EDITORIAL

INDIA-NEPAL PARTNERSHIP

→ndia and Nepal share a relationship rooted in antiquity, culture, and geography - an unbreakable civilizational bond _often described as "Roti-Beti ka Rishta" (relationship through bread and kin). Under the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this historic partnership has seen a remarkable transformation, evolving into a modern and multifaceted relationship of mutual growth, regional cooperation, and strategic

From the very beginning of his tenure in 2014, Prime Minister Modi has prioritized ties with Nepal. His maiden visit to the Himalayan nation in August 2014 was both symbolic and substantive - the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 17 years. In his address to the Constituent Assembly of Nepal, PM Modi invoked the shared heritage of Lord Buddha and Sita, reinforcing the spiritual and cultural connection between the two

His message was clear: India respects Nepal's sovereignty, democracy, and aspirations, and wishes to be a partner in its

PM Modi's "Neighbourhood First" policy has placed development cooperation at the heart of India-Nepal relations. India has significantly expanded its financial and technical assistance to Nepal, covering diverse sectors such as road infrastructure, energy, healthcare, education, and agriculture.

One of the most notable initiatives has been cross-border infrastructure projects - including roads, integrated check posts, and cross-border rail links. The Jayanagar-Bijalpura-Bardibas railway line, India's gift to Nepal, revived after decades, has brought the two peoples closer and enhanced trade and connectivity.

India has also undertaken housing reconstruction projects post the devastating 2015 Nepal earthquake. With Indian aid, over 50,000 homes, schools, and health posts have been reconstructed, showcasing India's role as a dependable development partner.

Energy has emerged as a new pillar of India-Nepal ties under Modi's leadership. The two countries have operationalized multiple cross-border transmission lines, including the Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar line, enabling the export of electricity from Nepal to

In a major milestone, Nepal began exporting surplus electricity to India in 2021 - a move hailed as a significant step in regional energy integration. Furthermore, Indian companies are investing in hydropower projects in Nepal, including the Arun III, which will enhance Nepal's energy independence and provide green energy to India.

In 2022, the two countries signed a power trade agreement, which envisions the import of up to 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal to India over the next decade. This shift toward renewable energy diplomacy demonstrates how Modi's foreign policy blends strategic foresight with sustainability.

In 2022, PM Modi and Nepalese PM Sher Bahadur Deuba jointly inaugurated the Kurtha-Jayanagar railway line, and the RuPay card system was launched in Nepal, integrating digital economies and expanding financial inclusion.

The India-Nepal relationship has not been without challenges. The border dispute that flared up in 2020 over the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh region created tensions. However, both sides have shown diplomatic maturity, engaging in dialogue and

Bamboo-A Sustainable Wonder Grass

DR. BANARSI LAL

Union Territory in which Jammu region is predominantly sub-tropical while Kashmir region is temperate. Agriculture plays the pivotal role in the economy of this beautiful Union Territory. Agricultural sector is very vast and it provides employment directly or indirectly to around 70 per cent of J&K population. Agriculture contributes about the significant amount of UT revenue which signifies the overdependence of the UT on agriculture. The average size of land holding of the UT is only 0.67 hectare against 1.33 hectares' land holding size on national basis. About 30 per cent of the area of the UT is under cultivation. The agro-diversity of the UT varies from sub-tropical in Jammu region and temperate in Kashmir region. The average annual rainfall of these two regions is 1069mm, and 660mm respectively. The average temperatures of these two regions are 24.5 and 13.3 Centigrade respectively. There is need to increase the income and employment in agriculture and allied sectors for the farmers of J&K. This is possible by searching some new avenues in agriculture. J&K lies in the North West of the country. About 19.95% total geographical area of this UT is covered under forests. A large part of the geographical area of J&K is under permanent snow cover, glaciers and thus unable to support trees growth. The national level goal in forestry is to cover at least two thirds of the total area in the hilly regions under forests and trees cover. Jammu and Kashmir adopted the forest policy to maintain adequate forests in various regions of the UT in 2011. There is need to popularize bamboo cultivation particularly in the wastelands as bamboo cultivation has immense potential in the UT.J&K already has some bamboo growing pockets where entrepreneurships can be generated by the value addition in bamboo. J&K has immense scope of agro-ecotourism, handicrafts, agarbati making etc. and bamboo can play a crucial role in these industries. Bamboo production is a highly commercial industry and its cultivation reduces the soil erosion. It can be a source of extra income and employment for the farmers of this hilly UT. Bamboo is an important plant gifted by nature in tropical and subtropical areas of the world. It is also called as wonder plant, green

