

Encounter: Richard Ragan

Interview: Pius Bahadur Amatya

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## PM In India

# Feel Good

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- Special Report On Tourism: Naturally Nepal
- Social Inclusion
- Agitation In Darjeeling: Gorkhalnad In Demand

*Complimentary Copy*

# अब... १\* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेण्ट बैंक बढी भन्दा बढी  
नागरिकहरूमा बैंकिङ्ग सेवाको पहिलो अनुभव  
एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सगौरब  
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ... **मात्र रु.१ मा**  
**“आफ्नै बचत खाता”**  
सम्पूर्ण अन्तराष्ट्रिय स्तरको सेवा सुविधा सहित ।



जीवन्तका पहिला पलक देखि बचतको यानी  
सुरक्षित भविष्यको लगानी ।

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**World Bank Steps Up Assistance for Energy and Agriculture**

The Government of Nepal and the World Bank signed two agreements totaling US\$ 109.2 million to assist Nepal's development priorities in the energy and agriculture sectors.

The agreements were signed and exchanged between Finance Secretary Rameshore Khanal and World Bank Country Director for Nepal, Susan Goldmark.

Under the first agreement the World Bank will provide US\$ 89.2 million in additional financing for the Power Development Project to help the Government of Nepal implement its Energy Crisis Management Action Plan.

Nepal is experiencing an energy crisis of unprecedented severity, caused by years of under-investment and sharp growth in electricity demand. This long-term problem was exacerbated in the last year by drought in part of the country and the loss, through flooding, of a transmission line that was used to import electricity from India.

**India provides grant assistance to Schools**

The Embassy of India, Kathmandu, signed three separate Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on August 18, with the District Development Committee

(DDC) of Doti, and concerned beneficiary organizations. The grants will provide assistance to three schools in the district of Doti: Shree Janata Primary School, Gaganpani, (NRs.71 lakhs); Shree Saraswati Primary School, Bagar, (NRs.66 Lakhs); and Shree Ghanteswor Higher Secondary School, Kundikot, (NRs.1.22 crores). These projects will be implemented in consultation with the Government of Nepal as small development projects under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme.

According to an Embassy press release, these schools serve the needs of over 1100 students, of which nearly half are girls. The schools receiving donations have been functioning in old buildings and are in need of an infrastructure upgrade. The Indian Government's assistance will help create the requisite facilities and allow the organizations to maintain their educational standards and increase capacity.

**UN Respond to Diarrhoea Outbreak**

The Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) outbreak in the western parts of Nepal is an immediate and serious concern for the relief community in Nepal. As of August 13, the Ministry of Health and Population has confirmed 282 diarrhoea related deaths in 17 districts in the Mid and Far

Western Regions since May 5th. Jajarkot and Rukum districts are the worst hit.

The Government of Nepal has been responding to the epidemic from the onset. Nevertheless, challenges remain, in particular logistics and access to affected communities, mainly due to Monsoon weather conditions and insufficient communication lines in remote areas.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, Save the Children, CONCERN, MERLIN, LWF, WaterAid, World Vision, CARE, DFID/CSP, GTZ, Oxfam and IRD are all working closely with the Government and their local NGO partners to deliver assistance. Support being provided includes: drugs & medical supplies, disease surveillance, treatment of drinking water and hygiene promotion.

**European Commission Supports for 'Water for Life' projects**

The European Commission's Humanitarian Department (ECHO) has granted Concern Worldwide and Oxfam NPR 55 Million (Euro 500,000) each to implement water and sanitation projects in remote locations of Kalikot, Jajarkot, Dailekh and Surkhet districts.

The recent deadly outbreak of diarrhoea in Jajarkot, which has spread to 15 other districts, highlights the need to address the root causes of these preventable deaths: lack of access to clean drinking water and poor hygiene practices.

The two projects will benefit more than 15,000 people through the construction of 30 water systems, 2,448 household latrines, eight school toilet facilities and basic health and through hygiene promotion in all target villages.

The projects will be implemented through NGO partners: Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) in Jajarkot; Karnali Integrated Rural development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) in Kalikot; Digo Bikash Tatha Batabaran Samranchhen Kendra (SuDECC), and Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) in Dailekh; and Environmental



Development Society (EDS) in Surkhet. Both projects are expected to be completed by June, 2010.

### KOICA's Volunteer Arrives

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has dispatched eleven new KOICA Volunteers to work in Nepal for two years. They were welcomed by the Representative, Ms. Young Ah Doh and other officials of KOICA Nepal Office at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

These new KOICA Volunteers will be assigned in different government organizations with in and outside the Valley and will share Korea's experience and knowledge in Health, Early Childhood Education, Korean Language, Radiography, Local development and Computer education with the Nepalese people. Among the eleven, one Senior KOICA Volunteer Mr. Shin Chan Su is visiting Nepal for the second time. During his previous assignment he worked with District Development Committee in Nuwakot and had implemented model farming project very successfully.

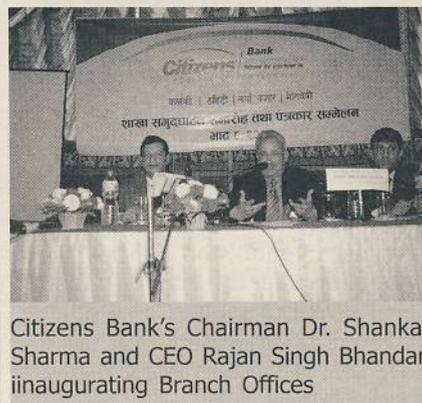
### USAID and MTV fight human trafficking

Indian pop star Sunidhi Chauhan and Nepalese headliners Nima Rumba, Kranti Ale, and Nalina Chitrakar will take a stand against human trafficking at a September 5<sup>th</sup> concert in Kathmandu, the first in a series of free "MTV EXIT Live in Nepal" concerts in Pokhara, Dharan, and Hetauda this September.

The September 5<sup>th</sup> concert will be held at 5 p.m. at Jawalakhel Stadium and hosted by television and film star Malvika Subba, who narrated the MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking) documentary "SOLD: An MTV EXIT Special." Subba is the MTV EXIT campaign's ambassador in Nepal.

The MTV EXIT campaign extends across all of Asia and is produced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and MTV. Anti-trafficking organizations Maiti Nepal and ABC Nepal will provide information on how to combat human trafficking at the concerts.

Non-governmental organizations in Nepal estimate that as many as 15,000 Nepali women and girls are trafficked to India annually, while 7,500 children are trafficked domestically for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Nepali girls become involuntary domestic workers each year within Nepal, according to the U.S. Department of State's 2009 "Trafficking in Persons Report."



Citizens Bank's Chairman Dr. Shankar Sharma and CEO Rajan Singh Bhandari inaugurating Branch Offices

## OATH IN QUANDARY

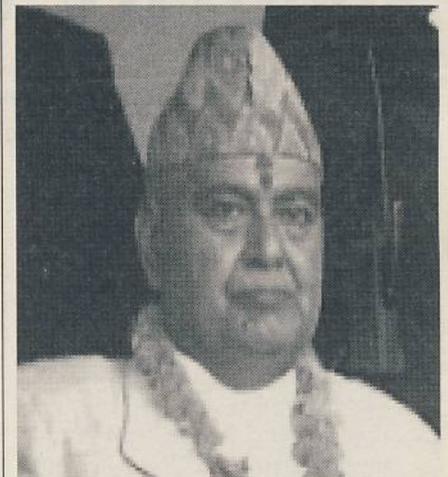
After two orders from the Supreme Court (SC) went unheeded, the president has asked the vice president to retake his oath in Nepali language.

The one-year-old oath in Hindi by vice president Parmananda Jha continues to be at the center of political storm that threatens to drive a wedge in the identity politics in the country.

With all the Terai-based parties backing VP Jha, the latter has (till Tuesday) steadfastly refused to obey the order of the apex court.

"He is rather in the mood to resign than retake the oath," said Mithilesh Kumar Singh, a lawyer close to the vice president.

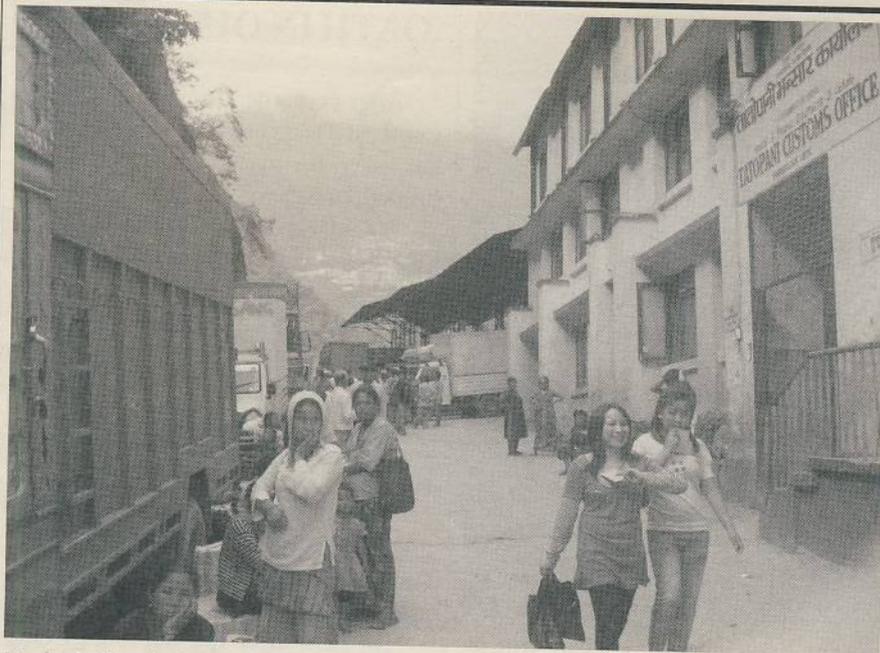
In fact, after the Supreme Court delivered an order three weeks ago asking the vice president to retake the oath, the cabinet also had advised him to do so.



But after he refused to take any step in that direction, the SC – responding to a second writ – has said that either he should retake the oath in Nepali within a week (by Sunday) or lose legitimacy of his position.

In order to placate the Terai-based parties, many of whom are supporters of the Madhav Kumar Nepal-led government, the cabinet has already decided to move seventh amendment in the interim constitution to allow persons holding constitutional positions to take oath in their mother languages in future.

But this has, as yet, failed to impress VP Jha, who himself is a former judge of the apex court. ■



**Kodari Check Post:** Tight security

## NEPAL-CHINA BORDER TALKS

# Security Concerns

*Chinese security officials show their concerns with Nepalese counterparts over anti-China activities in Nepal*

By KESHAB POUDEL

A senior Chinese communist party leader is paying a visit to Nepal as the head of a high-level delegation. The visit assumes a greater significance as it comes just a week after the visit to India by Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and the meeting of Chinese and Nepalese security officials. It shows Chinese concerns in Nepal are rising.

A Nepalese security delegation received a warm welcome from their Chinese counterparts in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China, recently. When they sat for discussions, Chinese security officials showed the details of anti-China activities, they said, Tibetan refugees were freely carrying out by taking advantage of the Nepal-India open borders.

At the Nepal-China bilateral security meeting, on August 15 and 16, the Chinese team had a bundle of proposals and suggestions to make.

The Home Ministry officials said the

meeting was a regular one between the two countries. What made it more important were the timing and the issues brought forth on the table.

"This is a regular security meeting between the two countries," said the spokesperson of the Ministry of Home Affairs. "Both the countries discussed security-related matters."

