

Internalising our deeper values

The return of the Buddha's sacred Piprahwa relics to India yesterday was more than a ceremonial farewell. It was a lesson in how nations should conduct themselves at a time when the world seems determined to spiral into deeper conflict. In the *kuenray* of Tashichhodzong, in Thimphu, where thousands of Bhutanese from every corner of the country came to offer prayers, a different kind of diplomacy was on display, one grounded not in force or fear, but in reverence, trust, and shared values.

The presence of His Majesty the King at the special prayers underscored the depth of this gesture. The sacred relics flew out of the Paro International Airport, respectfully, with India's Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, which showed a level of sincerity that no treaty or summit could ever match. The world, of course, talks endlessly about soft power, but as one seasoned foreign diplomat put it, Bhutan does not talk about its soft power; the nation practices it.

The relics arrived as a profound mark of friendship. We, as a nation, responded not only with formality, but also with heartfelt gratitude, complete respect and a national outpouring of devotion. At a time when many nations struggle to build trust even with their closest neighbours, the calm confidence between Bhutan and India stands out. It is the difference between relationships built on convenience and relationships built on genuine understanding. One flickers when the weather changes; the other endures.

The sight of the nation sending off these relics with full honours carries a wider message. It reminds the world that stability is not created through force or competition. Stability grows from goodwill. It grows from the ability to respect what others hold sacred. It grows from recognising that dignity is as important in diplomacy as it is in daily life.

A simple analogy explains it best. When a neighbour entrusts you with their most precious belonging, you do not return it casually; you return it with care that honours their trust. Bhutan did exactly that yesterday. And in doing so, the people and the nation demonstrated that good diplomacy is not performed on grand stages but is revealed in quiet courtesies, consistent respect, and the willingness to place relationships above pride.

The Global Peace Prayer Festival was, at its heart, a reminder that the world does not lack solutions; it lacks the will to choose peace over provocation. Bhutan's conduct during these days—welcoming the relics with devotion, hosting the public veneration with order and humility, and returning them with the highest honour—showed what choosing peace really looks like in practice.

As global tensions deepen and nations drift further apart, a small Himalayan kingdom has shown an unmistakable example of how to lead without shouting. This is the true picture of the highest kind of diplomacy that only Bhutan is capable of. The world is reeling in conflicts and rising instability. We are offering hope. We are offering sanity and right direction.