gold, emperor of all grasses, wood of the poor

etc. It is used by the people in their every-day utilities. It is closely interwoven with the life of the people in several ways. It can be used as a food, fodder, construction material, paper, mats, musical instruments, paintings etc. Bamboo has multiple economical, ecological and social values. It has the capacity to provide the ecological, economic and livelihood security among the people. It acts as source for the raw material for the industrial and domestic use. Bamboo biodiversity can be observed in different areas of J&K.

Bamboo forms the most diverse group of plants in the grass family. It belongs to the sub-family Bambusoidae of the family Poaceae. It is a form of grass but it is strong and elastic. Bamboo is found in all the continents except Europe. It is probably the best natural engineering material on the earth. It mainly grows in the tropics and sub-tropics. It has versatile, enduring and highly renewable material that people have been utilizing for thousands of years. It can be harvested in 2-3 years. It protects the environment by reducing air and water pollution due to its excellent pollution absorption qualities. It produces more than 35 per cent of oxygen than hardwood trees. It can contribute in the economy and ecology of India. It can be used as the building material and also for scaffolding, building of bridges etc. Bamboo maintains its core temperature which helps to grow it in diverse climates.

Bamboo occurs in different bioclimatically defined forest types ranging from tropical to subalpine zones. India is the second richest country in bamboo genetic resources after China. These two countries together have more than half the total bamboo resources in the world. About 136 species of bamboos are reported in India. Bamboo is grown on about 9.57 million hectares in India which constitutes about 12.8% of the total area under forests. Out of the 22 genera available in India, 19 are indigenous and three exotic. The annual production of bamboo in India is about 4.6 million tonnes. The annual yield of bamboo per hectare varies between 0.2 and 0.4 tonnes depending upon the intensity of stocking and biotic interferences. The economic impact of the agro forestry-based bamboo system may influence general economic development of the country. It is mostly found in N-E States, Chhattisgarh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Jammu and Kashmir. Bamboo is one of the fastest growing plants on the earth. Its growth rate ranges between 30cm to 100cm per day. It generates more oxygen than equivalent stand of the trees. It protects against ultra-violet rays and is an atmospheric and soil purifier. Bamboo grows at a fast rate. A story tells that once a forest officer kept his hat on a fast growing bamboo culm and forgot to take it with himself. The next day, he saw that the hat was beyond his hand's reach in 24 hours. Bamboo has manifold uses from cradle to coffin. Bamboo has many uses as a substitute for fast depleting wood and as an alternative to more expensive materials. It can be used in paper industry, to make small footbridges, water pumps, irrigation pipes etc. In rural areas it can be used as fodder, in making brooms, food, buckets etc. Nutrient analysis of edible bamboos indicated that it contains 77% to 84% moisture, 4% to 7% protein, 5% carbohydrates, 12-13 mg/100G vitamin C and Na, K, Ca, Mg and P as minerals. Bamboo has the potential for checking soil erosion, fast vegetative growth cover to deformed areas and road embankment stabilization. Bamboo tensile strength is 28000 per square inch versus 23000 for steel. It can be used for making pillars, roofs, ceiling, walls etc. It has been traditionally used to make medicines to treat asthma, cough and fever etc. It is also used to make certain structures in earthquake prone areas, in music and arts.