However, officials who took part in the meeting described it as "a deep suspicion" about Nepal's policy. "China is very sensitive about the Tibetans' anti-China activities in Nepal and their closer links with Dharmasala-based Dalai's supporters. China expressed concerns over the misuse of Nepal-India border against China's interests," said a senior security official on condition of anonymity.

Although the two-day border talks between Nepal and China were overshadowed by Prime Minister Nepal's visit to India, China politely conveyed its displeasure over the free movement of Tibetan refugees between Nepal and India.

Kishor Lama, Additional Inspector General of Armed Police Force, led a 21-member Nepali delegation comprising officials of Nepal Police, National Investigation Department, Home Ministry and Foreign Ministry and CDOs of adjoining border districts to the meeting.

China had proposed setting up a high-level mechanism to look after border security and management in February, but Nepal wanted such a mechanism to be formed at the CDO level in the bordering districts of the two countries. No decision has been taken on this so far.

"The Chinese intention at that time was to form such a mechanism at the ministerial or secretarial level, similar to the arrangement between Nepal and India. But we are considering setting up the mechanism at the CDO level at first and later upgrading it to the secretary level," said a Home Ministry official.

The meeting focused on a dozen issues in response to the February visit of Chinese military officials. Illegal immigrants from Tibet — who mostly enter Nepal from Tatopani entry point — were posing security threats to both sides, an official said, adding, cross-border crime was another priority agenda.

Chinese officials also raised the issue of Extradition Treaty with Nepal.

Following the meeting in Tibet, Nepal's Home Ministry is preparing to install a border security force at the request of the Chinese government to prevent free movement of Tibetan refugees and curb illegal activities along the border.

Border security bases will be established in Tatopani of Sindhupalchowk, Lomathang of Mustang, Kimathanka of Sankhuwasabha, Limi of Humla and Tinker of Darchula in the first phase.

This is the first time a full-fledged border security force is being placed along the Nepal China border. APF squads are already deployed in 18 places along the Nepal-India border.

The number of Tibetan refugees crossing the border has drastically gone down in the recent years from between 2500 and 3000 to 300. With the establishment of the posts, the border will be further tightened. But Chinese security concerns in Nepal will remain as long as a large number of Tibetan refugees reside in India and cross over to Nepal. ■



**Agitators** : Marching for Gorkha Land

## AGITATION IN DARJEELING

# Gorkhaland in Demand

*Gorkhas in Darjeeling have made a fresh call for strikes as part of their movement Gorkhaland*

By **UMAKANTAKHANAL,**  
in Darjeeling

**T**he people of Darjeeling have been demanding a separate state of Gorkhaland within the union of India for a long time. Many people have sacrificed their lives for the cause, yet their dream remains unfulfilled.

Darjeeling is a hill district in the Indian state of West Bengal, where more than 1 million Indian Gorkhas reside. In 1986-88, Subash Ghising, the former chairman of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, led a violent movement for Gorkhaland. The movement ended in the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), an autonomous administrative agency for development activities in the district. DGHC was formed in 1988 as a result of tripartite talks between the agitating party, the government of India and the government of West Bengal.

The hill district is now a site for the second wave of agitation calling for a Gorkhaland state within India.

Dissatisfied with the administration of Subash Ghising and DGHC, Darjeeling

Gorkhas started their protests two years ago. Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, under the presidency of Bimal Gurung, spearheads the movement.

Gurung says this phase of agitation will go on as per late Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violence. No voice in the district has opposed the movement. Instead, thousands of people have come out to the streets demanding a separate state for Gorkhas. To be sure, in the Queen of hills, the Gorkha movement is peaking again.

The state government of West Bengal has held several meetings with the agitating party but the talks have not yielded results.

The central government of India held three rounds of tripartite talks. The first and the second talks turned out to be futile because they were held at the secretary level in the absence of political leaders. The third round of talks, held on August 11, was meaningful for Morcha. The meeting scrapped DGHC and the bill to include Darjeeling in the sixth schedule, that is the land of the

indigenous, a demand which was made by Gorkha Janamukti Morcha. Morcha claimed that these provisions were hurdles on the way to Gorkhaland State.

Now the district has come back to zero after DGHC is gone. Despite claims by the agitating party that the latest round of talks were good for the Gorkhaland cause, the Gorkha civilians now have empty hands. The central government has not touched the issue on a political basis. This is crucial because otherwise the situation of the non-cooperative movement against the state government in Darjeeling will worsen. The Congress led central government has not become transparent on the issue of separate statehood. The MP from Darjeeling, Jaswant Singh, and some MPs of BJP could have raised the voice of Gorkhas in the parliament. The expulsion of Jaswant Singh from his party dashed that hope for now.

Most analysts say it is a riddle, "Has it been hit by an unexpected landslide or has a new road been opened"?

The news of the Darjeeling MP's expulsion initially hit the hills like a calamity, especially since the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha was saying that "all landslides" on the road to Gorkhaland had been removed.

Some say it looks like the votes from Darjeeling have gone into the dustbin. The central committee member of Gorkha



**Gurung** : Tough time

Janamukti Morcha, Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri, says, "Any other candidate would have won the seat by our support. Therefore, the expulsion will not at all affect the statehood movement in Darjeeling."

The question now is: how much can an unattached MP do for the movement? ■

# 'GOODWILL TOUR'

# How Good

# Is

# The Will?

Starting on a false note with a gloomy face, prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal seemed to race to the finish line on right track with a big smile. But it is premature to conclude if his five-day "goodwill" run in Nepal's most important neighbour will speed up the beleaguered coalition that he hopes to lead up to the new elections under a still-to-be drafted constitution.

By SUSHIL SHARMA with  
SAROJ DAHAL

**A**verage Bollywood blockbusters run for a length of 2 hours and 30 minutes. So do their Kollywood counterparts, in Kathmandu.

A meeting half that length between the prime ministers of Nepal and India in Delhi has become a hit. According to those who accompanied prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to Delhi last week.

The meeting between the executive chiefs of the two countries has been touted as a major highlight of Nepal's "goodwill" visit to India.

The "one-to-one" meeting between the two prime ministers was attended by foreign, finance and home ministers of India.

From Nepal's side, the prime minister's foreign affairs advisor, Rajan Bhattarai, sat besides his boss on the sideline of a cosy room at Hyderabad house.

The meeting took place amidst the thundering criticism back home by the main opposition leader and the chairman of the Maoist communist party, Prachanda, who publicly dubbed the

visit a total failure. He even boasted that the countdown of the government had begun.

Given that the Indian media virtually ignored the visit, no major agreements and treaties were signed (the much touted trade treaty was 'initialled' not signed) and that foreign minister Sujata Koirala opted out of the entourage at the last minute, critics were quick to dismiss the visit as a forgettable event.

Then came the "one-to-one trust-building" meeting between the two prime ministers.



**PM Nepal Leaving India:** Goodbye

Sources said that the atmosphere witnessed a dramatic change after the meeting.

Prime Minister Nepal was ecstatic. So were his entourage members.

The reason? Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh pledged “full support” to his Nepali counterpart in the former’s efforts to bring the peace process to a conclusion, draft a new constitution and hold fresh elections.

Translation: the Indian government fully supports the continuation of the Madhav Nepal-led coalition. The support comes from the most influential neighbour and regional power at a time when many have begun to count the days of the coalition.

The sense of satisfaction – and achievement – writ large on Nepal’s face when he returned home.

“There had been all kinds of speculation (about the future of the coalition). But they have been put to rest,” he said.

Maoist leaders admit that the visit seemed to end on a happy note – politically.

Said the new chief of the Maoist communist party’s international relations department, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, “the visit appears to be a political success for the prime minister who won support for himself, but whether he managed to get support for the country remains to be seen.”

India’s “support” appears to be guided by its security concerns: concern over a Maoist revival and a dent in India’s influence from its perceived regional rival – China.

According to sources, India is not sure about the fallout if the present government falls. Hence the assurance of a continued support to what the Maoists say is “a foreign masters-installed government”.

At the same time, India is not sure if the present coalition can effectively address its concerns.

Says Prime Minister Nepal’s foreign affairs advisor, Rajan Bhattarai, “Nepal succeed in winning the trust of his Indian counterpart.”

He said that India’s main concern was stability on which, according to

Bhattarai, the prime minister successfully took his Indian counterpart into confidence.

But things are not that straight and simple. India has reiterated mutual trust and confidence as a foundation of bilateral cooperation. This, according to foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, could have several messages. One is that the deficit of trust has not yet been erased.

Said Pandey, “Prime Minister Nepal must have got the information that India is in a mood to reconsider its policy and strategy on Nepal, despite the assurance he got to become a dependable alternative in the increasingly critical national politics.”

India wants stability, but on its own terms, which is not easy given the stakes of other powers, particularly China.

It is caught in two minds on how to proceed. Accommodate the still-not-trustworthy Maoists who “pushed Nepal closer to the doors of Beijing,” or see them mercilessly sidelined – if not brutally crushed like the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

# "We Are Negotiating With India"

- KRISHNA BAHADUR MAHARA

Unified Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (UCPN-M) leader **KRISHNA BAHADUR MAHARA** is a well-known name in the party. Having served in various capacities in the party, Mahara is now leading its foreign department. Mahara spoke on a range of issues with **KESHAB POUDEL AND SAROJ DAHAL**, focusing on Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's current visit to India. Excerpts:

**As a leader of the main opposition party, how do you assess the outcome of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's recent visit to India?**

After reading the joint statement, what I can say is this is just a goodwill visit of Prime Minister Nepal. I don't know anything about any secret understandings between the two countries since they are yet to appear in the public. I have not heard anything about a secret meeting between Nepalese and Indian prime ministers. Looking at the 34-point joint statement, I have not seen anything objectionable. Joint statements are like joint press conferences which avoid controversial issues.

**Are you sure he did not sign any secret treaty with India?**

I do not give a clean bill to India. How do I know whether he signed any kind of secret treaty or not? If Nepal has made any secret agreement with India, it will ruin his political career.

**After his visit, do you see any change in the Indian policy towards Nepal?**

I have not seen any indication for that. As long as India's interest is fulfilled, it will not react. The visit is merely a formal way for interaction.

**But PM Nepal claims that his government has support from all over the world?**

Every government wants to show that it has wider international support. Nepal's claim is no exception. International support is necessary but ultimately it is the people who decide the fate.



**Do you mean the visit to India has no political importance?**

Being a close neighbor of Nepal, such a visit has political importance. I am not trying to minimize it either.

**If that is so, why do your party leaders oppose it?**

As long as the visit focuses on formal goodwill aspect, we don't have any objection. We will object in case this government surrenders Nepal's interest. Our party has made it clear that we will not oppose the visit inasmuch as its aim is to improve the bilateral relations and understandings.

**How can you say that the visit is limited to goodwill when Nepal held one-on-one meetings with the Indian prime minister and India's foreign, defense and home ministers?**

Such meetings are normal. Our leader Prachanda also met them when he visited India last year as a prime minister.

**How do you look at India's response to peace process and constitution making?**

The peace process and constitution making are stalled now because of our dispute over the integration of the Maoist army into the Nepal army. Peace process and constitution making are

both important for us. By looking at the joint statement, India seems to be supportive to peace process and constitution making. India seems to have realized that they cannot ignore Maoists any more.

**Do you think Indian leaders discussed special issues with Prime Minister Nepal?**

We have yet to know what views India holds on the integration of Maoists into Nepal Army. Nothing has come out yet. Prime Minister Nepal must keep in mind that the peace process cannot end without participation of Maoists.

