**INDIA – NEPAL BORDER DISPUTE**

India and Nepal have been sharing a friendly relationship ever since India declared national sovereignty in the year of 1950. [During the very same year, the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1950_Indo-Nepal_Treaty_of_Peace_and_Friendship) was signed by both countries in their best interests.

According to the treaty, both countries have agreed to a peaceful trade, and are allowed to cross each others’ territories without restrictions. The Indian government and the [Rana rulers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rana_dynasty) of Nepal stated that "neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor." The treaty also granted Nepalese educational opportunities for India. In return, Nepal has provided business opportunities to Indians.

According to the treaty, the Nepalese and Indians can move freely across the border without passports or visas, and may live and/or work in either country. All of these deals and agreements have created a strong friendly relationship between the two countries. However, due to political issues and border disputes, this relationship has come to an end.

WHEN DID THE BORDER DISPUTE START?

India and Nepal share a 1,800 km (1,118 mile) border. So, it is an obvious assumption that there may occur border issues between the two countries. Despite the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, the border dispute is speculated to have started a long time ago. A major misunderstanding between India and Nepal occurred when India’s new map was released in November 2019, displaying Kalapani as part of the Indian state of Uttarakhand. Nepal’s citizens, in retaliation, protested in Kathmandu against the new map of India. However, the sudden outbreak of the border dispute was triggered when a new 80 km-long road in the Himalayas, connecting to the border with China, was inaugurated at the Lipulekh Pass.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE INAUGURATION OF NEW ROAD IN LIPULEKH PASS?

On May 8, 2020, India’s defense minister Rajnath Singh [virtually](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1622091) - over a video conference - inaugurated an 80 kilometre-long road in the Himalayas, at the Lipulekh pass. The Nepal government immediately disagreed with India’s plan to lay the road,claiming that the new 80-kilometre road passes through their territory.

Quitesoon after this issue, on 20 May 2020, the Nepal government launched its own map showing Kalapani present in eastern corner of Uttarakhand state of India as part of Nepal’s territory. On 10 June 2020, the [Nepali parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Parliament_of_Nepal) moved to approve a new map which included territory in India's Uttarakhand state. Nepal did this revision of its map mainly because of the inauguration of a new road at Lipulekh pass by the Indian government.

WHY WAS LIPULEKH PASS INAUGURATED?

Lipulekh, in the Uttarakhand state of India, is a [Himalayan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himalaya) [pass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_pass) on the border between India and the [Tibet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet_Autonomous_Region) region of China. This pass is located near Nepal, not in Nepal. Lipulekh pass was mainly launched for the wellness of pilgrims, as there is no other proper means of road transport present for the pilgrims to reach Kailash. So, the Indian government has inaugurated an 80 kilometer long road in the Lipulekh pass for the benefit of pilgrims. The new road is now the quickest link between Delhi and the Tibetan plateau in China. Hence, the road serves pilgrims to reach [Kailas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Kailash) and [Manasarovar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manasarovar) with ease.

HOW DOES THE KALI RIVER SEPARATE INDIA AND NEPAL?

The Kali river originates at Kalapani in the Pithoragarh district in the Uttarakhand state of India. The river flows in few other places in the countries of India and Nepal. It forms the boundary between India and Nepal in the Kalapani region .

The Kali river borders the Nepalese district of [Darchula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darchula_District) in the [Sudurpashchim Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudurpashchim_Pradesh) province, and the Indian district of [Pithoragarh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pithoragarh_District) in [Uttarakhand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttarakhand) state. The Sugauli Treaty signed between Nepal and British India on 4 March 1816 spotted the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary with India. The Nepali government affirms that the river to the west of Kalapani is the main [Kali river](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kali_River_(Uttarakhand)) hence the area should belong to Nepal. But India claims that the river to the west of Kalapani is not the main Kali river and, therefore, the border there should be based on the ridge lines of the mountains Om Parvat and not based on the flowing river.

