



Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road

New Delhi

Sapru House Lecture

on

"India-Nepal Relations: Vision for the next Decade"

by

H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'

former Prime Minister of Nepal

at

Sapru House, New Delhi

29 April, 2013

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel honoured and privileged to have this opportunity to address this august gathering of foreign policy experts, strategists and renowned academics of India, and friends and well-wishers of Nepal. I take this opportunity to extend my deep gratitude to Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) for organising this great event as well as for their kind invitation to me to share some thoughts on various important aspects of Nepal-India relations.

It gives me immense pleasure to inform you that the state of relations between Nepal and India, two friendly neighbouring countries, have been excellent, close, cordial and multidimensional since time immemorial. Our relations have been nurtured by history, cultural ethos, traditions and customs; unique in their nature and scope rarely found anywhere in the world. In similar vein, relations at the people-to-people level have been evolved through centuries, sharing common aspirations for economic progress, prosperity and peace. At the same time, I also feel that there are many more potentials for meaningfully strengthen our bilateral cooperation. I see vast opportunities lying before us. We should build upon the age-old cordial relations between our two countries and really close friendship between our peoples, focusing more on economic and commercial cooperation. Practical realization of these potentials for mutual benefit constitutes our vision for Nepal-India relations in the next decade. I am happy to share my views on this vision with you. Let me thank ICWA for choosing such an important topic for today's interaction.

India is a country of great civilization for ages. Being the largest democracy in the world, India and its people have shown the path of freedom, democracy and independence through their relentless struggles against British colonialism and support for such struggles in other countries. The light of freedom struggles led by Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi have had resonating effects in the countries around

the globe that were under the domination of the British colonialism. It would not be out of place if I say that India has been an inspiration for many struggles around the world against domination and injustice.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Nepal is at the crossroad of great transformation in its socio-political set-up through massive political overhaul seen after more than two hundred years of its existence as a nation state. As you all are aware that Nepal embarked upon new path of democratic ideals after the conclusion of the 12-Point Agreement reached among major political forces of Nepal including the than Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The historic 12-Point Agreement, conclude in New Delhi itself, has been marked as a milestone in the annals of political development of Nepal that helped to end 240 years of feudal autocratic rule of monarchy and ushered in the republican setup of governance in the country. Through the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, we paved the way for peaceful transition in Nepal. In this context, we, in Nepal, highly value friendship, cooperation and understanding shown by India, Indian leaders and its people to the aspirations of the Nepali people.

Nepal is still in a state of fundamental political and economic transition. Nepal's transitional phase had many dimensions. The first was to conclude the peace process; second was to provide all cooperation to the Constituent Assembly and create conducive environment for constitution writing, third was to set agenda and create environment for the economic prosperity. The political process that followed the CPA has been instrumental in creating a conducive environment for the protection and promotion democracy in the country. The Maoist army has been integrated into the national army and the Government is going to establish Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Disappearance Commission to address the other issues of the peace process with the consent of the major political players. We would like to end this transitional phase at the earliest possible through fresh elections to the 2nd Constituent Assembly which is expected to be held in near future. I am confident that new elections would help bring political stability in

Nepal and strengthen the hope and aspirations of the people for republicanism, democracy, federalism and peace. All major political parties have agreed to the new election for the Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution for Nepal incorporating people's wishes. For this purpose my Party gave up its ruling mandate and agreed to form an election government under the Chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nepal, ensuring that the upcoming elections would be held in a free, fair and acceptable manner.

Having briefly touched upon present political scenario, I would like to draw your attention towards the aspects of economic development agenda of Nepal. It is a matter of great happiness for us that Nepal's two close neighbours- India and China- have been marching towards modernization and economic advancement, unparalleled to any country in the world today. Awe-inspiring economic achievements have been made by both countries. Nepal- rather a tiny Himalayan country- situated between two economic giants- cannot and should not remain out of touch of ongoing development spree in the vicinity. Having two rapidly growing economies in the neighbourhood, it would be rather unfathomable for Nepal to remain under-developed, poor and backward. I strongly believe that economically sound and developed Nepal is not only the interest of Nepal and Nepali people, it is in the larger interest of both our neighbours- India and China. It is obvious that Nepal's economic development would herald political stability in the country which, in the long run, would contribute to ensuring and addressing the security concerns of India and China. My contention has been crystal clear and, that is, a prosper and developed Nepal is the best way to ensure security, peace and stability in the region.

Nepal-India relations have been based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and understanding of each other's aspirations and interests. In the context of the 21st century and in view of changed global scenario, I believe that Nepal and India should give a new impetus to their bilateral relations and redefine their relations collectively summing up the experience of History. So that our whole gamut of bilateral relations would be further consolidated and aspirations and interests of both countries be served. While it has been a need for positive definition of history of Nepal-India relations, I would like to see our bilateral relations developed on the basis of true friendship, cordiality and mutual

cooperation. Nepal is very much aware of India's security concerns and it adopts a firm policy of not allowing any activity against its friendly neighbours from its soil.

India has been the largest development partner of Nepal; we applaud India's continued interest in Nepal's various development projects. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal through this august gathering for more investment from India in Nepal on projects ranging from hydropower to manufacturing industries, infrastructure development to Information Technology, from agriculture development to tourism promotion programs etc.

In this context, many people ask me on the rationale of my proposition to have a trilateral economic cooperation in the development of Nepal involving our two friendly neighbours- India and China. I would like to make it clear that in the changed global and regional context and ever growing economic relations between India and China, trilateral cooperation in various mutual projects in Nepal is possible and would not be a distant dream. It is our vision for the future and, let me make it very clear that by no means I wish to undermine or replace our bilateral relations so happily subsisting for centuries. Rather, I believe that only by promoting bilateral co-operation between our neighbours the basis for a trilateral co-operation will and can be created. But, at the same time, I am confident that Nepal's economic development is possible through such cooperation of our friends. It would be the foundation for prosperity of Nepal and Nepali people which is not only in the best interest of Nepal but, equally, would be in the best interests of India and China. I am just recalling the fact that traditionally and historically, Nepal played a role for connecting India and China through its many trade routes and, at the same time, enjoyed peace and prosperity for its people.

Dear Friends,

My visit this time to India has been mostly concentrated on finding means and ways to further develop our bilateral relations in the 21st century addressing the aspirations and hopes of the people of our friendly country.

Nepal-India relations should be the best example of bilateral relations for many countries in the world. I would like to see these relations further strengthened and consolidated to the mutual satisfaction of our two

countries and people in the coming decade. I believe that changed dynamics in a global level and successful conclusion of transition in Nepal will create more conducive atmosphere for further development of our relations. Therefore, our efforts should be focused to that end.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all here today for your contributions to develop Nepal-India relations to a new height.

Thank you for your kind attention.