

**'Nepal can be bridge between India, China'**

K.P. Oli

Nepal can serve as a bridge between India and China, Prime Minister K.P. Oli has said, insisting that his country will maintain close ties with the two neighbours while pursuing an independent foreign policy.

Mr. Oli, who is here on a five-day visit, held talks with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, following which a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to build a railway link connecting Tibet with Kathmandu, along with 14 cooperative documents.

In an interview to China's state-run *Global Times*, Mr. Oli said since the formation of his government, Nepal has intensified engagements with both neighbours.

"We have made it clear that we pursue an independent foreign policy and a balanced outlook in the conduct of international relations," he said.

**'Top priority for both'**

"In foreign policy conduct, our two neighbours naturally receive top priority and with both of them, our relations are broad, comprehensive and multi-faceted," Mr. Oli said.

Asked whether Nepal will be the "land of the competition" or "bridge of cooperation" between China and India, Mr. Oli said Nepal has remained a sovereign and independent nation throughout history.

"We are firmly committed to not allowing our territory to be used against the sovereign interests of our neighbours. We have the resolve to maintain this and we naturally expect similar assurances from our neighbours," he said.

Mr. Oli said Nepal's developmental needs were immense and needed meaningful and mutually beneficial economic partnership with both its neighbours.

"Fortunately for us, both our neighbours are rising in global stature and making tremendous progress in every area of development. They are in a position to support Nepal in its developmental journey," he said.

"We believe that Nepal can serve as a bridge between our two neighbours. In fact, we want to move from the state of a land-locked to a land-linked country through the development of adequate cross-border connectivity. Our friendship with both neighbours places us in an advantageous position to realise this goal," he said.

On the Tibet-Kathmandu railway link, he said, "Cross-border connectivity is our top priority. Both sides have discussed developing a multidimensional trans-Himalayan connectivity network."

On China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), he said, "We believe that the BRI should be beneficial to all the participating countries. Nepal wants to benefit from the initiative and at the same time, works for the benefit of the international community".

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