

# Modi's fifth Nepal visit on cards

**KATHMANDU:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Nepal for the fifth time in December to inaugurate the first cross-border rail link between the two countries and to participate in a major Hindu festival at a temple dedicated to goddess Sita.

The broad gauge railway line between Jainagar in Bihar and Janakpur in Nepal, currently in

the final stages of completion, is part of India's efforts to counter China's plans to forge rail links connecting the Himalayan country with Tibet.

This apart, Modi is expected to lead a high-level delegation to Janakpur to attend the Ram-Janaki Bibhawa Panchami on December 12, which commemorates the wedding of lord Ram to

goddess Sita.

Modi will lead a symbolic 'baraat' – or wedding procession – from India to Janakpur, where the Janaki Mandir is considered the home of goddess Sita. The move is being seen as a strategic gesture ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, particularly for the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that border Nepal.