

Nepal Urges India to Recognize its New Constitution

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By UPF Asia: A meeting in New Delhi, India on the evening of Oct. 4, 2015 expressed concern and proposed solutions to the deterioration in bilateral relations between India and Nepal. It was held under the auspices of the Universal Peace Federation.

Up to and following the promulgation of Nepal's new Constitution on September 20, 2015 protests by ethnic minorities in Nepal's southern plains that border India resulted in more than 50 people being killed, including senior police officers. Transportation of vital goods to Nepal, a landlocked nation, has been at a virtual standstill for more than a month.

The goal was to have open, frank and face-to-face dialogue focusing on ways to restore relationships to their traditional levels of mutual trust, friendship and cooperation. Participants agreed that it was in the interest of all parties to strengthen Nepal's efforts to ensure a strong, stable and inclusive federal democratic structure.

The interaction meeting entitled, "Recent Developments in Nepal and India-Nepal Relations: The Way Forward," was chaired by former Indian Ambassador to Nepal, K.V. Rajan, and addressed by Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, former Minister and Member of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal, as well as eminent participants from the world of politics, academia, diplomacy and media.

Hon. Dhakal presented a frank analysis from the perspective of Nepal of the background to the consultations leading up to the Constitution. He noted that the new Constitution has many progressive aspects, the flexibility for adjustments in the immediate and near term, the advanced stage of consultations included the demands of regional parties, the disappointment and concern felt in Nepal at India's reservations to welcome the landmark document despite support from Ban Ki-Moon the Secretary-General of the UN and by many other governments, and most recently the massive damage to Nepal's economy caused by disruption of cross-border movement of goods. The Nepalese MP concluded by noting that India's unequivocal recognition of Nepal's constitution would go a long way in reducing tensions and restoring cordial relations between Kathmandu and Delhi.

Political leaders including: Mr. Vijay Jolly (Member, National Executive, BJP) and Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar (Congress MP) offered differing versions of the Indian viewpoint, respectively endorsing and opposing the Government approach, while other participants—Prof. Mahendra Lama, Sikkim Minister Mr. G.M. Gurung and former Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar suggested that steps could be taken through special mechanisms to restore cross border traffic while Nepal's political parties found their own solutions to ensure maximum support to the Constitution, including through suitable amendments.

Earlier, Dr. Robert Kittel, (Education Director, UPF-Asia), briefed the meeting about the series of conferences held over the past decade by the UPF under its South Asia Peace Initiative. UPF-Nepal made a notable contribution to the success of the Peace Process which culminated in the mainstreaming of the Maoists as a political party in a democratic structure, the integration of the Maoist army with the Nepal forces, and the promulgation of the Constitution.



The meeting agreed that the promulgation of the Constitution by an overwhelming majority of the CA members was a significant achievement which deserved to be hailed as such by all well-wishers and friends of Nepal. India's generous support in order to strengthen Nepal's stability and economic viability, and the institutional capacity of its new, inclusive, democratic and federal structure would be invaluable, available and fully utilized as Nepal overcomes the challenges ahead.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Krishna Adhikari, (Secretary-General of UPF-India). Mr. Santosh Paudel (spokesperson for the Nepal Family Party) pointed out that an inaccurate and incomplete understanding of Nepal's situation lie at the root of the current impasse.

