



SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION-NEPAL



Embassy of Nepal, New Delhi



Siddharth University



NMCCPR, Jamia Millia Islamia



Lumbini Buddhist University

International Conference on “Global Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation:  
India-Nepal Partnership in Buddhist Heritage”  
IIC, New Delhi  
January 30-31, 2026



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Banaras Hindu University



MIT-World Peace University

SOUTH ASIA CENTRE FOR PEACE RESEARCH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
LUMBINI BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY



Nalanda University



CNAS-Tribhuvan University



# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	
Objective .....	
Theme and Sub- Themes .....	
Day 1: January 30, 2026 .....	
Inaugural Session .....	
Session I .....	
Session II .....	
Session III .....	
Session IV .....	
Day 2: January 31, 2026 .....	
Session V .....	
Session VI .....	
SessionVII .....	
Lumbini-New Delhi Declaration.....	

## Introduction

South Asia Foundation, New Delhi in collaboration with SAF-Nepal, Lumbini Buddhist University and South Asia Centre for Peace Research and Sustainable Development, LBU (SACPRSD), established in collaboration with LBU organized a Conference on "Global Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: India-Nepal Partnership in Buddhist Heritage" on January 30-31, 2026 at the India International Centre, Max Mueller Marg, in New Delhi. The Conference is 4<sup>th</sup> such initiative of the SACPRSD-LBU, SAF-Nepal and Lumbini Buddhist University after the SACPRSD was established on October 02, 2024 at Lumbini Buddhist University. This conference was organised in collaboration with South Asia Foundatio-Nepal, Jamia Millia Islamia, Nalanda University, CNAS-Tribhuvan University, Banaras Hindu University, MIT-World Peace University, Siddharth University and India International Centre.



### Inaugural Programme of the conference

The conference aimed to strengthen regional and international cooperation through shared Buddhist heritage, emphasizing diplomacy, peacebuilding, cultural exchange, and sustainable development in addition to encouraging strong collaboration among universities and institutions from India and Nepal. Hosted in the national capital of India, the event reflected the growing relevance of Global Diplomacy, based on Buddha's teachings in contemporary international relations and regional cooperation in South Asia. The conference is significant in turbulent time amid global discord, especially delving with the teachings of Gautama Buddha while addressing contemporary challenges.

Through structured sessions, keynote addresses, panel discussions, and paper presentations, the conference fostered meaningful dialogue on how such initiatives can contribute to global peace, conflict resolution, sustainable development, ethical governance, and larger regional cooperation.

The conference also provided a platform for forging India-Nepal partnership in promoting Buddhist Heritage.

## Objective

The primary objective of the conference was to examine the role of Buddhist heritage as a unifying force in global diplomacy and regional cooperation, particularly in the context of India–Nepal relations. The conference sought to promote dialogue on peacebuilding, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable development grounded in Buddhist philosophy.

Special emphasis was also given on forging cooperation among Indian and Nepalese universities. Another key objective was to encourage academic exchanges, action oriented joint research initiatives and policy-oriented discussions among scholars, academicians and practitioners, working in the fields of international relations, Buddhist studies, and regional cooperation. The conference also aimed to highlight the shared civilizational links between participating universities and explore pathways for collaborative initiatives in education, and cultural exchange and heritage preservation between India and Nepal.

The platform provided a meaningful shared space for important Buddhist sites across India and Nepal, recognising their cultural heritage. It helped highlight the deep historical connections between the two countries and promoted cooperation in preserving, developing, and presenting these sacred places jointly to the global audience. This joint effort strengthened cultural ties and supported the collective legacy of Buddha's Teachings.

## Theme and Sub- Theme

The central theme of the conference was “Global Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: India–Nepal Partnership in Buddhist Heritage.”

The discussions were guided by the following themes and sub-themes:

### Day 1

- **Theme:** From Historical Roots to Cultural Connectivity
- Welcome remarks by:
- **Speakers:**
  - ➤ Prof. Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya, Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute Oslo
  - ➤ Prof. Subarna Lal Bajracharya, Vice-Chancellor, Lumbini Buddhist University
  - ➤ Prof. Dr. Dhruva Kumar Gautam, Vice Chancellor, Mid-West University
  - ➤ Prof. Achyut Prasad Wagle, Vice Chancellor, Kathmandu University
  - ➤ Amb. Jayant Prasad, Former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Nepal and Former DG, MP-IDS
  - ➤ Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri, former Indian Ambassador to Nepal
  - ➤ Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia
  - ➤ H.E. Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma, Ambassador of Nepal to India
  - ➤ Prof. Priyanka Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace, BHU; Senior Advisor, MIT-WPU
  - ➤ Shri Padma Jyoti, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology
  - ➤ Prof. H.S Shukla, Emeritus Professor, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University
  - ➤ Prof. Kavita Shah, Vice Chancellor, Siddharth University