The Kali River flows through an area that covers a disputed area of about 400 km² around the source of the river although the correct size of the disputed area may vary from source to source. From 1962 onwards, the Indian government forwarded their disagreement that the border should be based on the ridge lines of the mountain of [Om Parvat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Om_Parvat). The dispute also aggravated in 1997 as the Nepal government considered a treaty on hydroelectric development in the Kali river. India and Nepal argued on which stream of the river constitutes their country, in order to establish hydroelectric development. This argument in locating the source of the river Kali led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal. Both India and Nepal produced maps supporting their own claims.

AREAS IN THE INDIA – NEPAL BORDER DISPUTE

[Lipulekh and Kalapani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_disputes_of_India_and_Nepal#Limpiyadhura,_Lipulekh_and_Kalapani) are major regions in India, and the Susta region in Nepal is covered in the border dispute between India and Nepal.

The territorial dispute between India and Nepal includes an area of 400 km2 at the India-Nepal-China tri-junction region. The Kalapani territory is a region under Indian administration as a sector of [Pithoragarh district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pithoragarh_district) in the [Uttarakhand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttarakhand) state, but has also been [claimed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_disputes_of_India_and_Nepal) by [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal) since 1998. However, the Nepal government claims that Kalapani province lies in [Darchula district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darchula_district), [Sudurpaschim Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudurpashchim_Pradesh). Kalapani has been controlled by India's Indo-Tibetan border security forces since 1962. But, Nepal demands the withdrawal of the Indian border forces in Kalapani area because they are claiming that Kalapani belongs to them.

Lipulekh is a [Himalayan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himalaya) [pass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_pass) situated on the border between [Uttarakhand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttarakhand) state of India and the [Tibet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet_Autonomous_Region)an autonomous region of China, near their [trijunction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trijunction) with [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal). Nepal affirms that the southern side of the Lipulekh pass, called [Kalapani territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalapani_territory) (which is controlled by [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India)), belongs to Nepal. The pass is near the Chinese trading town of Taklakot in [Tibet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet), and has been used since ancient times by traders, mendicants and pilgrims transiting between India and China. Lipulekh pass is also used by pilgrims to reach [Kailas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Kailash) and [Manasarovar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manasarovar).

[Susta territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susta_territory) is an area under Nepal province and it is near [Nichlaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nichlaul), [Uttar Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttar_Pradesh), India. Susta is a rural municipal region in the Parasi district present in the southern side of Nepal. This area under dispute totals over 140 km2 and is being controlled by the Indian Government.

**SURVEY TEAM TO SOLVE THE BORDER ISSUE**

As an initiative to demarcate the India - Nepal border, survey teams from both countries were set up in order to explore and resolve the issue. They conducted a survey of the border pillars prepared by the Joint Technical Level Nepal-India Boundary Committee (JTLNIBC). The JTLNIBC was set up in 1981 to demarcate the India - Nepal border - and after years of surveying, deliberations, and extensions, the Committee had finally submitted the demarcating report in 2007 for ratification by both the countries.

The survey team identified missing pillars along the borders. Nepal maintained that it cannot ratify the maps given by the survey team without the resolution of Kalapani and Susta in the Nepal map. India, on the other hand, awaited for Nepal's ratification. In the absence of ratification, the process of completely demarcating the India-Nepal boundary could not be undertaken, and the border issue was not solved despite the formation of a survey team. From this argument, it is evident that both the countries continue to fail to compromise, and a lack of understanding is present between them.

Are there any possible long-term solutions for this dispute to end?

"India-Nepal border issues appear to be easily solvable, as long as there is political goodwill and statecraft being exercised on both sides. The way to move forward is to formally approve the strip maps, resolve the two remaining disputes, demarcate the entire India-Nepal boundary, and speedily execute the work of boundary maintenance," Prasad wrote in The Hindu. Similarly, many journalists and commoners have raised their views and opinions on how to solve the border dispute between India and Nepal.

It is easily possible to solve the border dispute if both countries compromise and concentrate on trade, economy, and the well-being of the citizens.