

Madhav Kumar's words on receiving UPF's *Leadership and Good Governance Award*

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Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, prime minister of Nepal (2009 -- 2012)

My life is an open book. Coming from a lower middle-class background, I was more interested in the uplift and well-being of downtrodden and backward communities than serving to uphold the traditional social order. The existence of prejudice and discrimination in my country on the basis of caste, creed, culture, religion and gender has deeply disturbed me since my young days. I have devoted my entire life to promotion of civil liberties, human rights, democracy, peoples' elevation and development, and foreign policy. I have spent more than four decades in the service of the country.

Starting as a young leader of the Communist Party of Nepal, I rose to the top position of the party and the nation within these periods. As a person dedicated to value-based politics, morality and principle, I tried to awaken the government and run it on the need for transparency in public life and upholding principles of good government.

Having a coalition government of political parties with different orientations and outlooks, when I served as

primeminister, my tasks were quite challenging and difficult. I gave much emphasis to the issues of the environment, faster economic development with social equity and justice, the building of our physical infrastructures and time-bound but quality work.

With this note, may I once again thank the organizers for boosting my morale to continue to work for my country with new vigor and vitality for development and good government.

I come from Nepal, the land of the world's highest peak, Mount Sagarmatha (Everest) and a country known as the cradle of two of the oldest religions of the world, Hinduism and Buddhism, and for its high degree of religious and cultural tolerance. Lord Buddha, born in Lumbini, Nepal, propagated the core message of peace, harmony, non-violence and universal fraternity. I am honored to bring the message of goodwill and friendship from our people to the friendly people of the Philippines and to all of you who have come from different parts of the world.

Achieving, maintaining peace

When we talk of peace in any context, I believe that the core of the matter is sustainable peace. We must remember that the Asia Pacific region is an area of both contrasts and extremities; it is imbued with strong and weak points. Asia is the largest and most populous continent and is the confluence of the world's major religions, cultures and civilizations. Asia has been blessed with great thinkers and philosophers, such as Lord Buddha, Confucius and Mahatma Gandhi, and by and large, we share a common oriental heritage and similar thinking and philosophy.

Asia also faced the tyranny of colonialism and its attendant problems of exploitation and oppression for too long, as it fell prey to the designs of imperialism. Though remaining perpetually independent, we saw the domination of our South Asian nextdoor neighbors by colonial powers.

As Asia is resurging to regain its lost glory in terms of human accomplishments, peace, progress and stability, our feelings are that the teachings of Lord Buddha who advocated peace, harmony and compassion more than 2,500 years ago, are more relevant today than ever before.

The present century represents an era of Asian renaissance. While there are promising forecasts for a faster pace of economic development in the Asia Pacific region, with the global center of gravity of economic and technical development slowly but irreversibly shifting to the region from America and Europe, we have to take lessons from the past when wars and rivalries for dominance pervaded the region.

Two world wars ravaged the region during the last hundred years and innumerable conflicts and proxy

wars between big powers impoverished most of the region's countries.

In a nutshell, we can safely say that the root cause of these wars and conflicts was nothing but the sheer sense of rivalry and the penchant among powerful countries for ensuring their power, influence and control of resources.

Despite the end of the wars and conflicts, countries of the region still suffer from the aftermath of the past, ranging from various irritants in interstate relations to potential dangers of nuclear proliferation. These challenges and constraints call for promoting a climate of mutual trust, understanding and cooperation among countries.

Obstacles to be overcome



Broadly speaking, there are four major thrust areas for upholding sustainable peace in our region that is replete with great social diversity and a multiplicity of languages, religions and ethnicities and is governed by various value systems. These include the fostering of social harmony and

peace within the country, promotion of peace and friendship among countries in the region, maintenance of harmony with nature in view of climatic change caused by global warming, desertification, deforestation, pollution, unplanned development and reckless human encroachment, the strengthening of social equality, inclusive development and a greater degree of mass participation as a precondition for sustainable peace, security and human development.

Likewise, the process of pursuing confidence building measures and promoting fruitful bilateral and multilateral cooperation among countries of our region should be allowed to go unhindered, taking into account the sensitivities and aspirations of the countries concerned. We should also ensure effective cooperation to thwart the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as this may act as a potential instrument to deny progress, peace and stability.

The natural environment

I am pleased to note that climate change, environmental and ecological conservation are aspects that are quite close to my heart. In our region, climatic change has wrought havoc and pitfalls. Nepal's vital lifeline is the Himalayan ecosystem that provides water for the sustenance of the entire region of Nepal, India and Bangladesh and provides shelter and sustenance to more than a billion people.

The melting of glaciers at an accelerated rate has continued unabated, posing serious risks downstream with an adverse impact on tens of millions of people, the physical infrastructure and the unique biodiversity.

I am sure other countries have their own problems in undertaking ecological conservation because of global warming.

Economic equality

Poverty is another potential area for future conflict, as it may seriously disturb peace in our region and undermine all our efforts toward progress and stability. The Asia Pacific region has the largest concentration of impoverished people in the world.

Nepal supports general and comprehensive disarmament to do away with the basic root of conflict and dissension among countries and peoples.

We strongly feel that while nations in the region should work for harmony, cooperation and reconciliation, expenditures for armaments should be diverted toward social progress, economic development, employment generation and removal of different forms of disparity. This is possibly the only way to restore the Asia Pacific region to its earlier era of progress and stability as Asia dominated the world for centuries before the rise of Western nations.

Existential threats



Religious leaders give a joint benediction.

Besides conventional problems afflicting our region, insurgency and rebellion have also posed problems in many countries. As a country that went through the problem of painful insurgency for a decade after the Maoists went underground to carry out a so-called people's war, Nepal is quite conscious of the problems of peace-building, conflict resolution and protracted negotiations and their impact on the national economy.

We need continued support and understanding from the international community for taking our peace process to its logical conclusion.

As one of the top leaders of Nepal directly involved in bringing Maoist rebels to the national mainstream through both overt and covert negotiations and ensuring their participation in the multiparty system wedded to full-fledged democracy, human rights, civil liberties and inclusive development, I completed the process of integration and rehabilitation of former Maoist rebels.

This was the first major headway in our peace process. I am still committed to working toward promulgating a new constitution at an early date despite some hiccups created by the activities of political forces not responsive to the actual aspirations of our people.

Finally, let me thank you all for your kind patience and wish the Asian Summit all success in its task of promoting steps toward sustainable peace, security and human development in the region.