- **Theme: Buddhism as a Diplomatic Pillar for Regional Harmony**

- Context Setting & Keynote Insights:

- **Keynote I:** Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace, BHU; Senior Advisor, MIT-WPU
- **Keynote II:** Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Vice-Chancellor, Nalanda University
- Amb. Jayant Prasad presented the keynote insights

- **Session I:** Buddhism: Civilizational and Regional Linkages

- **Chair:** Prof. Achyut Wagle, Vice Chancellor, Kathmandu University and Kavita Shah, Vice Chancellor Siddharth University

- **Co-Chair:** Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia and Shri Avadhesh Mathur, Former Member, National Security Advisory Board, Government of India

- **Panellists:**

- ➤ Prof. Basanta Bidari, Lumbini Buddhist University and Archaeologist, Nepal
- ➤ Dr. Mrigendra Bahadur Karki, Executive Director, CNAS, Tribhuvan University
- ➤ Prof. Saurabh, Dean, and Director, IQAC, Siddharth University

- **Sub-Themes:**

- Trans-regional spread of Buddha's teachings,
- Monastic and scholastic networks
- Sacred Buddhist Geography: Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar

- **Session II:** Cultural Diplomacy through Intercultural Understanding

- **Chair:** Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia

- **Co-Chair:** Amb. Ashok K. Kantha, Former Indian Ambassador to China and Amb. Ranjit Rae, Former Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Vietnam and Nepal

- **Panellists:**

- ➤ Mr. Kazunori Sasaki, The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, Japan
- ➤ Dr. Kul Prasad Khanal, Director, LBU
- ➤ Dr. Daya Ram Gautam, LBU, Nepal

- **Sub-Themes:**

- Cultural diplomacy and people-to-people connectivity
- Festivals, exchanges, and soft power
- Role of multilateral platforms (UN, UNESCO)

- **Session III:** Leveraging Regional Cooperation for Educational Ties: India and Nepal Collaboration

- **Chair:** Prof. Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya, Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute Oslo

- **Co-Chair:** Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri, Former Indian Ambassador to Brussels and Nepal

- **Panellists:**

- ➤ Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia
- ➤ Prof. Abuzar Khairi, Director, NMCPDR, Jamia Millia Islamia

- **Sub-Themes:**

- Universities and Institutions
- Academic exchanges and fellowships
- Heritage-based peace education

## **Session IV: Religious Tourism and Sustainable Development**

**Chair:** Shri Padma Jyoti, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Madan Bhandari University

**Co-Chair:** Amb. Ranjit Rae and Sh. Avadhesh Mathur

### **Panellists:**

- Sh. Anil Chitrakar, Conservationist, Nepal
- Sh. Pradeep Gupta, Former Joint Secretary to the Government of India
- Dr. Shree Prasad Bhattarai, HoD Department of Management, Lumbini Buddhist University

### **Sub-Themes:**

Buddhist pilgrimage circuits

Infrastructure and community livelihoods

SDG-aligned tourism models

## **Day 2**

- **Theme:** From Ethics to Empowerment
  
- **Session V: Ancient Buddhist Wisdom for Contemporary Regional Harmony and Action**
- **Chair:** Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair
- **Co-Chair:** Mr. Gautam Chikermane, Vice President, Observer Research Foundation
- **Keynote:** Prof. Basant Bidari, Lumbini Buddhist University
- **Panellists:**
  - Prof. Manoj Mishra, Banaras Hindu University
  - Dr. Ajay Yadav, Banaras Hindu University
- **Sub-Themes:**
  - Non-violence and dialogue
  - Conflict resolution
  - Global challenges: geoeconomics, climate change, inequality
  
- **Session VI: Nurturing Shared Heritage**
- **Chair:** Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace, BHU; Senior Advisor, MIT-WPU
- **Co-Chair:** Amb. Jayant Prasad and Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri
- **Panellists:**
  - Sh. Gyanin Rai, Lumbini Development Trust
  - Shri Anil Chitrakar, Senior Conservationist of Nepal
- **Sub-Themes:**
  - Conservation of Buddhist heritage sites
  - Joint research and documentation
  - Community-led heritage management

