fabrics of Rajasthan, Anusha and Liza launched the brand with just NPR 40,000 and 40 pieces. They had no shop, just a story — and that story, shared mostly through Instagram, slowly began to connect with people.

What makes Anusha’s story more inspiring is that this is only one of the many things she does. She also works full-time as an HR Admin and Audit Consultant at Omsairam Felt Product Pvt. Ltd. On top of that, she was involved in The Heroines! movement,

a global storytelling project that highlights the untold stories of remarkable women across history. As a Project Associate and Communication Officer, Anusha plays a key role in managing outreach and narrative building. Just recently, she was awarded for her outstanding contribution to the movement.

And yet, even with all that on her plate, she continues to build Ethnic Style Muse — one order, one story, one artisan at a time.

Her brand’s core is simple: handmade, ethical, and rooted in culture. Most of their sales come through Instagram, where Anusha shares behind-the-scenes stories, design inspirations, and the challenges they face. She doesn’t shy away from showing the messy parts — delayed shipments, price comparisons with fast fashion, or juggling meetings after office hours. That honesty is what connects.

Anusha might not have become a doctor, but she’s still making an impact. She’s balancing multiple roles, uplifting stories of other women, and running a brand that values art over algorithms. Her story is a reminder that you don’t need perfect conditions to begin — you just need heart, and the guts to keep going.

Dr. Dhakal Bids Farewell to Norwegian Ambassador Dramdal

Kathmandu: President of the Ambassadors Club and IRGDD, Dr. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, bid farewell to the Ambassador of Norway to Nepal, Torun Dramdal, on July 2. During the meeting, they discussed Nepal-Norway relations. Former Ambassador to Spain and Oman, Dr. Dhakal, praised Ambassador Dramdal's contributions during her tenure in Nepal in strengthening bilateral relations. Dr. Dhakal also highlighted the potential for further cooperation between Nepal and Norway.

They emphasized the long-standing friendship between the two countries and reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration through the Ambassadors Club and IRGDD. Ambassador Dramdal shared her experiences in Nepal, saying, "The climate, culture, and communities of Nepal were wonderful. I have enjoyed my stay in Nepal." She also noted that Norwegians are willing to invest in Nepal and expressed interest in collaboration, particularly in the hydropower sector.



PM Oli Hopeful For NAWF's Further Contribution to Socio-Development Endeavours

Kathmandu: Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has expressed his confidence that the Nepal Army Welfare Fund (NAWF) would further contribute to propel social works and advance shared destination of development through welfare programmes.

In his address to a special programme organized at the Nepal Army Headquarters on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the establishment of Army Welfare Fund on July 30, Fund's patron PM Oli lauded various welfare-based programmes being run by the Army Welfare Directorate through the Fund for the on-the-job and retired army personnel and their dependent families.

The Army Welfare Fund instituted by funds from the income generated from the UN mission has substantial contributions to different areas related to education, health, family residence and social security thereby sharing the burden of the State, the PM noted.

Transformation of India's Foreign Policy:

Shaping The Global Order as a Responsible Power



CHIRANJIBI BHANDARI

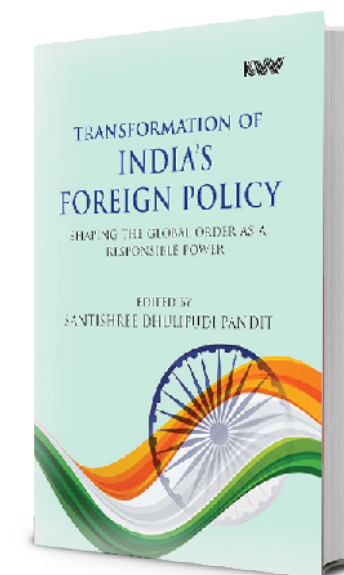
The writer is pursuing PhD in International Relations at South Asian University, New Delhi.

When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, India's stature was elevated as a global power based on its economic progress and assertive diplomacy. Modi's foreign policy doctrine, branded by strategic initiatives such as "Nation First, Universal Brotherhood," "Neighbourhood First," "Act East Policy," "Strategic Autonomy and Multi-alignment," "Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power," and "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India), as well as proactive contributions in global governance as a rule-shaper, are well-recognized initiatives that have focused the world's attention on India. India's zero tolerance for terrorism through assertive responses like "Surgical Strikes," "Balakot airstrikes," and "Operation Sindoor," as well as engagement with the Indian diaspora globally for the promotion of Indian culture, are also perceived as remarkable steps taken by the Indian government in recent times.

To understand India's foreign policy during Modi's government, the book Transformation of India's Foreign Policy: Shaping The Global Order as a Responsible Power, edited by Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, offers a thorough analysis of India's evolving diplomatic strategies under Modi's leadership.

This 245-page book is divided into nine chapters and presents India as a 'responsible power.' Along with a comprehensive introduction by the editor and a concluding chapter titled "Challenges and Way Forward" by P.R. Kumaraswamy, the other seven thematic contributors are also associated with Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The primary themes covered in this book include Modi's worldview, the contributions of foreign ministers, multilateralism, economic diplomacy



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 Pages : 245

and development partnerships, soft power, engagement with the diaspora, and national and global security.