**Do you think Nepalese prime minister is able to garner India's support in constitution making and peace process?**

I think India is more positive now than in the past. If Nepal made efforts to change India's mindset, that is good.

**How do you look at the present politics of Nepal?**

There is an equal possibility for conflict and compromise. We have seen certain changes in Indian policy regarding Maoists.

**Do you have any contacts with India following the fall of your government?**

We have been constantly

negotiating with India on various issues. We want to have good relations with all the countries of the world, including India, but we don't want to bow down before any power like India. We are negotiating with India through informal channel. This is natural in politics.

**If you are negotiating with India in formal and informal ways, why is your party termed anti-Indian?**

In diplomacy we need to maintain good relations with everyone. You cannot avoid the negotiations. There is also a change in India regarding Maoists. India holds the view that Maoists need to be considered together with other parties.

**Have you made similar contacts with China?**

We have good relations with all international powers and China too is our neighbor.

**What do India and China want in Nepal?**

They want their security to be protected in Nepal. They also know that chaotic and anarchic Nepal cannot serve their security interests. This may be the reason India is making efforts to woo us.

**So what do you say of this visit?**

This visit is successful at the level of goodwill.

**What do you think of the establishment of academy for Nepal Police?**

I don't understand this. Since the country is in the process of peace making and writing the new constitution, such activities will create more misunderstandings.

**Your party warned Prime Minister Nepal not to sign any treaty with India that held long term implications in bilateral matters. What do you say now?**

We strongly opposed the treaty of Pancheshwor and certain clauses of the trade treaty which deny our right to conduct trade with third party countries. In the name of controlling unauthorized trade, India is trying to screw Nepal further and make it India dependent.

**Since India is Nepal's largest trading partner, what is wrong with signing such a treaty between Nepal and India?**

As India and China economical grow and com closer, Nepal can get a lot of benefits as a transit point between their trades. Maoists have a clear stand on this. We cannot depend upon the Indian market only by signing a treaty which will curtail our right to decide the fate of business.

**How much did Nepal's prime minister resist such efforts by India?**

We are yet to know many things. Looking at the joint statement, I have not seen any objectionable issues.

**But, it does mention Pancheshwor?**

Pancheshwor is a controversial agreement. It is impossible to start the project without settling issues of Kalapani.

**Do you mean your party has seen nothing objectionable in Prime Minister Nepal's visit?**

I am not saying that. What I was saying is we have to read the agreements and understandings.

**Do you think Prime Minister Nepal was able to protect the country's interests?**

One of the important things about foreign relations is to protect national interests. Every country has their own interest and no one can compromise on their legitimate interest. If India does not compromise on its interest, how can it ask Nepal to do so? It will take a few more days to know about this.

**What are the political implications of the visit?**

Of course, an India visit has always some sort of political implications. But, the prime minister has done nothing to boost Nepal's interests. Even India has not given any importance to him. No Indian media gave any attention to Nepalese prime minister's visit.

**Any benefits of Prime Minister Nepal's visit?**

We have to wait until the implementation of the treaty. ■

## 'India Wants Nepal's Stability'

**RAJAN BHATTARAI** is the foreign affairs advisor for Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. He attended the much discussed 75-minute meeting between Nepal and his Indian counterpart, Man Mohan Singh. He spoke to **SAROJ DAHAL** on the highlights of the meeting:

**What is your assessment of the prime minister's visit to India?**

It was a goodwill visit aimed at boosting goodwill, understanding and mutual confidence. It has been a huge success on that front. It established a high level of understanding. The two leaders got to understand each better.

**What about the political achievements?**

The two prime ministers met for one hour and fifteen minutes. The Indian prime minister stressed three points: taking the peace process to a logical conclusion, issuing a new constitution on scheduled time and holding new elections. He assured full cooperation to the present government on all these fronts.

**That could mean isolating the Maoists, right?**

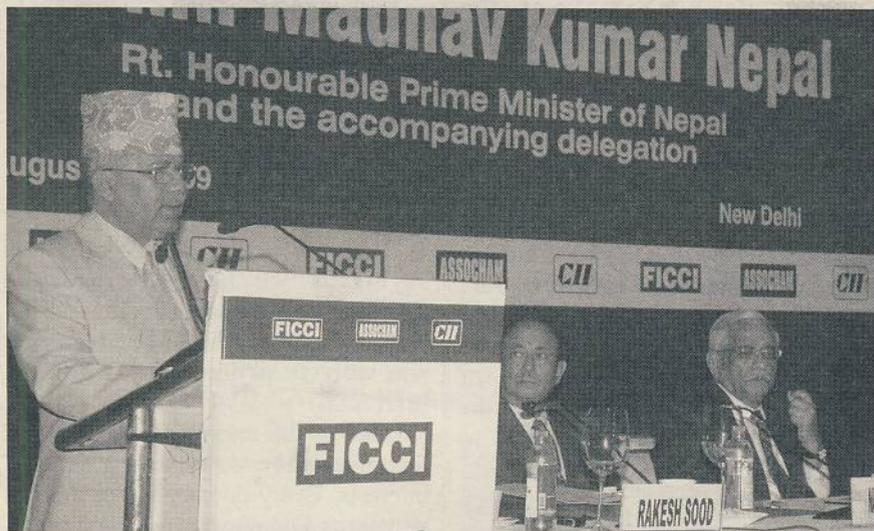
No, India emphasized a need for political consensus in Nepal. India wants the government to hold talks with all parties and forge a consensus.

**Did the visit exceed the expectations, then?**

No, no. The prime minister had said



that it was purely a goodwill visit. And it indeed turned out to be a truly goodwill visit. It has enhanced mutual confidence. Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh is confident that Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's government can give support. ■



### PM Nepal Addressing Business Community: Trading goodwill ?

Prime minister Man Mohan Singh advised Nepal to seek a consensus with



**FM Koirala:** Defiant

all parties including the Maoists.

The Indian establishment has not given up the idea of engaging the Maoists yet, despite the latter "not behaving properly" when in power for nine months.

The Maoists, for their part, too have been in touch with what they call "foreign masters" to return to power at home.

Prachanda's recent mysterious tour to Europe a day after his party launched to topple the government was part of efforts to keep in touch.

In London, he is believed to have held important meetings with Delhi's

interlocutors.

Said Mahara, "until recently there had been suggestions that we should be crushed, but India has reconsidered that suggestion and wants to see us accommodated."

If that claim comes out true, as some believe it will, new political developments can not be ruled out.

Maoist chairman Prachanda's suddenly cutting short his whirlwind country tour last Monday to meet the Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala is being seen as a move in that direction.

Interestingly, a day later, the Nepali Congress parliamentary party gave a clean chit to foreign minister Sujata Koirala who snubbed prime minister Nepal through an "illness" induced list-minute cancellation of her India tour.

The "villain of the piece" till the other day waiting the party's axe to fall on her, saw herself dramatically resurrected as a leader who could silence "the bold heroes" in Ram Chandra Poudel and Gagan Thapas with a simple clarification.

Bollywood and Kollywood items most often flatter to deceive. A bumper initial is not a guarantee for a movie to not end up a dud. The 75-minute "hit" meeting with Man Mohan Singh is not a guarantee that the Madhav Kumar Nepal show will go on. ■

## Joint Press Statement on Official visit of Rt. Hon. Madhav Kumar Nepal, Prime Minister of Nepal to India (18-22 August 2009)

The Rt. Hon. Madhav Kumar Nepal, Prime Minister of Nepal, paid an official visit to India from August 18-22, 2009 at the invitation of H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India. The Prime Minister of Nepal was accompanied by Hon. Mr. Sharat Singh Bhandari, Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation; Hon. Mr. Rajendra Mahto, Minister for Commerce and Supplies; Hon. Mr. Surendra Pande, Minister for Finance; Hon. Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Energy; and Hon. Mr. Mahendra Prasad Yadav, Minister for Industry. The delegation included Members of the Constituent Assembly, senior officials of the Government of Nepal, a business delegation and a delegation of media representatives.

2. On August 19, the Prime Minister of Nepal called on H. E. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the President of India, and on H.E. Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, the Vice-President of India.

3. The Prime Minister of Nepal had a meeting on August 19 with the Prime Minister of India, which was followed by delegation level talks led by the two Prime Ministers, on issues of mutual interest and concern. The Prime Minister of India hosted a banquet in honour of the Prime Minister of Nepal and Mrs. Gayatri Nepal. Hon. Shri S.M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister; Hon. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Finance Minister; Hon. Shri P. Chidambaram, Home Minister, called on the Prime

Minister of Nepal. The Prime Minister of Nepal had a meeting with Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the President of Indian National Congress.

4. An interaction with the Indian business community was jointly hosted by ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI in honour of the Prime Minister of Nepal and his delegation on August 19, 2009. During his stay in India, the Prime Minister visited Mumbai from August 21-22, 2009.

5. The Prime Minister of India extended a warm welcome to the Prime Minister of Nepal. The two Prime Ministers warmly recalled their meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on July 16, 2009 on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit. They expressed their satisfaction regarding the age-old, close, cordial and multi-faceted relations existing between Nepal and India and agreed to expand these further. The talks were held in an atmosphere of utmost cordiality and warmth.

6. The two Prime Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the state of bilateral relations between the two countries and resolved to work together to further strengthen and enhance cooperation consistent with the wishes and aspirations of the people of both the countries. Reiterating the importance of the cordial and multi-faceted relationship between Nepal and India, the two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their determination to consolidate and expand the areas of

cooperation with a view to taking the relationship to a new height on the basis of mutual respect, understanding and mutual benefit.

7. The Prime Minister of Nepal stressed that bringing the peace process in Nepal to a positive and meaningful conclusion in coordination and cooperation with all concerned parties, writing a new Constitution within the stipulated time frame and accelerating the pace of economic development are the main priorities of the Government of Nepal. The Prime Minister of India expressed full support for the ongoing peace process and efforts to bring about economic transformation in Nepal.

8. The two Prime Ministers agreed on the need to reinvigorate bilateral relations in all areas and directed that all the established institutional bilateral mechanisms should function effectively, in time bound manner and lead to concrete outcomes for the benefit of both countries.

9. The two sides agreed that enhancing trade between Nepal and India was a priority for both countries. Both sides agreed that the Inter Governmental Committee (IGC) at the level of Commerce Secretaries should look into the relevant issues with a view to promoting trade, investments and industrialization in Nepal, expanding complementarities of bilateral trade on a sustainable basis and further removing barriers to trade and investment. The two Prime Ministers directed that

the IGC should meet within the next two months. The two sides completed negotiations and initialed the revised Treaty of Trade and Agreement of Cooperation to Control Unauthorized Trade, which would contribute to further enhancing bilateral trade.

10. To facilitate Nepal's foreign trade, India agreed to the utilization of its port at Vishakhapatnam for movement of transit traffic to and from Nepal. It also expressed willingness to favourably consider request for usage for trade purposes of an additional sea port on its western coast.

11. The Nepalese side expressed satisfaction for the Indian assistance to control Goitre and other forms of Iodine Deficiency Disorders. The Foreign Secretaries of India and Nepal signed an MoU regarding continuation of Indian grant assistance for the Goitre control programme in Nepal.

12. The Nepalese side informed that the Government of Nepal will take further necessary measures for the promotion of an investor friendly and enabling business environment to encourage Indian public and private sector investments in Nepal, and a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement would be concluded and signed at an early date. The Indian side would encourage its business and industrial community to increase investment in Nepal. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the growing commercial relationship between the two countries but agreed that there was much untapped potential. In order to further deepen the economic engagement and utilize the full potential for such cooperation that exists between the two countries, it was agreed that a new Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation would be concluded and signed at an early date.