Planning Commission has set up a National Mission on Bamboo Technology and Trade Development. It has been realized that bamboo is very important in poverty eradication and employment generation. The major objective of National Mission on Bamboo is to implement an action plan for keeping bamboo as a key component in the national scene to generate employment, to protect environment degradation and give a boost to bamboo industry. Through various researches in various countries, it has been observed that alcoholic beverages can be made from bamboo leaves, charcoal can be made from bamboo, laminated bamboo mats can be made for disaster prone areas. Therefore, bamboo has an important role in strengthening rural economy. There is need to increase the area and productivity of bamboo. Bamboo plays an important role in rural and socio-economic development of the farmers. Some farmers grow bamboos in and around their farmlands to increase their income. The development of artisan skills for

handicrafts and wider utility of bamboo provides more employment opportunities and better income distribution for the rural people. There is a dire need to aware the bamboo growers about the latest information on introduction, phenology, reproductive biology, propagation, exchange of germplasm, conservation status etc. There is also a need for the introduction of other species of bamboo of ethno- biological significance. It has been observed that most of the bamboo growers do not possess up-to-date information on ecological and growth parameters, morphological variability's, conservation value, methods for multiplication etc. At regional levels systematic survey, range of distribution, flowering periodicity, ethno biological utilization, phenology, floristic compositions, introduction in production forests and homelands of rural areas need to be studied by concerned organizations located in the region. Many of these organizations lack funds, manpower and expertise to assess resources. Inter-institutional support both at regional and inter-regional levels and interaction may help in developing, improving and managing the bamboo cultivation. There is need to develop networking on conservation of bamboo forests, gardens, arboreta, rural homesteads etc. Bamboo growers should get the institu-

tional support at regional, national and international levels. GIS based information system should be developed for the protected areas. Ethno biological approach should be adopted towards the cultivation, preservation of rare and threatened species of bamboo. There is need of collaboration between the bamboo growers and scientists. There is need to increase the area under bamboo cultivation in J&K. The nurseries of bamboo should also be increased and cluster approach of bamboo growers need to be implemented so that they do not face any problem in marketing. Bamboo growers need trainings on scientific cultivation of bamboo. Capacity building on value addition in bamboo can bring new opportunities of income and employment among the farmers. Bamboo cultivation in J&K can also be promoted through agro-ecotourism. Public and Private Partnerships can play a crucial role in promotion and marketing of bamboo and its products.

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Startups-Igniting India's Innovation Revolution

PIYUSH GOYAL

fter the spectacular success of the Mahakumbh at Prayagraj Sangam, it is time to celebrate the confluence of three streams of development -- innovation, job creation and entrepreneurship, carrying forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of vikas (development) and virasat (heritage) for a vibrant India.

The three streams will converge at the Startup Mahakumbh on April 3. Like the awe-inspiring spiritual gathering at Prayagraj, the Startup Mahakumbh is being organized on a grand and global scale.

The event will bring together over 3,000 startups, 1,000+ investors, 500+ speakers, and more than 15,000 delegates and business visitors from across the globe, with participation from over 50 countries. It will be a powerful platform for startups to explore collaborations, mentorship, funding, and access to new markets. With dedicated masterclasses, knowledge sessions, and networking forums.

the event will not only fuel innovation but also inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs to launch their own ven-

Also, at this year's Mahakumbh, a three-tier investor-led jury process would select 150 finalists in what will be India's largest private sector funded Grand Innovation Challenge with a Rs. 50 crore prize pool.

Innovation - Be it the game of chess or the concept of 'zero' in ancient India, or the UPI, Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan of today, innovation has always been a part of the Indian DNA. New ideas, innovative goods and services achieved through healthy research and development will propel India in its mission to become a developed country by 2047. Appropriately, the theme of the event is Startup India @2047.

PM Modi's Vision - In his independence day speech in 2015. PM Modi articulated his vision of making India a global startup hub and transforming the country into a nation of job creators. Shortly thereafter, the transformational Startup India initiative was launched.

This initiative of PM Modi has unleashed a groundswell of youthful energy that is transforming India's entrepreneurial landscape. The number of registered startups has risen exponentially from just about 500 in 2016 to about 1.7 lakh now. These ventures are spread across more than 55 sectors including Fin-tech, Deep-tech, Ed-tech, Nano-tech, Bio-tech, Spacetech, Agri-tech and Health-tech, helping India emerge as a cradle of major technology-driven entrepreneurship.

