

*Context-Premier Wen's Nepal visit*

## **Nepal-China Rebuilding Relations On Bilateral Strength**



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The Rising Nepal, 22 December 2011

Ancient neighbouring countries, Nepal and China, face the second decade of the 21st century. The decades of the 21st century will be neither a hot nor a cold war-dominated period. These decades will be more complicated. They will be confronting continuously waged cyber wars and relentless negotiation and dialogue on terms of trade and technology transfer. Space exploration and expanded activity with matching innovations in communication technology and bioengineering will be additional features of this time.

### Reform

In 1978, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping initiated reform and modernisation in China. The same year in February, he visited Nepal. He wished Nepal also to move on the trailblazing path of reform and development. But the Nepali leadership was hesitant about the Chinese joint venture partnership proposal as it (the leadership) was less than adequately determined and patriotic to serve Nepal's national interest though it was that very leadership that had in 1975 made a just proposal for declaring Nepal a zone of peace.

The leadership's worldly behaviour represented a practical truth: the beggars have no right to choose. Or as a Nepali saying has it, "Hot food for the beggars?" But Nepal's leadership kept begging all the time - more so when they felt a psychological risk of not getting enough in begging.

More than anything, the iconic symbols of the Himalaya (Mt. Sagarmatha/ Qomolangma) and Shakyamuni Siddhartha Gautam Buddha naturally and culturally link Nepal and China. These icons provide adequate basis for infinite naturally and culturally-inspired joint cooperative ventures between the two countries.

The discovery of the remains of the more than 3,000-year-old Shangri-la civilisation in Mustang, Nepal's Himalayan district in the western region, speaks eloquently of the ancient Sino-Nepali ties that have firm historical roots. The Himalaya and Buddha together give a height and depth to Nepal's China ties, which have no parallel in the world. They testify to Nepal's close and unbreakable bond with China. During his visit to Nepal in February 1957, Premier Zhou Enlai referred to them as "blood ties between Nepal and China."

Last month, Dong Manyuan, Vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), a think tank associated with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, echoed the long-standing brotherly sentiment at a China Study Centre seminar in Kathmandu, when he said, "The relation between Nepal and China is as solid as the Himalaya and higher than Qomolangma, also known

as Mt. Everest."

The bilateral strength of Nepal-China relation can indeed sustain and comprehensively prosper according to the challenges and needs of the 21st century. All round connectivity based on efficient transport and communication infrastructure, including by satellite, should provide social, economic and political security to this relation.

As a secure relation boosts a sense of independence, it helps forge a more confident and credible relation in the trans-Himalayan region - not yet liberated from the vestiges of the inhuman colonial order. An imaginative joint venture model on integration will further bolster investment.

In this model, planning and financing framework at the inter-country level and ethnic Nepali group living and working in China's interior as well as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Tibet, and Chinese enterprises engaged in Nepal at the operational level can be instrumental in promoting a Nepal-China joint cooperative partnership.

#### New Perspective

Inspired by a sense of history and contemporary responsibility of a world power, China has now started appropriately rebuilding its ties with its immediate neighbours for achieving comprehensive peace and prosperity in the neighbourhood.

Premier Wen Jiabao was candid when he in a congratulatory message (August 30, 2011) to Nepali Prime Minister Dr. Babu Ram stated, "The Chinese government and people cherish China-Nepal friendship and always view and develop bilateral relations with a strategic and long-run perspective."

Himself an engineer geologist, who also heads China's Finance and Economy Leading Group and State Energy Commission, Premier Wen also hoped that the two sides would work together to further deepen their cooperation, and push forward a long-term and steady development of bilateral cooperation.

Premier Wen should be appreciated for the due priority he has started giving to Nepal. Now he seems to have realised the consequences of leaving Nepal out of his South Asian itinerary seven years ago, and also why in the later part of the 1950s his great predecessor Premier Zhou visited Nepal twice.

It is believed that China understands all dimensions of the externally induced-instability in Nepal. Even at a time when a Nepalese prime minister had to resign within months to pave the way for another party leader, and the domestic political situation was very polarised, a visiting senior Chinese leader Zhou Yong Kang, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC), who led a 60-member powerful delegation, in a speech (August 17, 2011) made the following non-partisan statement: "The Communist Party of China and Chinese Government attach great importance to Nepal-China friendship and are willing to join hands with the government, all political parties and people from all walks of life to strengthen the practical cooperation in political, economic, cultural and security and other fields and expand people-to-people exchanges."

Democracy has informed the people that in Nepal a large section of the leadership having a colonial mindset perceives Nepal in fragmentation. Coloration of indigenous Nepal-China bilateral strength by this section of the leadership has actually exposed itself. It is high time Nepali leaders

honestly heed to what Confucius said long ago, "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." An indomitable wisdom indeed.