13. The two sides discussed security concerns relating to the open border between the two countries. The Nepalese side assured that it would not allow its territory to be used for any activity against India and the Indian side also gave the same assurance to the Nepalese side. It was agreed that the Bilateral Consultative Group on Security Issues and the Home Secretaries of the two countries will meet within two months to enhance bilateral cooperation to effectively address all issues concerning security, including cross-border crime, and establishing effective communication links between and along the bordering districts to further facilitate the exchange of information. The two sides agreed to consider steps to further facilitate cross-border arrangements in order to resolve border related issues and to assist local populations in the border areas on both sides. The two sides also stressed on the need for strengthening the legal framework, in order to counter their common cross border security challenges.

14. To enable the Nepal Police to meet the emerging challenges and help it build its capacity to train police personnel, the Government of India agreed to the request of the Government of Nepal for the development of infrastructure and construction of buildings of the proposed National Police Academy at Panauti, Kavre in Nepal at an estimated cost of Indian Rs.320 crores.

15. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the progress made by Nepal-India Joint Technical Committee (JTC) in preparing and finalizing the boundary strip maps. The Government of Nepal agreed to take further necessary steps to facilitate the early signing of the strip maps.

16. The two Prime Ministers directed the Foreign Secretaries to discuss and review the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and other bilateral agreements with a view to further strengthening the bilateral relationship.

17. The Government of India will continue to assist the Government and the people of Nepal in their economic development and reconstruction. The areas of assistance would include infrastructure, human resource development, health and education.

18. The Nepalese side expressed appreciation of India's contribution for the development of BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences at Dharan and its support in providing Indian faculty with Indian Rs 5 crores for a further period of two years.

19. The Nepalese side highlighted the need for human resource development, particularly vocational training in the Central region. The Indian side conveyed that they would commence the construction of a polytechnic at Hetauda at a cost of approximately Indian Rs.22 crores.

20. For implementing an effective and integrated border management system, development of border infrastructure along the India-Nepal border will be undertaken immediately. Indian side conveyed that construction of two Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at Birgunj-Raxaul and Biratnagar-Jogbani at an estimated cost of Indian Rs.200 crores will commence soon. The early completion of these modern facilities would contribute considerably to facilitate people-to-people contact and trade.

21. To enhance connectivity of feeder and lateral roads in the Terai (hulaki roads), twenty roads of a total length of about 660 kms would be undertaken with Indian assistance in the first phase at an estimated cost of Indian Rs.805 crores. Both sides will strive to complete the work expeditiously. Both sides also agreed to expeditiously implement the Tanakpur-Mahendranagar Link Road as per bilateral discussions.

22. To improve rail connectivity between the two countries, two cross-border rail links would be constructed with Indian assistance at the following two points along the India-Nepal border at an estimated cost of Indian Rs.680 crores:

- (i) Jogbani-Biratnagar ( 18 Kms)
- (ii) Gauge conversion of Jayanagar to Bijalpura (51 kms) and extension of the same to Bardibas (17 kms).

Both sides will strive to complete the work expeditiously.

23. For accelerated development of financial markets in Nepal the Government of India would provide technical assistance for establishment of a Central Depository System (CDS) in Nepal at an estimated cost of Indian Rs.9.2 crores towards consultancy, development of application software and training. Relevant stakeholders in Nepal such as the Nepal Stock Exchange Limited (NEPSE) are to provide the necessary infrastructure for the System. Completion of the project is envisaged within a year.

24. In response to a request from the Nepalese side for enhancing scholarships in order to further assist with human resource development in Nepal, the Government of India agreed to double the number of scholarships. The Government of India also agreed to increase the number of slots for training and exchange programmes for Government of Nepal officials, including police personnel, to further strengthen capacity building and expand interaction between the civil servants of the two countries.

25. The Nepalese side expressed satisfaction that India has responded promptly to Nepal's request to send an expert to advise on the development of National Museums in Nepal.

26. In response to a proposal from the Nepalese side to keep the Bagmati River and its tributaries clean and safe, the Indian side agreed to send a technical team to Nepal to study the Bagmati Civilisation Project.

27. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the timely completion of the technically challenging task of the closure of the breach of Kosi embankment last year. They stressed the need for constant vigil and continuous maintenance, as well as other necessary measures so as to avoid the recurrence of such incidents in the future. They decided to take up preventive measures for the Gandak and other barrages under the existing bilateral arrangements. The two sides also discussed the problem of inundation in the border areas between Nepal and India and agreed



that the Joint Ministerial Commission on Water Resources should address these issues regularly, and the agreed work would be implemented expeditiously.

28. In order to accelerate the implementation of Pancheshwar Multi-purpose Project, the two Prime Ministers directed the Joint Ministerial Commission on Water Resources and Joint Committee on Water Resources to expedite the finalization of Terms of Reference for Pancheshwar Development Authority and the Detailed Project Report of the Pancheshwar Project.

29. The Prime Minister of Nepal conveyed that the Government of Nepal planned to generate 25,000 MW of hydro-electricity in the next twenty years, and sought India's active participation in the development of this potential. The two sides agreed to facilitate increased Indian public and private sector involvement to harness Nepal's hydropower potential. Both sides also agreed to expedite progress on the Sapta Koshi High Dam and Sunkoshi Diversion Project and the Naumure Project as per bilateral discussions. Both sides also agreed to expedite the construction of Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400 KV cross border transmission line for which the modalities are to be developed. In order to facilitate power trade in the short run, Indian side agreed to examine the Nepalese request for improving the transmission lines in three border areas.

30. The two sides agreed to further extend bilateral cooperation on culture, science and technology, tourism and sports. The Nepalese side said that they would welcome more Indian tourists to visit their country and explore its immensely rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. Experts of both sides would meet to study and explore the potential areas of cooperation in this important sector.

31. Parliamentarians of both sides can make valuable contribution in sharing experiences, exchange views on strengthening democratic norms and for generating fresh ideas to promote bilateral relations and understanding. The two Prime Ministers agreed that there should be regular exchange of Parliamentary delegations. They also agreed to establish Young Parliamentarians Forum.

32. In response to a request from the Nepalese side for the removal of ban on the export of essential commodities from India to Nepal, the Indian side conveyed that the issue would be considered on receipt of specific proposals.

33. Climate change is an issue that directly affects the ecological resources of India and Nepal. Glacial meltdown in upper reaches of Himalayas and the gradual ecological degradation of the Chure-Bhawar range are leading to natural disasters in the form of floods which are a common threat to both our countries. Both sides agreed to undertake joint scientific collaboration between India and Nepal in hydrological and glaciological study of the impact of climate change for mutually beneficial cooperation.

34. The Prime Minister of Nepal renewed the invitation to the Prime Minister of India to pay an official visit to Nepal at an early date. The Prime Minister of India accepted it with pleasure. The dates of the visit will be decided through diplomatic channels.

New Delhi, August 22, 2009

# "The Pace Of Change Is Too Slow"

-PIUSBAHADURAMATYA

**PIUS BAHADUR AMATYA** is a noted industrialist and businessman of Nepal. His luxury hotel business is now in the process of revival after years of downturn. Executive chairman of The Fulbari Resort & SPA, a modern five star hotel in Pokhara, Amatya spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on problems and prospects of business in Nepal from past to present. Excerpts:

**As a well-known businessman and hotelier, how do you assess the overall situation for business, particularly in the tourism sector?**

When the country is in a fragile situation under an interim period, tourism and business sectors don't have a good time either. There is a problem everywhere. Travel is so uncertain. Nobody can say when and where there will be a road blockade.

**Everyone seems to be saying that Nepal's future is doomed. How do you look at this?**

I think the situation is worrying if slow economic growth continues like this for another twenty years. Our two neighbors, India and China, are achieving phenomenal economic progress. Nepal's pace will not match them.

**Don't you think there will be a spillover effect in Nepal?**

We need to develop infrastructure to cash in on the spillover. What Nepalese are doing now is acting like middlemen carrying one country's goods to another.

**Don't you think Nepal has potential?**

Nepal is a country full of potentials. Look at the present budget: almost three trillion rupees. If we spend the money equally in all 75 districts, we can transform them. For instance, we can build hydropower projects of 5 to 10 MW in the districts. If you have enough power more industries will come.

**As you said, the country has the capability to develop hydropower. Why is this not happening?**

We have everything but we are not giving enough focus on particular areas. This is again the result of political instability and uncertainty. When a politician in power has to worry about his chair from day one, he/ she cannot spend any quality time for the country.

**What about the previous Panchayat period when the country had relative peace and stability?**

Politically, it was also unstable even though there was relative peace and order. Actually, we missed the opportunity to transform the country. Nepal should have taken advantage of the existing global reality.

**That means there is a darkness all over, in all times, all sectors?**

The only silver lining is the education sector. We have made a lot of progress in education. Nepal has benefited from the liberalization policy introduced by Nepali Congress. Nepalese educational institutions are providing the best quality education to their students.

**How do you look at the future of the country?**

The situation is bleak in terms of employment opportunity and acquiring higher education back home. This is the reason people are leaving the country for employment opportunity. For instance, more than 3 million

Nepalese are now working and living in different parts of the world. If they see a future here, they will definitely come back.

**Despite a bleak scenario, non-residential Nepalese are showing an interest in returning to the country and demanding legal rights and privileges. How do you look at this?**

This is a good sign. We have to welcome the move of non-resident Nepalese since they can be an asset to the country's overall development. Nepal needs their experiences and expertise. NRNs have exposure and money. We need to encourage them as they are people of Nepalese origin. They will have a positive contribution.

**How do you look at the country's transformation process?**

The pace of change is too slow and its effect is negligible. There is change every day. Time changes from day to night. What I mean by this is that change has no meaning as long as it does not bring any substantial effects. A large number of people have not felt substantial changes.

**How about Fulbari Resort?**

When the general situation of the country is so uncertain, I too have to face the consequences as a citizen of this country. So far as my business is concerned, it is gradually recovering.

**You have had very bitter experiences with your hotel business, right?**

The time is yet to come to talk about my bitter experiences of the past. After facing a difficult period, Fulbari Resort is now in the process of recovery.

**How is it possible to transform a luxurious and expensive hotel into a profitable venture in a place like Pokhara?**

I have been gradually transforming the hotel by reducing the operation cost, by downsizing the staff, reducing the room costs and adding additional attractions like package trips. From management to room expenditure, I have made a lot of reforms. We are now redesigning the hotel's rooms to reduce the cost.

**Is your hotel now affordable to Nepali tourists?**

For your information, over 30 percent of our guests are now Nepali. The rise of the Nepalese middle class and their changing behavior is making a lot of difference. We are planning to increase the number of Nepalese tourists in our hotel, along with foreigners. This will sustain my hotel's occupancy.

**What suggestions do you have to attract domestic and foreign investment in the country?**

As long as Nepal cannot improve its infrastructure like electricity, roads, and drinking

*Nepal is a country full of potentials. Look at the present budget: almost three trillion rupees*



water, nobody will come to invest in Nepal. Who would invest in the industrial and tourism sector when the country faces up to 16 hours of power cuts for five months?

**Don't you think investors have advantages following the opening up after 1990?**

I have not said that Nepal has not made progress after the political change. For instance, education has made a lot of progress. Similarly, the number of overseas workers grew steadily. Now more than 2 million Nepalese are working in different parts of the world sending billions of rupees as remittances. Had the changes come with stability, the country would not have to pass through the present anarchic and chaotic situation.

**What do you say when political leaders make remarks like 'every change has its price'?**

I don't agree with this. Change can also come with stability. It is the political leaders who need to give control to the country in a time of crisis. Fed up with growing violence, people now want peace and order and people are waiting for such leaders.

**When will such leaders come?**

I cannot predict when they will emerge, but such leaders will definitely come to control the present state of chaos. The country cannot continue with this situation for a long time. Nepalese are fatalistic and they believe in fate.

**If Nepal's fate is an unstable government, what will be your future strategy?**

We have to learn the survival strategy of the river. The river decides its course depending on the road it follows. It always searches for an easy path. Rivers are bent in hundreds and thousands of places because of their quest for survival.

**Who suggested you invest in luxury hotels in places like Pokhara? Was the investment really worthy of Pokhara a decade ago?**

The investment was made on the basis of a study conducted by experts. When the hotel was going to open in 1999, the tourist arrival rate was about half a million. Had Nepal continued to maintain the arrival rate, the hotel would not have to face a hostile situation. After the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight, the bad days started for Nepal's tourism. The Royal massacre of 2001 was another incident which shattered the hopes of Nepal. The intensification of the Maoist insurgency has damaged the remaining tourism industry. Unfortunately, I ran my business during one of the most hostile periods in Nepal.

**But, the number of tourists arriving has been increasing?**

We still need to do a lot of work to maintain the flow of tourist arrivals in Nepal. We need to increase the number of tourists up to one million.

**What is the state of booking at Fulbari Resort?**

Our booking is robust. I am optimistic that the situation will improve.

**How do you see possibility of tapping the growing economic opportunities of Nepal's two neighbors?**

Nepal has enormous opportunities to gain benefits from the growing economic development of these countries. As you know, the number of tourists arriving from India and China continues to increase. This is a good sign, but it is just a peanut.

**Do you have any plan to reform your industry?**

As the world is globalized, I am considering transforming my industry from family owned to family led. I want public partnership in the company.

**Why do you need public support?**

We need public support to increase the market participation. There will be more public partnership in my future ventures. ■

*I don't agree with this. Change can also come with stability. It is the political leaders who need to give control to the country in a time of crisis.*



**Minister Rajendra Mahato with Indian Trade Minister at a Signing Agreement :** Renewal of treaty

## TRADE TREATY RENEWAL

# Second Inning

*Dubbed as 1996 Plus, the revised trade treaty is expected to help Nepal narrow down the ballooning trade gap with its giant neighbor*

By SANJAYADHAKAL

**A**lthough the two countries have not formally signed the revised trade treaty, the Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal presented its 'initialing' as the biggest prize of his recent India visit.

"This will help our economy. Our trade deficit can be decreased," he told the reporters at Tribhuvan International Airport upon his return from five day tour of southern neighbor.

Flanked by his finance, commerce and energy ministers, PM Nepal was visibly delighted when he briefed media about the understanding reached in revising trade treaty.

### Hard Bargain

PM Nepal had reasons to rejoice because the revision of the trade treaty was salvaged at the last moment after the formal talks broke down.

On August 19, when the two sides sat in New Delhi for formal talks on treaty revision, one issue included in the Agreement on Controlling Unauthorized

Trade became the bone of contention that led to the breakdown in talks.

As the Agreement was lumped together with trade treaty revision, the differences in one of the provisions halted progress in all others.

India refused one of the four points in the provision inserted to stop unauthorized trade. It refused to allow export of materials imported by Nepal from third countries to India. This was even as Nepalese side had agreed to allow export of materials imported by India from third countries to Nepal. The Indian authorities were said to be fearful of Chinese goods being exported to India via Nepal, which led to the problem.

On that day, the Minister who led the Nepalese side in the talks as well as the business delegation members were clearly frustrated. "Those who did not wish economic progress of Nepal must be cheerful now," the Minister for Commerce and Supplies Rajendra Mahato said.

Later the talks were continued after PM Nepal intervened. And the commerce secretaries of the two countries initialed in the revised trade treaty as well as the agreement to control unauthorized trade. These agreements will come into effect after they are signed at ministerial level soon.

### Soaring Trade Gap

It was after the trade deficit with India – with whom Nepal conducts 60 percent of its total international trade – continued to soar (currently it stands at Rs 109 billion) that the authorities and business community began pushing for revision in the 1996 Trade Treaty.

The euphoria generated by the landmark 1996 Trade Treaty between Nepal and India could not be sustained for more than half a decade.

Although in initial years, it led to favorable outcome for Nepal, the exports from the country began to wane after various non tariff barriers (NTBs) were put in place – such as strict quarantine system, standardization issues, Special Additional Duty (SAD), state-level taxes and quota restrictions.

In the revised treaty – which has the term of seven years - there are provisions that would help overcome the NTBs.

"The revised treaty will definitely help us bridge the trade gap. It restricts the states of India from imposing taxes on Nepali goods, the excise duty on goods to be exported to Nepal from India will be waived, SADs will be done away with and standardization issues will be eased," said Kush Kumar Joshi, president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

The treaty has also added new trade points between the two countries. The port of Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh, India, has also been allowed for use for Nepal.

The two countries are also working on to sign the agreement on avoidance of double taxation and bilateral investment protection pact.

However, these agreements will bear fruit only when Nepal's house remains in order. In the atmosphere of insecurity, labor unrest, bandhs and strikes, these pacts will mean little. ■

# 'Madheshi Dalits Are Most Exploited'

-SAMBHU HAJARA DUSADH

Constituent Assembly (CA) member SAMBHU HAJARA DUSADH represents the *dalit* community of the Southern Plains. Dusadh heads one of the most important thematic committees of the CA: the Committee on the Determination of the Form of Governance of the State. Dusadh, who is from Parsa district, spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues of social inclusion. Excerpts:

## What is the state of backward communities like *dalits* in the Terai?

*Dalits* are living in very pitiable conditions as they are excluded from society in the Terai. There are widespread discriminations against them. Their representation in administration and politics is negligible. From education to health and employment, *dalits* are excluded everywhere.

## The recently released Nepal Human Development Report-2009 also reveals that there is a rampant discrimination between upper caste Brahmins and *Dalits* in the Terai. What do you say?

I have already mentioned the situation. *Dalits* of Terai have very low status in all fronts compared to high caste brahmins. Even after the restructuring of the state, there is no guarantee that everything will be settled and discrimination will end. We want special privileges.

## How are *dalits* of Terai in a different situation than those in the hills?

*Dalits* of Terai are in a more pitiable situation than those in the hills. Nepal Human Development Report-2009 has also shown the plights of Terai *dalits*. Of course, *dalits* have some common demands but Terai *dalits* need different kinds of reservation. Pahadi *dalits* have some advantages in terms of language.

## In what other respects are Madheshi *dalits* facing different problems?

Madheshis are marginalized and discriminated in all forms and the Madheshi *dalits* have to face double discriminations, as Madheshis and as *dalits*. We want empowerment in order to end the discrimination. We also need certain incentives.

## What is the status of *dalit* women?

Being a *dalit* itself means facing discriminations in all kinds and forms. The conditions of *dalit* women are more

pathetic. There is rampant illiteracy, high mortality and diseases.

## What is your impression of the social inclusion process in Nepal?

Our society is based on hierarchy and higher castes always see themselves as superior to lower castes. The discrimination against the *dalits* and lower cast reach school classrooms from the family. Our society recognizes high cast hegemony in politics. Despite some change in the process, it is still rampant.

## As a member of CA and chairman of such an important committee, how do you want to contribute to the cause of *dalits* and other marginalized communities?

Out of 601 CA members, our number is very insignificant compared to other groups. We have been making efforts to pursue a policy of protection for the *dalits*. We need the constitutional guarantee for employment and reservation for *dalits*. Higher castes in Terai continue to dominate all spheres of life occupying almost all prominent positions in politics, business and bureaucracy.

## How do you like to visualize the situation?

According to the census, *dalits* constitute over 13 percent of the total population. It is unfortunate to say that they have no representation in the higher positions of power. If we see the specific cases of *dalits* of Madhesh, their state is more pathetic than that of others.

## How do you think *dalits* of Terai get the benefits?

We have been demanding special provisions in the constitution, including equal rights with reservation, that will bring change. You cannot change the situation overnight, though.

## Which do you prefer, equity or equality, to end the cases of exclusion?

For the time being we need equity in power sharing. Although the slogans of equality have always been there, they fail to reduce the gap between the two groups.

## Do you believe the new constitution will address all the issues?

Since there is a wider participation of people of our community and there is a wider pressure from all sectors, the new constitution will guarantee certain things to the *dalits*.



## How hopeful are you that the new constitution will address the issues of exclusion?

One cannot ignore the question of social inclusion now. One of the mandates of Janandolan II is to provide equal opportunity to all sections of the society and give them equal status. The constitution of CA shows that this is the body of all down trodden, marginalized, disadvantaged, oppressed and excluded people. Even the political leaders now have different perspectives than in the past regarding the problems of *dalits*. Nepali Congress party has already established a *dalits* cell. The new constitution of our party will also have special provisions for *dalits*. ■

## THE CITY WITHOUT LOCKS



Kishan Singh Dham's new collection of poetry is now available in markets. His compilation explores current Nepali society and the political and cultural realities facing the country. At times satirical, at times honest and straight forward, Dham's poetry leaves nothing untouched.

# Contemporary Facts of Domestic Violence against Women in Nepal

By Jyotsna Tamang<sup>1</sup>

## Background

Domestic violence is a central concern for equitable development of women because such violence impedes women's economic and social development, their capacity for self-determination and their health. The consequences of violence vary ranging from psychological problems to death. The evidences indicate an association between domestic violence and the women's poor conditions viz. low birth weight, pre-maturity, pre-natal and early childhood mortality, gynecological morbidity and sexually transmitted infection including HIV/AIDS. The cross country studies find that the domestic violence is a serious issue with global presence. The review of 50 population-based studies performed in 35 countries indicate that 10% to 52% women faced physical abuse and 10% and 30% women experienced sexual violence by the intimate partners

In the context of Nepal, there are limited numbers of community based studies on domestic violence in Nepal. The Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2006 reports that one out of four Nepali women (23%) believe husband's wife beating justifiable. The few other studies have also been conducted to measure the general perception of men and women on domestic violence. Some of the common forms of Violence against Women identified in Nepal are: traditional violence (Deuki, Jhuma, Badi Chhoupadi); violence based on misbelief (torture given for allegedly practicing witchcraft); sexual violence (trafficking, forced intercourse and sexual harassment); family violence (domestic violence, polygamy, childhood marriage) and dowry related violence (mental and physical torture). It is believed that the domestic violence persist rampantly in the country due to the existence of women discriminated societies in Nepal. But, there is a dearth in the academic studies that explain the extent of domestic violence and its causes and consequences on the physical and psychological health of the women.

In this regard, a study has been conducted under the research grant support of Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) with an aims to estimate the prevalence, nature and factors of



domestic violence and to explore the coping strategies used by women to deal/avoid domestic violence from their husbands. The study was conducted in four districts - namely Achham, Ilam, Rupendehi and Gulmi - and among four main ethnic communities - namely Hill Dalits, Hill Brahmin/Chhetris, Hill Janajatis and Madhesis. The study has used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This article highlights on some of the major findings of this study.