The Government is also actively taking initiatives to support funding of startups. In last year's budget, our Government abolished the Angel Tax, a move that was applauded by new entrepreneurs. This year, the budget launched a new Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds.

Jobs & Solutions- Government registered startups have created 17.69 lakh direct jobs as on Jan 31, 2025. In addition, they are providing cutting-edge

solutions to real-world challenges. Revolutionizing breast cancer detection with non-invasive, AI-powered thermal imaging technology; simplifying rural trading by connecting farmers directly with buyers; providing affordable and efficient payment gateway solutions; creating impressive eco-friendly products that convert waste to wealth; securing our cyberspace are only a few among many examples of the challenges addressed by our startups for India and the world.

Our startups are also very nimble and quick footed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, startups that had developed strong analytical solutions, drones, telecommunications platforms, etc. quickly pivoted to leverage these technologies for contact tracing, quarantine monitoring, and developing dashboards for war rooms. They had a key role in producing critical equipment such as PPE kits, ventilators, and sample collection products and services.

Entrepreneurial Culture - The Startup India initiative has significantly transformed the entrepreneurial mindset across the country. Where once families sought comfort of a secured job, today they encourage and take deep pride in the entrepreneurial adventures of their young family members. This is driving our energetic youth to become job creators instead of job-seekers.

Ventures born out of such energy are scaling new heights. The number of Indian unicorns having more than a billion dollar valuation has jumped from less than 10 before 2016 to more than 110 today, with a collective valuation of over USD 385 billion, according to industry estimates.

Support in Public Procurement - Our Government has made a special provi sion of preferential treatment for eligible startups in the Government e Marketplace (GeM). This platform gives sellers transparent and corruption-free access to procurement by Government departments, thereby helping entrepreneurs bypass complex procedures and entrenched vested

interests that operated before its launch.

GeM has enabled 29,780 government registered startups fulfil 4,09,155 orders worth ?37,460 crore with the help of democratised market access, easy product listing and relaxation in the requirements of turnover and experience in public procurement.

Beacons of New Bharat - Today, startups are beacons of hope of New Bharat. The thriving startup ecosystem is transforming the Indian economy to enhance the Ease of Living' for our citizens.

The Mahakumbh at Prayagraj showcased India's spiritual grandeur to the world and made our youth proudly embrace our culture, heritage beliefs. The startup ecosystem built and nurtured by PM Modi is helping the youth embrace the entrepreneurial culture that will make Bharat a global powerhouse of innovation, new technology and new ideas.

(The writer is Union Minister of Commerce and Industry)

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■ RAMESH SARRAF DHAMORA



n ancient temple of Devi Swaroopa Jeen Mata is built in Jeenmata village near Goria on Sikar-Jaipur road in Rajasthan. The real name of Jeen Mata is Jayanti Mata. She is the incarnation of Maa Durga. This temple is dedicated to the goddess of power. Surrounded by dense forest, this temple is situated at the confluence of three small hills. This temple

of Jeen Mata is a very ancient Shakti Peeth. The temple of Jeen Mata faces south. But the entrance of the temple is in the east. There are statues of Tantrikas and Vama Margis on the walls of the temple. Which also proves that the followers of the above mentioned principle have once had control over this temple or this has been their place of worship.

