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1947 Tripartite Agreement on Gurkha soldiers

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Why in News

Recently, the Nepal's Foreign Minister has said that the **1947 Tripartite Agreement between India, Nepal and the United Kingdom (that deals with the military service of Gurkha soldiers from Nepal)** has become redundant.

He also said that Nepal would prefer to handle the matter bilaterally with India and the United Kingdom.

Key Points

- **The Tripartite Agreement:**
 - In 1947, when India became independent, it was decided to **split Gurkha regiments** between the **British and Indian armies**.
 - From the first quarter of the 19th century, Gurkhas had served under the British, first in the armies of the East India Company, and then the British Indian Army.
 - East India Company first recruited Gurkhas after suffering heavy casualties during the **Anglo-Nepalese War** also known as the **Gurkha War**. The war ended with the signing of the **Treaty of Sugauli in 1816**.
 - It ensured that Gurkhas in British and Indian service **would enjoy broadly the same conditions of service** as that of British and Indian citizens. The services include all perks, remuneration, facilities and pension schemes etc.
 - Gurkha recruitment was the first window that was opened to **Nepali youth to go abroad**.

- **Issues Involved:**

- The objection from Nepal regarding the Gurkhas serving in the Indian military has become prominent in the backdrop of **Nepal-India territorial dispute over the Kalapani region** of Pithoragarh district that Nepal claims as its own.

Nepal has responded by publishing a new map that included the disputed territories of Kalapani region.

- The issue became a talking point after Indian Army Chief remarked that Nepal's strong protest against **Indian road construction in the Limpiadora-Kalapani-Lipulekh** area was at the behest of a third party (China).

The Nepalese people believe that **Indian Army Chief, who is granted the honorary post** of a General in the Nepal Army has hurt the sentiments of the Nepali Gurkha Army personnel who lay down their lives to protect India.

- Also the Gurkha veterans have been alleging that the United Kingdom has been discriminating against them in terms of pay, pension and other facilities.

The British government started providing equal pay and pension to Gurkhas in 2007.

Gurkhas in British Army

- After the 1947 Tripartite Agreement, the British Army amalgamated the Gurkha regiment into combined **Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR)**. Currently, the Gurkhas comprise up to 3% of the British Army. In 2015 they **completed 200 years of service in British Army**.
- Queen Elizabeth II of Britain is **guarded by two personal Gurkha officers**.
- The Gurkhas are **recruited every year at the British Gurkha camp at Pokhara in Nepal**. The camp enlists fresh recruits not only for the British Army, but also for the counter-terror arm of the **Singapore Police Force**.
- Their **signature weapon of Gurkhas, Khukri**, forms part of the Gurkha **regimental insignia in Britain as well as in India**.

Way Forward

India has strong cultural ties with Nepal. Both countries share open borders and recognize the citizens of each other country as a national citizen. However, the bilateral relations which have soured in the recent past over border disputes, need to be strengthened through diplomatic relations.

Source: TH