Throughout the different chapters, the book offers a multidimensional analysis of the notable achievements of India's foreign policy since 1947 and critically examines Prime Minister Modi's leadership and worldview in shaping foreign policy behavior and conduct. The thematic chapter The Worldview of Prime Minister Narendra Modi by Md. Muddassir Quamar explains Modi's worldview based on Vedic teachings, civilizational and cultural depth, as well as his distinctive leadership style. The author

The primary themes covered in this book include Modi's worldview, the contributions of **foreign ministers, multilateralism, economic diplomacy and development partnerships.**

You tell the story
 We will craft your book



Lekhan Kunja
 Ghost Writing Nepal

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interestingly highlights the significance of leadership in international relations and argues that Modi's assertive and visionary diplomacy has redefined India's global posture, blending strategic autonomy with proactive engagement. He reflects, "Modi has skillfully used India's unique qualities—cultural heritage, civilizational richness, democratic credentials, economic potential, demographic dividend, and diaspora—to advance India's interests" (Page 27).

The second thematic chapter, Implementing Modi's Worldview: Contributions of Sushma Swaraj and S. Jaishankar by Rohit Kumar Sharma, discusses how the two External Affairs Ministers contributed to transforming Modi's diplomacy into action to enhance India's standing on the international stage, considering a civilizational perspective and India's ancient wisdom. The author highlights Swaraj's contributions through people-centric diplomacy and diaspora outreach, and Jaishankar's role through strategic recalibration and institutional reforms.

Anuradha Jangra, a doctoral candidate at JNU, in the chapter Multilateralism in Indian Foreign Policy, thoroughly discusses India's foreign policy evolution from the Non-Aligned Movement to its emphasis on fairness and equity in global governance and the universalism of the weak to multilateralism. She clearly explains this evolution over several decades. India's leadership in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, WTO, G20, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and BIMSTEC is examined as evidence of its rising global influence. Furthermore, the author argues that "China's rise is a significant geopolitical factor influencing India's views on multilateralism and international organizations" (Page 87).

In the next chapter, Professor Sameena Hamid underscores India's economic diplomacy as a vehicle for sustainable development, emphasizing initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, digital public infrastructure, and climate-resilient partnerships. The author further highlights India's visionary leadership in climate action and cultural diplomacy. Mission LiFE, unveiled by PM Modi at COP26, champions sustainable lifestyles over

consumerism. Meanwhile, the revival of Nalanda University serves as a cultural bridge, reconnecting South and East Asia through shared heritage. Together, these initiatives reflect India's mixture of ecological responsibility and civilizational outreach in shaping its foreign policy.

In the chapter India's Soft Power, Deepika Matange explores how India's culture and knowledge systems have played a significant role in influencing societies around the globe. The author discusses how India's cultural diplomacy, Yoga, cinema, art, and technology—alongside its commitment to preserving indigenous knowledge systems and advancing scientific innovation—have contributed to spreading ancient wisdom and Indian values globally.



As the final thematic chapter on security, Prabhat Jwala illustrates how India's foreign and security policies are increasingly synergized to meet the country's evolving needs and growing geopolitical ambitions.

Ifran Ahmed Nazir's contribution, India's Rastradoots: Engagement with the Diaspora, compellingly argues for India's diaspora engagement through the 4Cs—Care, Connect, Celebrate, and Contribute—which are presented as strategic pillars connecting India with its global citizens.

As the final thematic chapter on security, Prabhat Jwala illustrates how India's foreign and security policies are increasingly synergized to meet the country's evolving needs and growing geopolitical ambitions. The chapter discusses how India's integrated

foreign and security policy—including defense visits, joint production, strategic exports, nuclear posture, and counter-terrorism cooperation—advances institutional reforms, strengthens border security, and positions India as a proactive contributor to global stability.

Finally, P.R. Kumaraswamy's concluding chapter, Challenges and Way Forward, summarizes that India and China stand out as leading contenders in shaping 21st-century global politics, alongside other influential middle powers like Brazil, South Africa, Türkiye, and South Korea, in the race to redefine the international order.

The book offers structured analytical perspectives across seven critical domains through both theoretical and practical insights. Its systematic approach—from vision to practice to the way forward—enables readers to comprehend the interconnected nature of India's global standing.

It represents a mature intellectual effort that meaningfully contributes to our understanding of how India is preparing itself as a global actor through conscientious engagement and tactical vision. The volume clearly records India's achievements across multilateral forums, economic diplomacy, and soft power initiatives, though it largely adopts a commemorative tone, providing limited space for critical analysis or dissenting perspectives.

The book, edited by Santishree Pandit, offers a sharp, multidimensional view of India's foreign policy transformation under Modi. However, when read alongside other books such as The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World by S. Jaishankar, Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy by Shivshankar Menon, and India-ASEAN Relations: Five Years of Modi Foreign Policy by Chander Shekhar, among others, it completes a holistic narrative—bridging strategic vision, reflective analysis, and regional engagement—to understand India's assertive stance in global affairs.

I believe this book is highly relevant to individuals, including academics, policymakers, and international relations experts, who wish to grasp India's expanding influence in global and world affairs in a deeper way. ■



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