## **Session VII: Global Peace Perspective: Youth, Governance, and Peace through Buddha's teachings**

**Chair:** Amb. Ranjit Rae, Former Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Vietnam and Nepal

**Co-Chair:** Prof. Dhruba Kumar Gautam, Vice Chancellor, Mid-West University

### **Sub-Themes:**

- Peace governance frameworks
- Youth leadership and innovation
- Policy recommendations for India–Nepal cooperation

**DAY 1: January 30, 2026**

## **Inaugural Session**

The conference commenced with a formal inaugural session marked by traditional Buddhist invocations and opening remarks. The welcome address emphasized the historical and cultural significance of Buddhist heritage in shaping diplomatic relations across Asia. Senior academicians and dignitaries highlighted the importance of reviving ethical and value-based diplomacy in a rapidly changing global order.

Special addresses by eminent scholars and diplomatic representatives underscored the shared civilizational bonds between India and Nepal and their collective responsibility in preserving and promoting Buddhist heritage. The inaugural session set the tone for the conference by stressing cooperation, dialogue, and mutual understanding.



**Inaugural Session**

## **Session I: Buddhism: Civilizational and Regional Linkages**

This session focused on the civilizational spread of Buddhism and its role in shaping regional linkages across South Asia. Discussions examined the trans-regional dissemination of Buddhist teachings, the role of monastic and scholastic networks, and the importance of sacred Buddhist geographies such as Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar. Scholarly contributions provided archaeological, historical, and institutional perspectives on how Buddhist heritage continues to serve as a connective force among nations.



**Keynote Addresses by Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya and Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi**

## Session II: Cultural Diplomacy through Intercultural Understanding

The second session explored cultural diplomacy as a tool for strengthening people-to-people connectivity and regional cooperation. Deliberations focused on cultural exchanges, festivals, soft power, and the role of multilateral platforms such as the United Nations and UNESCO. Scholarly Contributions highlighted how intercultural engagement rooted in Buddhist values can enhance diplomatic trust and mutual understanding among countries.



Session in progress

## Session III: Leveraging Regional Cooperation for Educational Ties: India–Nepal Collaboration

This session examined educational cooperation between India and Nepal with emphasis on academic exchanges, institutional partnerships, fellowships, and heritage-based peace education. Speakers highlighted the role of universities and research institutions in promoting long-term collaboration, intellectual exchange, and regional capacity building.



Prof. Subarna Lal Bajracharya, VC, LBU, H.E. Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma, Amb. of Nepal to India & Prof. Achyut Prasad Wagle, VC, Kathmandu University welcoming delegates



Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding among South Asia Foundation–Nepal, Lumbini Buddhist University, and Jamia Millia Islamia. The Memorandum marked an institutional commitment to strengthening academic cooperation, collaborative research, faculty and student exchanges, and joint initiatives in the fields of Peace studies, peace research, regional cooperation and academic collaboration.

#### Session IV: Religious Tourism and Sustainable Development

The final session of Day 1 focused on religious tourism and sustainable development, particularly through Buddhist pilgrimage circuits. Discussions addressed infrastructure development, community livelihoods, and tourism models aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Insights shared by several scholars on inclusive and sustainable approaches to heritage tourism that balance economic growth with cultural preservation.



Prof. Basant Bidari, LBU, Prof. Achyut Wagle, VC, Kathmandu University and others giving presentations

## Day 2: January 31, 2026

**Theme:** From Ethics to Empowerment

### Session V: Ancient Buddhist Wisdom for Contemporary Regional Harmony and Action

This session examined the relevance of ancient Buddhist principles such as non-violence, dialogue, and compassion in addressing contemporary regional and global challenges. The speakers underscored the importance of dialogue-based approaches, ethical leadership, and value-oriented governance in fostering sustainable peace and regional harmony.

The session concluded with a shared recognition that Buddhist wisdom, when integrated into contemporary diplomatic and governance practices, can serve as a powerful tool for addressing global challenges while promoting cooperation, inclusivity, and long-term stability across regions.



**Prof. Manoj Kumar Mishra, BHU & Mr. Gautam Chikermane, ORF giving presentations**

### Session VI: Nurturing Shared Heritage

Session VI focused on the importance of preserving and nurturing shared Buddhist heritage through collaborative and community-driven approaches. The discussions highlighted the conservation of Buddhist heritage sites, joint research initiatives, and systematic documentation as essential components of sustainable heritage management. The session emphasized that heritage preservation is not only a cultural responsibility but also a diplomatic and developmental imperative that strengthens regional cooperation.



