

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE TO THE EX- SERVICEMEN OF INDIAN ARMY AT
POKHARA**

Pokhara, Nepal: 04-11-2016

Brave ex- servicemen of Indian Army and their dependents,

I am indeed happy and proud to be present amidst you.

2. Being the President of India, it is a matter of happiness and satisfaction for me to have got this opportunity to interact with you in this beautiful city of Pokhara.

3. On behalf of the people of India, I express my deep sympathies to Nepal and its people on the unfortunate loss of lives and damage to property on account of the destructive earthquake that struck Nepal last year.

4. It is a matter of pride that the brave Gurkhas have been serving in India since the last 200 years with exemplary courage and sincerity. They have earned a name for themselves in the Indian Army. Today, 32,000 Gurkha soldiers are serving in the Indian Army and around 1 Lakh, 26 thousand ex-servicemen and their dependents are drawing pension in Nepal.

5. The ex-servicemen are the foundational pillars of the friendship between Nepal and India. The Indian Government and Indian Army are proud of the Gurkha soldiers and ex-servicemen. I, on behalf of Government of India assure you that the Government of India will never step back in its efforts for the welfare of its ex-servicemen.

6. Since ancient times, the relations between India and Nepal have been based on multi-faceted social and cultural contacts. People of both countries can visit each other freely due

to Open Border and Friendship Treaty. Nepali citizens can easily get employment in India. These relations between the people of the two countries are elevating our mutual relations to a still higher level.

7. These relations have also strengthened the friendship between the Army of both countries. Our brave ex-servicemen of both nations have made important contribution to the security and development of both our countries.

Brave ex- servicemen of Indian Army and their dependents,

8. I am happy to say that Government of India is running many welfare schemes for your prosperity and well-being. Every year nearly 3100 crore Nepali rupees are being distributed as pension in Nepal. In the current year our objective is to distribute around 4000 crore Nepali rupees under 'One Rank One Pension' and 7th Central Pay Commission.

9. The Government of India is committed to rehabilitation efforts pertaining to the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal last year and is working together with the Government of Nepal in this direction. The Government of India has provided 32,000 Nepali Rupees per pensioner in addition to other aid to 6832 earthquake affected ex-servicemen.

10. Apart from pension, the Indian Army has taken care of all the aspirations of ex-servicemen. Last year approximately 6.5 crore Nepali Rupees have been distributed under various welfare schemes. Apart from starting the ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme in Nepal to take care of your health in old age, approximately 1 crore Nepali Rupees have been distributed as medical assistance. 10 Medical Teams from Indian Army visit

Nepal every year. Till now 64 Ambulances have been gifted to various ex-servicemen institutions.

11. The Indian Army is providing scholarships to dependent children of ex-servicemen. Under its plan of infrastructural development, drinking water projects have been started in 1049 villages of ex-servicemen so far. Electricity has been made available through Solar Electrification Projects in 17 remote areas.

12. Being the Supreme Commander of the Indian Army, it is a matter of satisfaction and pride for me that all welfare schemes for ex-servicemen are also being implemented in Nepal on time. As per 'One Rank One Pension' scheme under 7th Pay commission, decision has been taken to increase the original pension drawn on 31.12.15 by 2.57 times. The Pay Commission had recommended payment of 2.57 times of the pension drawn on 01.01.2006.

Brave ex- servicemen of Indian Army and their dependents,

13. Nepal is progressing towards peace and development and we are with you in this journey. I once again call upon you to play a constructive role in nation building and in strengthening India-Nepal friendship.

14. To conclude, I pray to Lord Pashupati Nath, Maa Durga and Lord Buddha for the happiness, progress and prosperity of you and your families.

Thank You,

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat-Nepal Maitri!!