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Nepal Objects to Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lipulekh — India Calls Claim 'Untenable'

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WHY IN NEWS

Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a formal diplomatic protest note on **May 3, 2026**, objecting to India's announcement of resuming the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra** via **Lipulekh Pass** (Uttarakhand), scheduled from **July 4, 2026**. Nepal asserted that Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura are part of Nepal's sovereign territory under the **1816 Sugauli Treaty**. India's MEA Spokesperson **Randhir Jaiswal** firmly rejected the objection, calling Nepal's territorial claim "**untenable**" and reaffirming India's position that Lipulekh has been the established Yatra route since 1954.

Lipulekh Pass, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura are Indian territory under India's administration. Nepal's unilateral enlargement of its territorial claims has no historical basis and is untenable.

THE KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA

FEATURE	DETAIL
Destination	Kailash Mansarovar (Tibet, China) — sacred to Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Bon religion
Routes	(1) Lipulekh Pass, Uttarakhand (land route); (2) Nathu La, Sikkim
Yatra history via Lipulekh	Since 1954 — decades-long established route
2026 schedule	July 4, 2026 onwards; 1,000 pilgrims; 10 batches via Lipulekh, additional batches via Nathu La
Administering ministry	Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India
Suspended in 2019–2024	Due to COVID-19 and India-China tensions post-Galwan (2020)

THE LIPULEKH–KALAPANI–LIMPIYADHURA DISPUTE

The Geography

AREA	LOCATION	SIGNIFICANCE
Lipulekh Pass	Tri-junction of India, Nepal, and China (Tibet); ~5,334 m altitude	Traditional Yatra route; India-China trade route since ancient times
Kalapani	~36 sq km; Source of Kali River region	Key disputed area; India has maintained a border outpost (ITBP) here since 1962
Limpiyadhura	Northwest corner of Nepal's territorial claim	Nepal claims this as origin of Kali River
Total disputed area	~372 sq km	India administers; Nepal claims sovereignty

The Core Disagreement

ISSUE	INDIA'S POSITION	NEPAL'S POSITION
Boundary treaty	1816 Sugauli Treaty defines Nepal's western boundary as the Kali River	Agrees — Sugauli Treaty applies
Where Kali River begins	Further east → Kalapani/Lipulekh is Indian territory	At Limpiyadhura → all land west of Limpiyadhura source belongs to Nepal
Administration	India has continuously administered Kalapani since 1962	India's presence is "illegal occupation"

Key Timeline

YEAR	EVENT
1816	Sugauli Treaty — Kali River set as Nepal’s western boundary with British India
1962	India establishes ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) post at Kalapani after India-China war
1954–2019	Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lipulekh conducted without major diplomatic dispute
May 2020	India inaugurates Dharchula–Lipulekh road (80 km) — Rajnath Singh virtually inaugurated it
May 2020	Nepal protests the road; releases a new official map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani, Limpiyadhura within Nepal
June 18, 2020	Nepal parliament passes and President authenticates constitutional amendment incorporating the new map
April 30, 2026	India announces resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lipulekh from July 4, 2026
May 3, 2026	Nepal issues formal diplomatic protest
May 3, 2026	India’s MEA: Objection “untenable”; Lipulekh route established since 1954

INDIA–NEPAL RELATIONS — BROADER CONTEXT

DIMENSION	STATUS
Treaty framework	1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship — enables open border, free movement
People-to-people ties	Deep cultural, religious, and ethnic ties; large Nepali diaspora in India
China factor	Nepal has deepened ties with China (BRI, trade corridors); India concerned about China-Nepal connectivity through disputed areas
Hydropower	India is Nepal’s largest export market for electricity (Saptakoshi agreement)
Lipulekh road trade	India-China agreed in 2015 to use Lipulekh for India-China trade — Nepal was not consulted; this fuelled 2020 dispute

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — International Relations	India-Nepal relations, boundary disputes, Sugauli Treaty, neighbourhood first policy
GS2 — Governance	MEA's role, border management, ITBP
GS1 — Geography	Kali River, Lipulekh Pass geography, tri-junction concept

Mains Keywords: Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, Lipulekh Pass, Kalapani dispute, Limpiyadhura, Sugauli Treaty 1816, India-Nepal relations, MEA “untenable,” Dharchula-Lipulekh road, China-Nepal-India tri-junction, neighbourhood first policy

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Lipulekh Pass altitude	~5,334 metres; India-Nepal-China (Tibet) tri-junction
Disputed area	Lipulekh + Kalapani + Limpiyadhura; ~372 sq km; India administers
Sugauli Treaty	1816; Kali River = Nepal's western boundary with British India
India's position	Lipulekh, Kalapani, Limpiyadhura = Indian territory; claim is untenable
Nepal's position	Origin of Kali River is at Limpiyadhura → all three areas are Nepali
Yatra history	Via Lipulekh since 1954
Dharchula-Lipulekh road	Inaugurated May 2020 by Rajnath Singh; triggered Nepal's 2020 map dispute
Nepal's new map	Released May 20, 2020; constitutionally adopted June 18, 2020
MEA spokesperson	Randhir Jaiswal; called claim “untenable” (May 3, 2026)
2026 Yatra dates	From July 4, 2026; 1,000 pilgrims; 10 batches

Source: Nepal Objects to Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lipulekh — India Calls Claim 'Untenable' — Ujjiyari.com
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