

**REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT CIVIC RECEPTION IN JANAKPUR**

Janakpur, Nepal: November 04, 2016)

**Your Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal, Shri Bimalendra
Nidhi,
Revered Mahant of Janaki temple, Shri Ram Tapeshwar Das Ji,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. I am overwhelmed by the warm reception and hospitality that has been extended to me by the people of this ancient city of Janakpur. I am delighted to be here in Janakpur, the city of Goddess Sita, who is revered both in India and Nepal alike.
2. Janakpur is one of the best examples of our shared civilizational heritage. A centre of learning since ancient times, Janakpur city has attracted scholars from all corners of the world. It has been a fertile meeting place for intellectuals and scholars of all faiths.
3. Raja Janak, the ruler of this famous city and father of Goddess Sita, is credited with inculcating an atmosphere of knowledge and learning among the city's inhabitants.
4. The ancient texts, manuscripts, coins and sculptures that have been excavated from its vicinity amply demonstrate Janakpur's fame as a centre of learning. I have been informed that the earliest written manuscript of the first *Mandal* of the *Rig Veda* was discovered near Janakpur.
5. Since time immemorial, this city has been a melting pot of diverse cultures and religions. Tales abound in our folklore of how Lord Buddha and Mahavira visited Janakpur during their spiritual journey across the region.
6. Besides, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam have also found roots in Janakpur. It is a city that has been established on the foundation of scholarship, hospitality and syncretism.

Friends,

7. India-Nepal relations are founded on these ancient linkages and traditions. The ties that bind Janakpur and Ayodhya have existed since time immemorial. The residents of this great city are heirs

to the bond of familial ties that were established between Raja Janak and Raja Dashrath. People of India value this unique relationship, shared tradition and rich heritage.

8. Friends, India deeply values its partnership with Nepal across diverse sectors. As a close and friendly neighbour, India's abiding interest in Nepal is peace, stability and prosperity.
9. I applaud the efforts of people and government of Nepal for achieving inclusive economic development, and ensuring a peaceful and prosperous life for its peoples.
10. India takes pride in its close development partnership with Nepal and the achievements of friendly people of Nepal.
11. The people and Government of India are committed to further deepen and expand their close ties with Nepal on the basis of mutual trust and mutual benefit.

Friends,

12. The key to economic development of Janakpur lies in the promotion of the tourism sector. Recently, Janakpur and Ayodhya reinforced their ancient ties by signing a twin city agreement.
13. The development of the Ramayana tourism circuit, with better facilities for millions of pilgrims, will not only generate employment opportunities but also strengthen the story of our common heritage.
14. I am pleased to announce the construction of two dharmashalas along the Parikrama Path around Janakpur. These two dharamshalas will, I hope, be of benefit to the pilgrims from both Nepal and India.
15. Janakpur is close to India - both spiritually and geographically.
16. It is essential that we pay adequate attention to the development of border infrastructure and connectivity to facilitate movement of people.
17. Today, in consonance with priorities of the people of Nepal, both Governments are giving particular attention to expediting implementation of connectivity and development projects such as

Terai roads, cross-border rail links, Integrated Check posts, power transmission lines.

18. These projects are vital not only for Nepal's socio-economic and infrastructural transformation but also demonstrate our collaborative efforts to facilitate trade, investments and movement of people.
19. The Government of India is assisting in the construction of four Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along important India-Nepal entry point. The ICPs at Birgunj and Biratnagar will be of great advantage to the people of Jankapur and the surrounding region.
20. I have been informed that ICP at Birgunj will soon be operational. These ICPs, with their modern, state of the art facilities, will be instrumental in promoting trade and tourism and facilitate the convenient movement of people across the border.
21. I thank Shri Bimalendra Nidhi, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of Nepal, for being present here today.
22. His father Late Shri Mahendra Narayan Nidhi was not only a great Nepali leader, but also an ardent Gandhian in his life and political philosophy. On this occasion, I would like to acknowledge his contribution to spreading Gandhian thoughts and philosophy and pay tribute to his cherished memory.
23. We all are cultural and spiritual ambassadors of India and Nepal. With our joint efforts, we can propagate, across the globe, the message of peace and love bestowed upon us by Lord Rama and Goddess Sita. It is our common responsibility to build on the legacy of our forefathers, which would be a befitting tribute to them. Let us all work together to achieve this noble objective with their blessings.
24. Long live the harmony and spirit of common brotherhood between the people of our two great countries.
25. Nepal Bharat Maitri Amar Rahos (Long live the friendship between Nepal and India)