## Research Findings

The domination of male in societal and family power relation is a one of the chief cause of domestic violence. Specifically, male domination can be categorized into four areas: 1) Decision making regarding household, health, number of children and having sex, 2) Restriction in terms of mobility outside the home, interaction with male members and financial restriction, 3) Threatening especially to bring another wife, and 4) Use of force as in beating the wife or forcing her to have sex.

The study results explain that the slightly less than half of the women agree that there is wife beating in circumstances, namely: if the wife does not complete her household work, if she disobeys husband, if she neglects the children, if she refuses sexual relations with husband, if she asks husband whether he has other girlfriends and if husband suspects that she is unfaithful. Further, the study finds that the women perceived husbands' beating justifiable in two instances, namely: i) disobeying the husband and ii) neglecting the children

The study accessed the domestic

violence with six questions to women relating leading issues of gender violence in Nepal. They are: 1) Slapped or thrown something at wife, 2) Pushed or shoved wife, 3) Hit wife with husband's fist or something that hurts, 4) Kicked or dragged wife, 5) Choked or burnt wife on purpose and 6) Threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon. Likewise,

the study accessed the sexual violence with three questions designed in essence of leading sexual crime of the country. They are: 1) Did your husband ever force you to have sex, 2) Did you ever have sexual intercourse when you did not want, and 3) Did your husband ever force you to do anything degrading or humiliating. The one in three women in the studied districts had faced physical violence from their husband and two-fifths among them had faced physical violence from their husbands in the last 12 months. Furthermore, the sexual violence was more common in the studied districts as 58 percent of the surveyed women had faced such violence.

Among the pregnant women, 5 percent had faced the physical violence during their pregnancy which had resulted heavy bleeding, abdomen pain and even miscarriage. The prime reason for violence against pregnant women was a refusal to have sex. Specifically, drunkard husbands are forerunner in beating the wives

The 29 percent of the surveyed women who faced either sexual or physical violence also had the physical injuries due to such violence. These injuries ranged from body ache to cuts, burns, miscarriage and fractures. Commonly, women seek for health care if they had physical injuries due to violence. The two fifths of the surveyed women who faced either sexual or physical violence had gone to a health provider. The psychological impact of violence was more profound among those women who faced either sexual or physical violence. The commonly faced psychological problems were fear,

tension and depression. Further, the 5 percent of the surveyed women who faced either sexual or physical violence had tried to commit suicide due to such violence.

#### Case Studies

The following citation from the women who had faced violence also postulates the nature of domestic violence against women in Nepal.

"No matter how much rights women get, she will always be at lower level than men. We have been doing this for years and it is in our culture. The men say that women are supposed to be below men, to live under their control. Women are not allowed to go out, speak in front of others, get employed. They are just restarted in the household work. I sometimes wonder why I got married as we (women) always need to do it (sex) and always have to obey him. The husbands always need it (sex) even after all these years of marriage. Our children have grown up but he never stops doing it (sex). If I don't listen to him then he beats me so I am in psychological tension."

-35 years old Illiterate Women

"Once he beat me entire night with a huge piece of firewood, I thought to myself that this was enough because I could not bear it any longer. I thought it was better to die than to bear all these problems, so I decided to kill myself. I

went up to the roof and I hung myself with a rope. My husband must have heard me go up so he quickly came up and cut the rope. He took me to a hospital and unfortunately they saved me. I was unconscious for three days. I was also pregnant at that time but I did not know that"

-22 years, Grade 5 complete,

Labour

"After the delivery of my third daughter my husband started treating me badly. He never used to give me

***Domestic violence is a leading issue of gender discrimination in Nepal. Although this problem needs immediate attention, it is a problem that has rarely been systematically studied in the developing countries like Nepal.***

enough to eat. He used to accuse that I must be going around with someone else during my maternal home visit so I always bear a daughter. He beat me up for having a daughter. He beat me with such a big stick (showing the size with her hand). I don't even remember the number of times he beat me. It had just been 11 days after my delivery and he beat me up so bad. After that, I went to my maternal home."

#### Conclusions

Domestic violence is a leading issue of gender discrimination in Nepal. Although this problem needs immediate attention, it is a problem that has rarely been systematically studied in the developing countries like Nepal. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to study the domestic violence among married women in Nepal. The results indicate that the domestic violence is not uncommon and women have faced severe physical and sexual violence such as being kicked, burnt and even threatened to kill by using weapons. Such violence has led to devastating effects, both physical and psychological which ranges from bruises, fracture, miscarriage and suicidal attempt. Thus, the findings suggest that government should immediately bring out national level policies and programmes against women violence which focus on sensitizing women, their husband and families. These programmes should also focus on the provision of immediate counseling and support to women who are currently facing such violence.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Tamang is a research fellow of Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) for 2007. This article is based on the research study supported by SIRF.

## A Grim Reality: Violence against Women in Nepal

By Mohan Das Manandhar  
Rojan Bajracharya<sup>1</sup>

**Background:** There is global existence of domestic violence against women which differs only in range and nature between the societies. The male dominations in state, society, culture and family structure nurture the unequal power relations favoring male in both public and private spheres which eventually lead to the practices of domestic violence against women. UN has formally recognized the "Violence against Women" as social and development agenda by declaring the post ten years of 1976 as "Decade for Women" and issuing "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women" in 1993. However, the gender based discrimination has rooted in the societies in such an extent that the global commitment has also brought minimal changes.

South Asia is one of the leading

regions to account domestic violence against women as the studies reports that one in every two women of the region experiences the violence in her daily life. Specifically, the South Asian states and societies persists the hierarchical caste and ethic structure which favors the gender based domination of male so the community sanctioned violence is the combine impact of social, cultural, political, economic, and legal factors of the region. The Oxfam study titled "Towards Ending Violence against Women in South Asia" reports that 80 per cent of women in Pakistan have experience violence within their homes; 50 per cent of women in India have experience of at least one incident of physical or psychological violence in their lifetime; and 32 per cent of Bangladeshi women working outside their homes experience



disruption of their work due to the incidents of domestic violence. The website of "Reporters without Borders" reports that the South Asian newspapers have leading headlines on: Girls being burn for dowry, Girls being exploited in the work places and Girls being trafficked for sex trade.

**Stylish Fact of Nepal:** Nepal is also the member of the South Asia region

with high incidence of domestic violence. The Nepal Demographic Health Survey of 2006 accounts that the female members of family have less role in decision making of family matter which clearly signifies the extent of male domination in Nepali society from family level which perpetuate the domestic violence in entire Nepali society. Likewise, the study of Save the Children accounts that 5,000 to 7,000 Nepali women and girls are trafficked as sex worker each year from Nepal which also signifies the rampant persistence of violence against women in Nepal. Further, The Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) funded researches indicate that the core issues of Women is violence against women as 80% of its researches are on domestic violence against women.

So, the violence against women is one of major public discourse in Nepal. The Social Welfare Council of Nepal – the governing body to control NGO in Nepal – report that there is highest number of NGOs in Nepal that advocates for women right and women’s violence. The violence against women is also the major agenda of political which can be reflected in the manifesto of major political parties. In this regard, SIRF along with SAP international also organized a seminar on violence against women in Nepal in which Jyotsana Tamang, SIRF researcher, also presented her paper. These discourses have recognized violence against women in following four major areas.

**Violence against Women in Household:** The tradition Hindu based society of Nepal place the male members of family in higher status than female which partially inspire the male member of family to be violent and brutal against female particularly wife. If a husband beat his wife when she argues then such practice is taken as natural in Nepali society. The women has almost limited right to refuse the sexual intercourse if her husband wishes and the brutality in such circumstances are rarely made public because the family and societal structure rarely favor such women who disclose the private affair. The brutality is sometime so vulnerable that if a pregnant woman gets miscarriage due

to brutal beating of drunken husband then family member move such woman to cowshed because she is regarded impure due to miscarriage. Specifically, the male domination in societal and family structure limits the publicizing of such violence which further encourages such violence.

**Violence against Women in Politics:** The women have made significant contribution for the democratic development movement and political transformation of Nepal. Nevertheless, the political decision-making in Nepal has always remained in the domain of men because the central leaders of political parties are mostly male. The women’s equal participation in decision-making and their access to political power is critical issue that has been ignored and still does not get enough attention and importance.

**Violence against Women in Media:** There is less representation of women in media in Nepal which also partially credit to less exposure domestic violence via media. The women are under-represented in decision-making positions as owners and executives in print and electronic media so there are fewer moves from media to bring front the issues of women violence.

**Violence against Women in Workplace:** When we talk and hear about violence against women in Nepal, the discussion is more confined to the violence against women in domestic level. But the issue of violence against women in workplace has become a matter of serious concern as there is increasing trend of women’s employment. There are limited attentions toward this new form of women violence observed in Nepali society.

**Policy/ Program Measure:** Government of Nepal is cognizant of the prevailed practices of violence against women in Nepal so the government has recently enacted Domestic Violence Act of Nepal. There is separate cell in police that control and monitor the violence against women. Likewise, the government has started to design its annual budget in essence of gender responsiveness so that more programs on woman and violence can be incorporated in the budget. Further, the

government approximately allocates 10 percent of budget in direct women supportive program. National Planning Commission designs a separate women specific plan during five year planning. These government measures are complemented by the programs of INGOs and local NOGs at local level. However, these measures are not fruitful to minimize the violence against women because the government and other development partner are not able to properly implement these programs to targeted groups. Likewise, the tortured women rarely complain against the culprit because they fears on stigmatization due to societal discrimination which further encourage such violence. Further, Government has limited studies on violence against women for its reference in planning process.

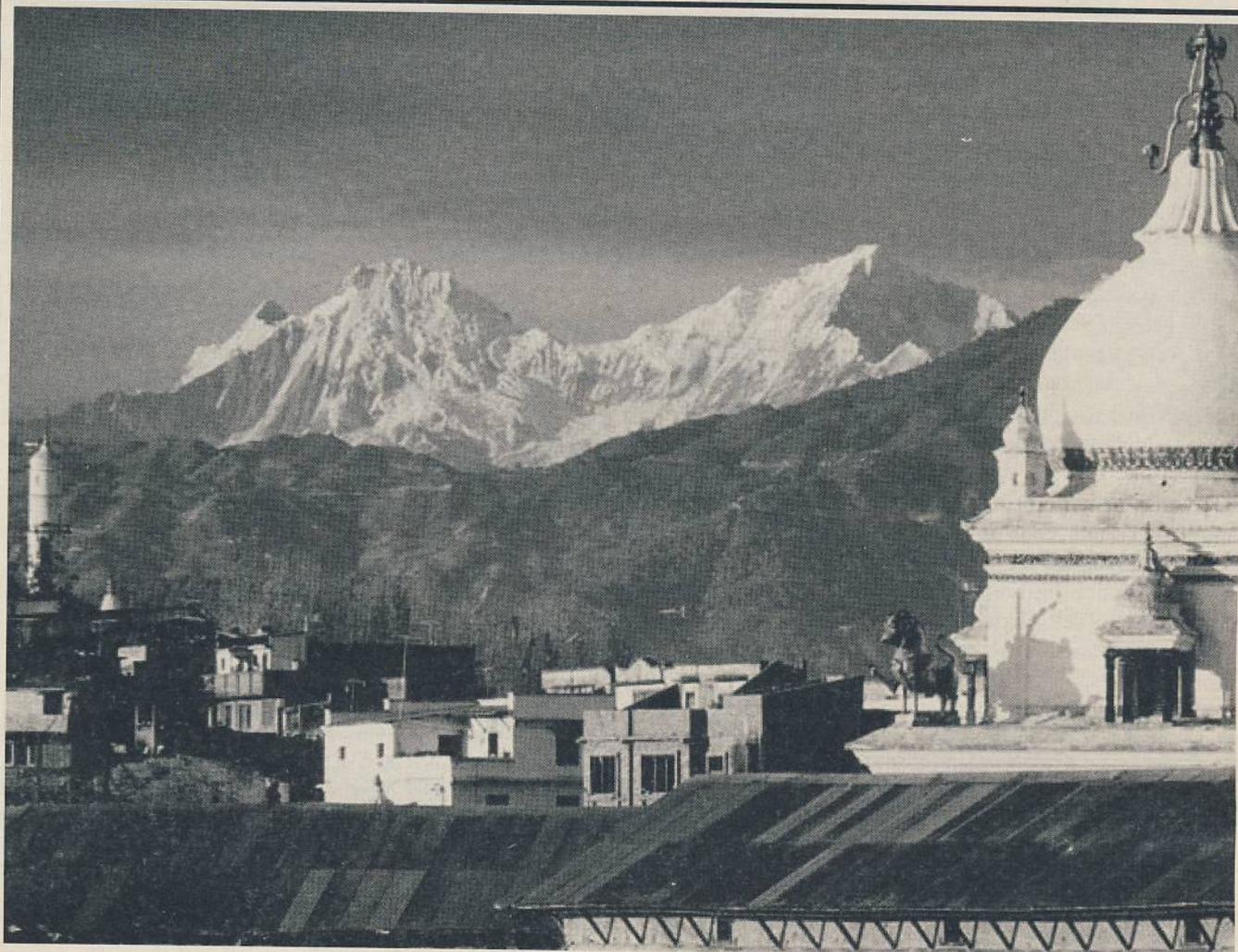
**Conclusion:** The domestic violence against women in one of the leading issues of women discrimination that prevails in various forms in the contemporary society. Government of Nepal is cognizant of its high prevalence in Nepalese so government should conduct studies to explore on nature of women violence prevailed in Nepali society in order to design the policy and program for target groups. Further, there should be campaign to encourage the women to report the violence against them.

*1 Mr. Manandhar and Mr. Bajracharya are associated with Social Inclusion Research Fund. The views presented are those of writers' own.*

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Mountain and Temple : Attracting tourist

Photo: Nepal Tourism Board

## TOURISM

# Naturally Nepal, Once is not Enough

*Nepal Tourism Board is celebrating the year 2011 as the year to lure a large number of tourists into the country. Looking at the recent trend in tourist arrivals, there are signs for hope that the campaign will bear fruits.*

By KESHAB POUDEL

**T**emples and views of nature have always been a tourist draw in Nepal. From early visitors, like British resident representative Francis Hamilton and French Scholar Silva Levi,

to today's travel operators and backpackers, everyone has relished the mystery and beauty on the lap of the high Himalayas.

In his book, *History of Nepal*, first published in 1877, Francis Hamilton

describes Kathmandu as a city of temples surrounded by beautiful mountains.

Similarly, Silva Levi, a French scholar, extols the temples and architects of Kathmandu valley in his book *Le Nepal: Etude Historique d'un Royaume Hindu*.

Even modern day visitors maintain similar interests. "Nepal is such a beautiful country," Rafal, a journalist from Spain, told the media recently, "Everybody must visit it."

For American travel operator and entrepreneur Michael Kobold, "Nepal is a country blessed with unique products which have strongly presented it in the world map."

As Nepal is celebrating the World Tourism Day on 27<sup>th</sup> of September as an annual event, it also gives an opportunity for the travel trade authorities and others concerned to prepare for the mega-event, namely,

Nepal Tourism Year 2011, a campaign announced by the government with an ambition to increase the arrival of tourists up to one million by the year.

This is, without doubt, an occasion to take Nepal to the global tourism market for its share of visitors and introduce its diverse products abroad.

“Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is a national program and in order to entrust the ownership of all the individuals and agencies to make it successful, all district development committees should earmark at least some percentages of their budgets for tourism development with a ‘one district, one destination’ approach,” said Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Sarat Singh Bhandari.

NTB organized the last such event in 1998 launching major marketing campaigns to sell Nepalese products during the Visit Nepal Year-1998 to global markets.

“Within limited resources and other constraints, Nepal Tourism Board is now preparing for the mega event of 2011,” said Prachanda Man Shrestha, Chief Executive Officer of NTB.

According to Nepal Tourism Statistics 2008, 500,277 tourists visited Nepal in 2008. In 2007, 526,705 visitors came here. The year 2002 was one of the most dismal years after 1990 when just 275,468 tourists visited Nepal.

After several years of decline, Nepal’s tourism sector started to rebound after 2003 when the figures crossed 338,000. Years 2004, 2005 and 2006 retained the number at over 350,000. It was only after signing of comprehensive peace agreement, the tourism industry bounced back.

Despite several beautiful destinations, Nepal has yet to lure a large number of tourists who would relish them. At the moment, however, thanks to the limited number of destinations up for sale, Nepal cannot extend the stay of tourists beyond a certain time.

With the robust rise of number of tourist arrivals between 1990 and 1998, which was up to half a million, Nepal saw a drastic reduction in the number of tourists after 2001 with the intensification of the Maoist insurgency.

Since the hijacking of Indian Airlines



**Rafting** : Popular sport

in 1999, Nepal’s tourism started to decline. The Royal massacre of 2001 and the growing Maoist insurgency pushed it to the brink. Following the signing of comprehensive peace agreement in 2006 between the government and Maoists, the situation gradually turned towards normalcy and tourism industry rebounded again.

**Domestic Tourists**

Along with the increasing number of foreign visitors, the number of domestic tourists has also been increasing for last few years. Thanks to the promotional activities of NTB, more domestic tourists are visiting various destinations in the country these days than ever. Hotels are already offering packages designed for the local visitors.

“Tourism industry is gradually moving towards the right direction. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 will change the present state,” said Aditya Baral, Director of Nepal Tourism Board.

“Nepal’s middle class is also growing fast. Thirty percent of tourists at my hotel are Nepalese. I am trying to lure more Nepalese tourists in the future,” said Piyus Bahadur Amatya, executive chairman of Fulbari Resort.

“Since the middle class Nepalese also have enough money to travel, we have to tap this market.”

Despite frequent small scale disturbances in the roads, the number of travelers continues to rise.

The situation was relatively dismal in July. Then again the tourist arrival

figures are picking up.

The figures released by Immigration Office, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), reveal that visitors arriving in the month of July 2009, compared to the same month last year, increased by 10 % to 23,266. In 2008, 18,097 tourists visited Nepal. In 2007, the number was 26,107.

In July this year, arrivals from India witnessed positive growth of 5% last year and Pakistan also showed an increase in arrivals by 4%. Consequently, despite the negative growth in the arrivals from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the SAARC segment shows a 4% increase compared to the same month last year.

Nepal observed a remarkable growth of 15.8% in April 2009, but suffered a decline in May by 5% in the visitor arrivals to Nepal. All major market segments: Asia (SAARC), Asia (Other), Europe, Oceania and North America have registered positive growth trends. An increase in June and July arrivals reflects the volatile nature of international tourism and corroborates the fact that historically tourism has demonstrated remarkable resilience and has emerged from past crises stronger and healthier.

A total of 26,167 foreign tourists departed from TIA in July 2009. The number of Nepalese arrivals stood at 41,790 while 46,843 Nepalese departed from TIA in July 2009.

In view of the projections over the years, such as dispersal of at least 40%

of the international tourists into emerging and new tourist areas, it is imperative to encourage additional investment on tourism infrastructure, and to develop a mechanism to record domestic tourism activities.

#### Program to Attract Tourists

With the mega-event less than one and a half years away, NTB has already started promotional campaigns such as participating in tourism fairs in different parts of the world.

"The idea to declare Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is very good, but there are many challenges ahead, particularly in midst of a growing uncertainty," said Prassidha Bahadur Pandey, president of Nepal Hotel Association.

The announcement of TUI/Arke Fly of the Netherlands to launch Air Flight from Holland to Nepal from October 2009 is also a good sign for Nepal's tourism

Nepal as a tourist destination.

The airline is reportedly planning a flight per week in the beginning which could be increased as per the market demand in the future.

Similarly, Nepal Airlines is also planning to introduce a new carrier in its fleet from next year. Operating under its two ageing aircraft, Nepal Airline needs new planes to bring more tourists in Nepal to make the year 2011 event successful.

For its part, NTB needs to explore new regional, emerging and potential



NTB CEO Shrestha with Minister Bhandari : Discussing Agenda

1. Establish Nepal as a choice in premier holiday destinations with a definite brand image,
2. Improve and extend tourism related infrastructure in existing and new tourism sites,
3. Enhance the capacity of service

## Prospectus of Nepal Tourism Year 2011

The natural scenery, high mountains, incomparable cultural heritage and numerous specialties have made Nepal a well-known destination in the world tourism map with a distinct image of its own. However, the development of tourism is limited in number and reach covering only certain areas of the country. The new government has shown greater concerns about the real value of tourism and its role in contributing to economic growth, poverty alleviation, equity and overall tourism development in the country.

Therefore, the government is placing a high priority on the tourism sector in its new economic development policy. As there is a favorable political situation in the country, the government is all geared towards economic revolution in the next 10 years for the uplift of the masses. In this connection, the government of Nepal, in consultation with the Nepalese Tourism Industry, concerned organizations and experts, decided to

launch a national tourism campaign "*Nepal Tourism Year 2011*". This announcement reflects the government's anticipation to bring into Nepal at least one million international tourists by the year 2011 and spread the benefits of tourism to the people at large. The national campaign also indicates the tourism industry's exigency to organize a tourism promotion campaign having wider impacts.

With the glittering badge of adventure destination and the adage "*Atithi Devo Bhava*" (Guests are Gods) that reflects "*Atithi Satkar, Nepaliko Sanskar*" (Hospitality is Nepalese culture) deeply rooted in our culture, the tourism products of Nepal never cease to mesmerize the visitors. The cultural, geographical, ethnic and bio-diversities of the country allure international visitors to Nepal time and again which truly substantiates the spirit of Nepal tourism brand; '**Naturally Nepal, once is not enough!**'

The concept of Nepal Tourism Year

2011 envisions harnessing these opportunities and strengths and bringing together the commitment of the government, expertise and experiences of the organizations like Nepal Tourism Board, aptitude and dynamism of the private sector and communities for further tourism development in the country. Active involvement of the major political parties, members of the Constitution Assembly and rights groups is always taken into consideration in order to make the campaign inclusive and participatory in *modus operandi* and effective in result. The campaign will also focus on mobilizing the networks of the Non-Resident Nepalis (NRN) communities, Nepalese diplomatic missions abroad, I/NGOs, airlines, and national and international media. Similarly, friends and well-wishers of Nepal, tourism academicians and celebrities will also be approached in order to highlight the campaign internally as well as internationally.

sector.

"The decision taken by the company to launch flights to Nepal from October 2009 will enhance the number of tourists in Nepal," said Steven Vander Heijden, chief executive officer of TUI/ Arke Fly, while underlining the majestic charms of

markets by enhancing air connectivity with them. It would be good for the Nepalese authorities to make a fresh start from 2011 in realizing the goals of the NTB slogan: 'Naturally Nepal, once is not enough'.