The door of the temple's shrine is towards the west in the Sabha Mandap. Here the life-size statue of eight-armed Jeen Bhagwati is installed. The Sabha Mandap is at the foot of the mountain. There is another temple in the temple itself which is called Gufa. Where there is a brass head of Jagdev Panwar and a statue of Kankali Mata. To the west of the temple is the tapasya sthan of Mahatma which is famous by the name of Dhuna. People believe that this temple is a thousand years old. But many historians believe that the construction period of Jeen Mata temple was 8th century. There are eight different inscriptions in the temple which are strong evidence of the antiquity of the temple. The oldest inscription among the above inscriptions is of Samvat 1029. On which the time of construction of the temple is not mentioned. Therefore, this temple is even more ancient than that. In a book named Chauhan Chandrika, the basis of this temple is found before the 9th

According to a legend, Devi Jeen Mata had shown the biggest miracle to Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb had sent a huge army to destroy the temples of Shekhawati. This army broke the temple of Shiva and Harshnath Bhairav on Harsh Parvat and proceeded to break the Jeen temple. It is said that when the priests of



the temple prayed to the mother in a sad voice, mother Jeen released bumble bees (big bees) whose attack made Aurangzeb's royal army run away bleeding. It is said that the condition of the king himself became very serious. Then the king folded his hands and apologized to mother Jeen and promised to send 1.25 kg of oil from Delhi for the eternal lamp in the mother's temple. For many years, oil for the lamp in the mother's temple kept coming from Delhi, then instead of Delhi, it started coming from Jaipur. Later, the Jaipur Maharaja started sending this oil twice a year during Navratri instead of monthly. And during the time of Maharaja Man Singh ji, instead of oil, cash of Rs. 20 and 3 annas were sent per month. Which kept coming continuously. After showing the miracle to Aurangzeb, Jeen Mata also came to be known as the goddess of bumble bees.

In our country, Durga Maa is worshipped as the goddess of power. Durga Maa has many forms and incarnations. On the occasion of Navratra, a huge crowd of devotees gather in the temples of Maa all over India. In this country full of faith, Maa has the highest place. Jeen Mata is Devi Shakti who is worshipped as the deity of worship for centuries. Two huge fairs are held every year in Jeen Mata temple from Chaitra Sudi Ekam to Navami (in Navaratri) and Asoi Sudi Ekam to Navami. In which lakhs of devotees from all over the country come. On the occasion of Jeen Mata fair, many people from the outer regions of Rajasthan also come. Akhand Deep keeps burning in the temple for twelve months. The doors of every temple remain closed

during lunar eclipse. The reason for this is that during lunar eclipse, negative powers increase and positive powers become weak. Therefore, it is believed that if the doors of the temple are kept open, then evil powers will reside in the temple. But the doors of Shaktipeeth Jeen Mata temple are always open. The doors of this temple are never closed. This is the only temple in Rajasthan where devotees visit Maa Jeen Bhavani 24 hours a day.

According to folk tales, Jeen Mata was born in the house of King Ghangh of Chauhan dynasty, the ruler of Ghanghu village in Churu district of Rajasthan. Jeen Mata's elder brother's name was Harsh. Mata Jeen is considered to be the incarnation of Shakti and Harsh is considered to be the incarnation of Lord Shiva. It is said that there was a lot of love between the two siblings. But they had a tiff on some issue. Then Jeen Mata came here and started doing penance. Harshnath also followed him to convince his beloved sister. But Jeen Mata stubbornly refused to go with him. Harshnath became very sad and he too went some distance away from there and started doing penance. A simple description of the conversation between the two siblings is still found in the folk songs of Rajasthan. The grand temple of Lord Harshnath is still situated in the Aravalli mountain range of Rajasthan. Mangala Aarti of Jeen Bhawani is performed at 4 am in the morning. Aarti is performed after Shringar at 8 am and Aarti at 7 pm. Bhog (rice) is distributed after both Aartis. Aarti is performed on time every day in the temple of Mata. Aarti is performed on time even during lunar and solar eclipses. Special Aarti and distribution of Prasad is done on Ashtami of Shukla Paksha every month. The doors of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple of Mata remain open for 24 hours. The curtain is put up only during Shringar. Every year, a special festival is celebrated in the temple on Sharad Purnima. Kajal peak is at a height of 300 feet from the Jeen Mata temple. It was difficult for the elderly, handicapped, women, children to reach here. Now a ropeway has been started for the convenience of all these. Till now it used to take 2 hours to reach the peak. But this distance is covered in 5 minutes by ropeway.

(The author is a freelance journalist recognized by the Rajasthan Government)