India, Nepal sign 8 MoUs; PMs flag off the Saryu–Kamala Express

Topics: International Affairs · UPSC Prelims · TNPSC · SSC · Current Affairs



News

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra (Balen) Shah made a State visit to India, described by Nepal's Foreign Secretary as his first bilateral foreign visit since taking office in March 2026. After talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House, New Delhi, on 23 November 2026, the two countries signed eight MoUs. They cover a satellite communication network using the South Asia Satellite (ISRO – Nepal's Ministry of Information and Communication), academic and research cooperation between the National Forensic Sciences University and Nepal Police's Crime Investigation Department, cooperation between Rashtriya Raksha University and Nepal's National Police Academy, training of Nepalese civil servants by the National Centre for Good Governance with the Nepal Administrative Staff College, traditional medicine, sustainable urban development, healthcare, and livestock and fisheries. The foundation stone of the 669 MW Lower Arun hydropower project was laid, Phase II of the Motihari–Amlekhganj pipeline was dedicated, foundation stones were laid for the Banbasa Integrated Check Post and for a petroleum terminal at Jhapa (part of the proposed Siliguri–Jhapa pipeline), and a motorable bridge over the Mahakali between Dharchula (India) and Darchula (Nepal) was inaugurated; PM Modi also announced a package of 240 billion Nepalese rupees (about US$1.62 billion) for reconstruction after the August floods, which killed about 1,500 people. The two Prime Ministers flagged off the 'Saryu–Kamala Express', the weekly Janakpur Dham–Ayodhya Cantt train. According to the Railway Ministry, the train covers about 604 km through Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, with stops including Jaynagar, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Raxaul and Gorakhpur; it leaves Janakpur on Saturdays and Ayodhya on Mondays. It links

Janakpur, regarded as Sita's birthplace, with Ayodhya, Rama's birthplace, to promote Ramayana-linked religious tourism.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Nepal PM	Balendra (Balen) Shah
Talks	Hyderabad House, New Delhi – 23.11.2026
Agreements	8 MoUs
Space	SATCOM network via South Asia Satellite
Train route	Janakpur Dham – Ayodhya Cantt, ~604 km
Frequency	Weekly
Hydropower	Lower Arun (669 MW) foundation stone
Fuel	Motihari–Amlekhganj pipeline phase 2
Reconstruction aid	NPR 240 billion (~US$1.62 billion) – after the August floods
Train	'Saryu–Kamala Express' (Janakpur Dham – Ayodhya Cantt)
Other projects	Banbasa Integrated Check Post, Jhapa petroleum terminal (foundation stones); Dharchula–Darchula bridge (opened)

Background

- The foundation of India–Nepal ties is the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed on 31 July 1950. It lets citizens of each country live and work in the other on equal terms; the two share an open border of about 1,750 km. Nepal is a key partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.
- Under its 2015 Constitution Nepal is a federal republic of seven provinces. Janakpur is the capital of Madhesh Province and is regarded as the capital of King Janaka of Mithila in the Ramayana. In 2018 PM Modi flagged off a Janakpur–Ayodhya bus service.
- Economy: India is Nepal's largest trading partner. The Indian PSU SJVN is developing the Arun-3 (900 MW) and Lower Arun (669 MW) hydro projects. The Motihari (Bihar)–Amlekhganj (Nepal) pipeline, opened in 2019, is South Asia's first cross-border petroleum products pipeline; it was built by Indian Oil Corporation.
- Science: the 'South Asia Satellite' (GSAT-9), launched by ISRO in 2017, is a communication satellite India offered to its neighbours. The new ISRO MoU will use it to set up a communication network in Nepal.

> **Tamil Nadu link:** The 'Mithilai Kaatchi Padalam' in the Bala Kandam of Kambar's Kamba Ramayanam describes Rama's first sight of Sita in Mithila, Janaka's city. Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu is a key stop of the Ramayana pilgrimage trail.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra (Balen) Shah made a State visit to India, described by Nepal's Foreign Secretary as his first bilateral foreign visit since taking office in March 2026.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Nepal PM: Balendra (Balen) Shah; Talks: Hyderabad House, New Delhi – 23.11.2026; Agreements: 8 MoUs; Space: SATCOM network via South Asia Satellite.

What is the background to this news?

The foundation of India–Nepal ties is the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed on 31 July 1950. It lets citizens of each country live and work in the other on equal terms; the two share an open border of about 1,750 km. Nepal is a key partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Janakpur Dham, terminus of the new India–Nepal train, is the capital of which province of Nepal?

A) Koshi

B) Bagmati

C) Lumbini

D) Madhesh

Answer: D – Explanation: Madhesh Province (formerly 'Province No. 2'). Kathmandu is in Bagmati; Buddha's birthplace Lumbini is in Lumbini Province.

2. Which SAARC country opted out of the 'South Asia Satellite' (GSAT-9) project, now used under one India–Nepal MoU?

A) Bhutan

B) Pakistan

C) Maldives

D) Sri Lanka

Answer: B – Explanation: Pakistan. GSAT-9 was launched from Sriharikota by GSLV-F09 on 5 May 2017 as India's gift to its neighbours (ISRO).

3. In the Kamba Ramayanam, the 'Mithilai Kaatchi Padalam', where Rama first sees Sita in Mithila, is in which Kandam?

A) Ayodhya Kandam

B) Aranya Kandam

C) Bala Kandam

D) Sundara Kandam

Answer: C – Explanation: Bala Kandam – the first of six Kandams. The famous line 'Annalum nokkinan; avalum nokkinal' (he looked, and she looked) is in this padalam.

4. Which Indian public sector company is developing the Arun-3 and Lower Arun hydropower projects in Nepal?

A) NHPC

B) SJVN

C) NTPC

D) THDC

Answer: B – Explanation: SJVN Ltd (formerly Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam) – Arun-3 (900 MW) and Lower Arun (669 MW).

5. Which Indian company built the Motihari–Amlekhganj pipeline, South Asia's first cross-border petroleum pipeline?

A) Indian Oil (IOCL)

B) Bharat Petroleum

C) Hindustan Petroleum

D) GAIL

Answer: A – Explanation: Indian Oil Corporation – the two PMs opened it by video link in September 2019; it carries fuel from Bihar to Nepal.