**Amb. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Hon'ble M.P. presenting the model of heritage diplomacy as a Guest of Honour of the conference**

## Session VII: Global Peace Perspective: Youth, Governance, and Peace through Buddha's Teachings

Session VII was conducted as a roundtable and youth dialogue and focused on global peace perspectives through the lens of Buddhist teachings. The session examined peace governance frameworks, the role of youth leadership, and innovative approaches to addressing contemporary challenges such as political polarization, social inequality, and policy fragmentation. Emphasis was placed on empowering young voices in peacebuilding and governance processes.



Various delegates giving their presentations

## Conclusion

The International Conference on Global Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: India–Nepal Partnership in Buddhist Heritage successfully provided a meaningful platform for academic dialogue, diplomatic engagement, and cultural exchange. Over two days, the conference brought together various vice chancellors, academicians, scholars, policymakers, diplomats, and youth participants to reflect on the enduring relevance of Buddhist heritage in promoting regional cooperation, ethical diplomacy, and global peace. The discussions effectively linked shared civilizational roots with contemporary challenges, reaffirming Buddha’s teachings as a living tradition with practical relevance in the contemporary world.

The sessions highlighted key themes such as cultural diplomacy, educational collaboration, heritage conservation, sustainable development, and peace-oriented governance. Various deliberations also highlighted the challenges and addressed the modern day conflicts. Further deliberations on ancient Buddha’s Teachings and wisdom demonstrated how principles of non-violence, dialogue, compassion, and interdependence can inform policy-making, and facilitate conflict resolution and regional cooperation. The focus on shared heritage and community participation underscored the importance of collaborative and sustainable approaches to preserving Buddhist Heritage sites while supporting local livelihoods and Regional cooperation.

The conference concluded with the adoption of the Lumbini New-Delhi Declaration, reflecting a collective commitment to continued cooperation and dialogue. Overall, the conference strengthened institutional linkages, encouraged future research and academic exchanges, and laid a foundation for advancing peace, cooperation, and sustainable development through the shared heritage of the region.



Hon'ble M.P. Sh. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, JMI & Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri addressing the delegates

The conference also highlighted the importance of institutional and people-centric collaboration in sustaining regional partnerships. Through discussions on academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, and capacity-building efforts, participants emphasized the role of universities, research institutions, and cultural organizations in strengthening long-term cooperation between India, Nepal, and other participating countries. The emphasis on education and knowledge-sharing reaffirmed the value of intellectual diplomacy as a key pillar of regional engagement rooted in Buddha's teachings.

Furthermore, the active participation of youth scholars and practitioners added a future-oriented dimension to the conference outcomes. The youth dialogue sessions demonstrated the potential of young leaders to contribute innovative perspectives on peacebuilding, governance, and ethical leadership, inspired by Buddha's teachings. By integrating youth engagement with policy and academic discourse, the conference underscored the need for inclusive and forward-looking approaches to diplomacy and regional cooperation, ensuring that the values discussed continue to shape future generations.



**Sessions in Progress**



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Embassy of Nepal, New Delhi



Siddharth University



NMCP, Jamia Millia Islamia



Lumbini Buddhist University

## International Conference on “Global Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: India-Nepal Partnership in Buddhist Heritage.” India International Centre, New-Delhi January 30-31, 2026

### LUMBINI-NEW DELHI DECLARATION

- 1.The conference has set the ball rolling in the direction of active Collaboration with Indian and Nepalese universities for Joint Research and academic exchanges.
- 2.To strengthen the South Asia Centre for Peace Research and Sustainable Development (SACPRSD), established by the South Asia Foundation-Nepal and Lumbini Buddhist University, for starting academic courses soon.
- 3.To establish a forum of universities in collaboration with SAF-Nepal, SACPRSD and Lumbini Buddhist University for stronger ties in academic engagements.
- 4.To conceive of joint and specific India-Nepal collaborative activities in the area of environment, climate change and sustainable development.
- 5.To engage with visiting people and pilgrims to Lumbini, SAF is actively involved in setting up a light and sound project on Gautama Buddha at Lumbini. This will ideally spread the teachings of Gautama Buddha in a more engaging way with the visitors coming from across the globe, including by using animation with the support of Lumbini Buddhist University. LBU and SAF-Nepal will collaborate to implement this initiative jointly.

The above declaration was adopted by the house unanimously during the conference at 4:30 PM on January 31, 2026 and was announced by Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri in presence of Amb. Ranjit Rae, Amb. Jayant Prasad, Prof. Subarna Lal Bajracharya, Prof. M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Prof. Dhruva Kumar Gautam and the representatives of the participating universities.



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