

Welcome Remarks

by



Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

Sapru House Lecture

by

H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'

former Prime Minister of Nepal

at

New Delhi

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H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', former Prime Minister of Nepal, and Chairman of Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Ambassador Shyam Saran, former Foreign Secretary, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

2. Thank you very much for responding to our invitation to this special event. Your presence in large numbers is an indicator of the continuing ability of Sapru House to draw its supporters and admirers and, of course, the extra-ordinary stature of our guest speaker today. We are particularly delighted that a number of reputed educational institutions have made it a point to send their scholars and faculty members. We want our regulars to come here again and again, but we also welcome new guests, especially the young minds willing to be ignited.

3. We gather here today for what promises to be a stimulating and enjoyable evening. The Sapru House Lecture series, launched in August 2012, will have its third edition today. Our distinguished speaker H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', will address us shortly on "*India - Nepal Relations: Vision for the Next Decade*". We welcome him to Sapru House, this iconic building, and to ICWA, the historic institution which has been playing a pro-active and purposeful role in helping India to understand world affairs and helping the world to understand and appreciate India's world view.

4. Let me take this occasion to pay a sincere tribute to the exceptional men and women who dreamt about and toiled for this institution in earlier years. It is their combined endeavours that made the Indian Council of World Affairs a potent instrument of India's soft power in an age when the very phrase was yet to be invented. This lecture series is dedicated to all those visionary leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, the first President of ICWA, Dr. H.N. Kunzru, the second President, and Dr. A. Appadorai, the first Secretary General who helped in founding and nurturing ICWA as a key instrument of study, research, public education and debate on foreign policy questions. We also thank all those who played a valuable role through the years in strengthening ICWA, the only think tank in India enjoying the special status of 'an institution of national importance', bestowed upon it by the Parliament of India.

5. We are particularly delighted to have as the Chair Ambassador Shyam Saran, former Foreign Secretary and former Ambassador to Nepal. He has served in several capitals of the world including Beijing, Tokyo and Geneva. He has been India's Ambassador to Myanmar and Indonesia and High Commissioner to Mauritius. He is aptly considered as one of India's finest diplomats. As Foreign Secretary, he served India with distinction and left a deep impact. He has been active in public service since his retirement too. He is the Chairman of National Security Advisory Board as well as RIS, an important think tank. He will conduct the proceedings and the interactive session that would follow the lecture.

6. We are exceptionally privileged by the presence of our distinguished speaker who has impressive credentials. You have already seen his CV. He is the Chairman of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the largest political party in Nepal, according to the results of the 2008 election. The Constituent Assembly elected him as the first Prime Minister of Nepal under the interim constitution in 2008. H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is widely known as a cerebral, charismatic and dynamic political leader. He is erudite, articulate and always full of energy.

7. We at ICWA have invested heavily in studying and monitoring developments in Nepal. A special project to examine various aspects of the Nepalese polity, conducted over the past one year, has now reached a critical stage. We have with us a set of policy recommendations, which were crafted in consultation with scholars and former diplomats operating under our Core Group on Nepal which is chaired by Ambassador Deb Mukherji. We may place it in the public domain suitably in order to trigger further debate.

8. Finally, a word about the theme of today's lecture – *“India - Nepal Relations: Vision for the Next Decade”*. We have chosen today's theme with care and deliberation. The principal objective of this lecture undoubtedly is to undertake an in-depth appraisal of India's multi-faceted relationship with Nepal. Are there still constraints and impediments on the path of further development of relations? What can we do differently? What other areas need exploration? Can we suggest new measures? We should perhaps seize the present opportunity and lose no time in expanding and deepening our converging interests and actively advance cooperation. Only in this

way can we speed up development, meet challenges together, share development achievements and usher in a bright future. We look forward to listening to the views of our VIP speaker who will no doubt cover these and many other issues today. Once again, I welcome him most warmly.

I thank you all for your attention.