#### Objectives of the campaign

providers,

4. Build community capacity in the new areas to cater to the need of the tourists, and

5. Promote domestic tourism for sustainability of the industry. ■

# “It Is Not food That Caused Diarrhea”

-Richard Ragan

Nepal is currently a food deficit country, and certain regions are plagued by extreme food scarcity and poverty with staggering statistics: 40 percent of the Nepali population is undernourished. In 2009-2010 the United Nations World Food Program (UN-WFP) plans to feed around 1.6 million people affected by food scarcity. SHARMINI sat down with director, RICHARD RAGAN, at his office in Patan Dhoka, to discuss the issues facing the country and the policies of WFP. Excerpts:

**Nepal is currently a food deficit country. What are the problems preventing Nepal from overcoming this difficulty.**

There are a lot of problems. Historically, the issue around food insecurity in the country has largely been access. People who live in really remote areas are dependent exclusively on what they produce. They're living in an environment where they struggle to get access to markets, struggle to get access to anything because they are a minimum daylong walk from anything other than their village. Even in a period where Nepal produces enough food, which it does occasionally at a macro level, large sections of the country don't have access to that food.

**What's the status of nutrition?**

We've got chronic malnutrition rates in the mid and far West higher than 60 percent. This means more than 1 in every other kid is chronic malnourished which is staggering. And that's largely a product of poor diet and lack of access to food.

**How does malnutrition affect the population?**

Chronic malnutrition is the most pervasive because if a child doesn't get the right nutrients while developing, then they become mentally deficient, much more prone to illness, and are essentially compromised for their entire life.

**What affect does climate change have on food production?**

We know for a fact that people throughout this country are experiencing a dramatic decrease in snow fall levels. That's a fact. And for farmers who depend on that as their water source to irrigate land, because



up in the middle and higher hills there's very limited irrigation, they're in trouble. They're not able to get water at the right time for their crops.

**How do all these problems affect your operations?**

We've gotten quite big in the last few years. We were a 25 million dollar a year program and we're now closer to 115 million dollars a year.

**The WFP distributes most food through a food for work program. What is this program?**

Most people think that we just give food away, but we don't give food away. We use food as an entry point for development. It's money, it's a wage. We do food for work, we do food and cash for work and then we do give straight up cash transfers in some cases. The cash transfers are designed to stimulate the market in places where there is limited market access.

**So you use development projects as a way to distribute food. How do you determine what development to do?**

If the village development committee tells us they want an irrigation system then we bring in the technical expertise, we bring in the material and then we use food as the currency to pay people because they don't have access to food. Food is actually more important to them than money because even if they have money there's nowhere to buy food.

**What kind of projects are you working on?**

We do road construction work, village to market access, irrigation work, and we do post-harvest storage construction. We rebuild bridges that have been destroyed by the war; we rebuild buildings that have been destroyed by the conflict. We're organizing farmers to support the production of cash crops like ayurvedic and aromatic herbs.

**Part of your operations does include giving food away. When do you do this?**

The only time we give food away is in the refugee camps, because we feed all the Bhutanese refugees, and when there's a natural disaster. We're still working in the East because of the Koshi floods.

**What do you think the situation is like in Nepal?**

My view is that people have been suffering silently here for a long time. People give all sorts of excuses for not intervening, 'they're too remote, they're always hungry, they're too difficult to work with, it's too expensive to operate there.' Look at the response to the cholera epidemic in the far west: everybody's saying it's so difficult, it's too hard. Of course. We've been working in these places for the past three years. I know how hard it is. And there's nobody else working up there, quite frankly.

**How have you been working with the government to distribute food?**

Recently, we've increasingly shifted

away from National implementation. Before I got here, school feeding, mother and child health care, road construction, infrastructure work and refugee help was all national implementation. Now were doing the majority of what we do with NGOs.

#### Why?

I believe we need to move faster, I think this is a crisis. People are interested in a peace dividend. They want to see something tangible that makes their life better after a 10 year civil war.

**You say that under nutrition and malnutrition is a big problem. What are you doing about it?**

We've got a micronutrient program that we're running with UNICEF. We have a mother and child health care program in the mid and far west. We give mothers fortified foods and counsel them on proper diet for themselves and for their newborns. Once the newborns are born mothers can come in and we counsel the mothers, and if it looks like the child is not gaining sufficient nourishment then we provide food through MCHC.

**Is there any danger of people becoming dependent on nutrients packets and being unable to find another source?**

We're trying to build people's immunities, build their capacity to cope with things and at the same time teach them about proper diet. UN distributes micronutrients, but UNICEF also does training on what to eat. We're not just going to give them nutrients and then back off.

**There have been claims that WFP food is the cause of the recent diarrhea epidemic. What do you think of that claim?**

It is medically and scientifically impossible to get diarrhea related disease from dried food. It can't happen no matter what you say. People have been eating this food for thousands of years for a reason. It's resistant to that. People look around to blame others and the UN is an easy target because we're big and we feed over 2 million people in the country.

**What would you say to people who make these claims?**

It's just not true, it's crazy. And it's dangerous. You distract attention from the real cause. You scare people who are dependent upon this food to survive. And you feed into the ignorance. People claim the villagers are

ignorant but people who aren't in the village are also pretty ignorant for making these claims.

#### What are the real causes?

There's been a lack of development, there's been a drought, there's not been enough food, so people's bodies are not resistant and they don't have strong immune systems.

#### How do the claims affect your work?

It slows you down. Now we'll have a long discussion about food quality and cholera but what we should be looking at is the winter drought. Also, 3,000 children have been dying every year in Nepal from diarrhea. Where is the concern and outrage over that? There needs to be a focus on the right to food, and the right to access that food.

**Have you seen positive changes since you've been here?**

I think we've saved people's lives. When you watch a refugee get on an airplane to leave for resettlement and you realize that you've been keeping them alive for 17 years. I think we've improved lives. Given little girls the chance to go to school in places where they wouldn't otherwise.

**Why did you choose to work for WFP?**

I wanted to work for WFP because it's tangible. I can measure whether at the end of the day we've done our job: people eat or they don't eat. I think we've done a pretty good job, not only in Nepal but around the world, of keeping people alive and making sure their lives improve. ■



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# TAMING THE MONSTROUS KOSI

-Dr. A.B. Thapa

Kosi river held back between the embankments since the last half a century and now flowing well above the adjoining lands has already turned into the world's deadliest river. World might be heading for the rerun of the worst flood disasters reminiscent of the past Yellow river disasters when each time the flood took the life of a record number of people. Already the peoples of Nepal and India are in grave danger. Unfortunately both the governments are seen even until now unable to get to the root of the Kosi flood problems. Indian Government was even telling just few years back that the Kosi flood control problem does not exist. During the run up to the 1997 Indo-Nepal joint committee meeting on Kosi several letters were received from the Govt. of India explaining our government that the Kosi flood control problems have already been solved once for ever after the completion of the construction of the embankments

## Indifference to Kosi Problems

Governments of India and Nepal were completely taken by surprise when last year the eastern embankment was suddenly breached and the Kosi shifted its course to the east. Despite last year's horrifying flood disaster experience both the governments are not as yet seen taking much interest to find satisfactory ways to protect the life and property of millions from the oncoming Kosi floods feared to strike again anytime soon.

The Kosi has already turned into a monstrous river. Now the safety of the peoples living in the Kosi floodplain must be at the top in priority of both the governments.

## Birth of a Monster

The Kosi embankment and barrage had been designed for a maximum flood discharge of only 9.5 lakh cusecs. Within the last 50 years twice the flood discharge close to 9 lakh cusecs have been recorded. Surprisingly, the maximum flood discharge recorded within the last 40 years was only around 5 lakh cusecs. As a result, it was not necessary to face up to the problems of the breach in embankment.

The annual rate of the sedimentation upstream barrage based on the observations as of the early 1980s is about 5 cm per annum. It implies that within the last 50 years after the commissioning of the barrage a layer of 2.5 meters thick sediments might have already deposited on the river bed. At present the capacity of the embankments to safely hold back the maximum flood might have been reduced to the extent as low as only about 5 lakh cusecs, and even such greatly diminished capacity is decreasing further year by year due to contin-



Reaching the safety of high grounds

ued bed level rises.

It is pretty obvious that in future the breaching of the Kosi embankments even during minor floods would be a regular phenomenon and on such occasions there would be a rerun of the last year's flood disaster episode. If there would be a breach in embankment at the time of maximum flood discharge close on nine lakh cusecs., a discharge already recorded twice within the last fifty years, there could be a total devastation of the north-east Bihar. Most of the low lying areas would be quickly submerged way deep inside the water particularly if the breach coincides with prolonged incessant rain. Too many people would not have time to reach the safety of the high grounds. No wonder in similar circumstances the loss of life in China used to be in astronomical number!

## Physical Process

When the Kosi bursts the embankment at extremely high river discharge several very adverse hydraulic factors would be brought into play. All of them are compounded to result in the most dreadful flood disaster. In this process the relegated old Kosi channels would be reactivated one after another.

If there is a breach in embankment, say at a flood discharge of 9 lakh cusecs, perhaps the initial flow channeled through the newly reactivated Kosi old channel could even reach 18 lakh cusecs, which would be the combination of the base flood discharge and the flow from the negative surge moving upstream. These hydraulic phenomena would result in very rapid current of the positive surge heading downstream all along the fully reactivated old channel expected at that time to be full of water drained from the local catchment.

## Sediments Play Havoc

Sediments previously heaped up on the

river bed of the Kosi would be quickly flushed down to the reactivated channel by the fast running flood water gushing out from the original course. Soon the upper reach of the newly reactivated channel would be throttled with sediments. Thereafter the bulk of the flood water would be concentrated on the next adjacent reactivated channel. This channel too would be choked with sediments. This process of reactivating the old channels would be repeated again and again until the Kosi flood water reaches the far end of its floodplain unless the flood quickly subsides. Thus the sediments would be playing havoc. Prevention of the breach in embankment must be at the top in priority.

## Buffer Channel

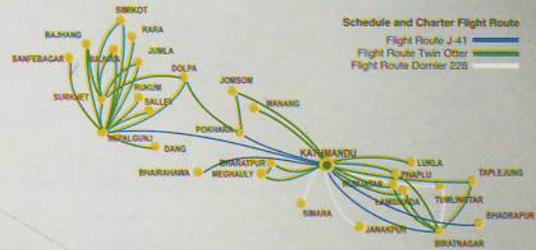
At present the capacity of the present Kosi river channel to hold back big floods is greatly reduced. It would not anymore be possible to confine always the river within the boundaries of the embankments to prevent the rerun of the last year type disaster. However, the loss of life and property can be greatly reduced by preventing the Kosi to roam freely to rampage its vast floodplain. For this purpose one of the relegated old Kosi channels must be developed as a buffer channel for the diversion of the high flood water in excess of the carrying capacity of the present Kosi course. A spillway must be provided to discharge safely the flood water across the embankment into the buffer channel, which could also help to hold back the sediments already accumulated on the river bed.

## Storage Dams

It would be a big mistake to opt to implement at the very beginning the mammoth Kosi dam project to resolve the rapidly worsening flood situation. It will take a very long time to complete the detailed study and construction of the optimum sized Kosi dam project, that might have a dam perhaps the highest in the world and a hydro-power plant capable to generate about 16,000 MW in accordance with further studies based on more correct recent data and well tested evaluation procedures recently applied in the Karnali project study

Fortunately for us, there is an easy solution. The implementation of the relatively small Sun-Kosi Project and the Tamar-1 Project provided with adequate flood control storage would suffice to resolve the present Kosi flood problems at least for a period of next 50 to 60 years. There could also be a possibility to incorporate the provision of the Arun river flood storage also by raising significantly the Arun-3 dam height. ■

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