India’s Military Ties with Nepal - Gurkha Regiment

What is the issue?

- Relations between India and Nepal are currently strained with Nepal's Parliament approving a new map with Indian territories included.
- In this context, here is a look at the special ties between the Indian and Nepalese armed forces.

How did India’s military ties with Nepal evolve?

- Soldiers from Nepal form a significant part of Indian Army’s legendary Gurkha regiment.
- India’s military connection with Nepal goes back to the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- His army in Lahore enlisted Nepalese soldiers called Lahure or soldiers of fortune.
- British India raised the first battalion of the Gurkha Regiment as the Nasiri regiment on April 24, 1815.
- By the time the First World War started, there were 10 Gurkha regiments in the British Indian Army.
- When India got freedom, these regiments were divided between the British and Indian armies.
- This was done as per the Britain–India–Nepal Tripartite Agreement signed in November 1947.
- Six Gurkha regiments with a lakh-odd soldiers came to India.
- This went on to raise another regiment called '11 Gurkha Rifles'.
- This was to accommodate soldiers of 7th Gurkha Rifles and the 10th Gurkha Rifles, who chose not to transfer to the British Army.

What are the current practices?

- Any Nepali can join the Indian Army, both as a jawan and as an officer.
- A citizen of Nepal can take the National Defence Academy or Combined Defence Services exams and join the Indian Army as an officer.
- The Nepalese army also sends its officers for training to India’s military academies and combat colleges.
- The Gurkha regiments, which have 35 battalions, recruit a large number of troops from Nepal.

- There is a strong inter-personal ties between the soldiers and officers of the two countries due to the Gurkha regiments.
- Every year, battalions commission a tour of Nepal.
- Young officers from India trek to traditional recruiting areas in the rugged Himalayas.
- They meet the locals, and often live in villages with ex-servicemen.
- Both the officers and the troops are fiercely proud of their war cry 'Jai Maha Kali, Ayo Gorkhali', the khukri, and their command over Gurkhali language.
- [Khukri is a type of large, recurved traditional knife that originated in Nepal.]
- In the initial years after Independence, any officer who could not master Gurkhali in 3 months was shifted to another regiment.
- The Indian Chief of Army Staff can be the honorary chief of the Nepalese army.
- This convention dates back to 1972.
- Back then, the Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, a Gurkha regiment officer, was made the honorary chief of the Nepalese army.
- Ever since, the Army chief of India is the honorary chief of the Nepalese army and vice-versa.

How about the rights of the soldiers from Nepal?

- Soldiers from Nepal enjoy the same benefits as the India troops both during service and after retirement.
- They get the same medical facilities as the Indian soldiers.
- They can avail of healthcare facilities in India as well.
- Also, often, medical teams from the Indian Army tour Nepal.
- The British started giving the Nepalese soldiers pension only a few years ago.
- Unlike this, the Indian Army has never discriminated against the Nepalese soldiers.
- The Indian Army also runs welfare projects in Nepal villages, including small water and power projects.

Source: The Indian Express

Related Articles: India-Nepal Relations over the Years, Kalapani Territorial Issue



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering