

## China stresses on ties with Nepal, India

China on Wednesday proposed an understanding with India on Nepal, to help develop a trilateral partnership, which would include setting up a trans-Himalayan economic corridor.

China's Foreign Minister and State Councilor Wang Yi said during a press conference with his Nepali counterpart Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, "Nepal's development should be a common understanding between China and India." "I believe that China, Nepal and India are natural friends and partners. We are neighbours connected by the same mountains and rivers," Mr. Wang said. "As we say in China, family members and neighbours wish each other well."

Mr. Wang's appeal for a trilateral bonhomie came at a time when India and China are trying to impart buoyancy to their post-Doklam ties. In parallel, India-Nepal ties are also in the reset mould, highlighted by a red carpet welcome that was accorded to Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli during his visit to New Delhi last week.

India-Nepal ties had been earlier hit following New Delhi's unofficial blockade of essential supplies to its Himalayan neighbour, prompting Nepal's outreach to China via Tibet.

### Benefits for neighbours

"As two major emerging economies, China and India shall deliver benefits to their neighbours, Nepal included" Mr. Wang said, stressing that China's big plans to develop connectivity and infrastructure were part of the Belt and the Road Initiative.

But once these projects were complete, it could further yield the emergence of a trans-Himalayan corridor, which could benefit China, India and Nepal.

He highlighted that that China and Nepal had agreed on a "long-term vision of a multi-dimensional trans-Himalaya connectivity network", under the BRI. These projects would cover seaports, railways, highways, aviation, power, and communication sectors.

"We believe that such a network when well-developed can also provide conditions for an economic corridor connecting China, Nepal and India. We hope that such cooperation will contribute to the development and prosperity of all three countries."

In an apparent signal to India, Mr. Wang pointed to Nepal's geography — its linkages with both China and India — as the basis of trilateral cooperation. "Nepal on its part wants to leverage its geographical advantage and connect China and India for greater development. And Nepal stands as a natural beneficiary from sound cooperation from China and India... I think it should be supported by both China and India."

On his part, Mr. Gyawali said Nepal and China had agreed to start a feasibility study for a cross-border railway linking the countries.

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