

**Mahamaheem's Speech for Inauguration of Seminar
on India-Nepal Relation-Perspectives for Future
on 4th March, 2011 at Varanasi**

Ambassador of Nepal to India His Excellency Rukma
Shumsher Rana,

Ambassador of India to Nepal Shri Rakesh Sood,

Distinguished Participants from Nepal and India,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the historic city of Varanasi, a city that is as close and special to the people of Nepal as it is to us. The fact that this is the second time a seminar on India-Nepal relations is being organized in Varanasi by the Ministry of External Affairs

is a testimony to the significance of this beautiful city to India-Nepal relations.

India and Nepal share a unique and special relationship. Our centuries old bonds are rooted in shared history, geography, culture, language and civilization and manifested in our daily lives in the extensive people-to-people contacts, particularly for those living close to the border. Few other sovereign states in the world can take pride in a relationship as wide-ranging and multi-faceted as that between our two countries.

The temple bells of Kashi-Vishwanath reverberate in the hearts of people in Nepal in the same way as there is deep devotion in India for the sacred Pashupatinath

Temple which every year attracts thousands of pilgrims from my country. Lord Buddha, who was born in Lumbini in Nepal, delivered his first sermon not far from here in Sarnath. These are just two examples of so much that we share. The cultural and people-to-people interactions between Nepal and India, particularly with states like Uttar Pradesh, contribute richly to the tapestry of our relations. Whether it is the shared languages of Awadhi and Bhojpuri that people speak on both sides of the India-Nepal border or the colourful culture of Tharu people who inhabit both Nepal and adjoining districts of Uttar Pradesh, or the daily trade that takes place across our borders, there is so much that binds us together.

Our open border has sustained and promoted close cooperation between our two countries. Occasionally, it has been misused by some for illegal and criminal activity. Both India and Nepal, therefore, have to remain ever vigilant and work closely to ensure that the open border is not misused. Our security is mutual and shared, not individual and divisible.

As a close friend and neighbor, we have been cooperating with Nepal in its socio-economic efforts within our modest means. Our development cooperation which covers a broad canvas, including water resources, human resource development, health, power, civil aviation, tourism, trade, investments, and agriculture has now

entered a new era with major projects to improve connectivity between India and Nepal. India, in the first phase, will construct 19 roads exceeding 600 Kms in the terai region of Nepal, establish two integrated check-posts and two cross-border railway links over the next two-three years. In the second phase, we will construct additional 800 Kms of roads, three cross-border railway links and two integrated check-posts. It gives me great satisfaction to say that six of the roads in phase-I, two of the integrated check posts in Phase-II and two of the rail links in phase II will be built along the India-Nepal border in Uttar Pradesh. We believe these will contribute substantially to Nepal's development efforts and facilitate

trade, investments and people-to-people contacts between our two countries. We count on your close cooperation to expeditiously implement these projects.

By virtue of their shared geography India and Nepal also have the boon of tremendous water resources. But these need to be harnessed. There is no doubt in my mind that with rapid progress in our mutually beneficial cooperation in developing our shared water resources, these rivers would become, in words of our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, 'rivers of joy and prosperity'.

There is much untapped potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries in areas

like hydropower, tourism, agriculture and trade, just to name a few. Our common challenge is to realize this promise. We would be happy to work closely with Nepal to further expand and strengthen our bilateral relations for mutual benefit.

As Nepal's closest neighbor and the gateway for Nepal to India, Uttar Pradesh, which is the most populous state in India and also the fourth largest state in terms of geographical area, presents a huge potential market for our friends in Nepal to explore. The modern cross-border infrastructure that we are building will enhance connectivity and usher in economic prosperity for the people living along the bordering areas on both sides.

We in Uttar Pradesh have had the pleasure of receiving some of Nepal's best and brightest for studies in our schools, colleges and universities. They have helped enhance our knowledge of Nepal and have contributed to enhancing better understanding between our two countries.

Uttar Pradesh and, particularly, Varanasi has also played host to many of Nepal's brave leaders who strived relentlessly to establish democracy in Nepal. We hope their sacrifices and struggles will bear fruit and see the happy conclusion of the political transition in Nepal which has passed several key milestones. Despite the doubts that many have, the ongoing transition has come a long way. The courage and determination of the people of Nepal and

the foresight of its political leadership has made this happen. We have no doubt that Nepal will be able to handle the challenges it now faces in drafting a new constitution and institutionalizing multiparty democracy in the polity of Nepal. We believe that the political changes in Nepal are its internal issues, decided and settled by the Nepalese people and their representatives. Solutions and consensus among political parties would come through meaningful and result-oriented dialogue among themselves in an atmosphere free of coercion. India remains strongly committed to providing any assistance and support, as required by the people of Nepal for the success of the

peace process and the institutionalization of multi-party democracy in Nepal.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that the focus of your interaction be on how to bring peace, stability and multi-party democracy in Nepal. This would also pave the way for development and prosperity in Nepal and closer cooperation between India and Nepal. Drawing strength, sustenance and encouragement from our historically close relations, our two countries stand at the cusp of a great partnership. We are hopeful that the friendly relation between the two countries provides the basis for building a forward-looking framework for greater cooperation.

I congratulate the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India for taking the initiative in organizing this timely seminar on India-Nepal Relations in Varanasi. I once again welcome all of you to our historic city and wish you all a very pleasant stay and fruitful deliberations.

Thank You - Namaskar