

Encounter: Robert Piper

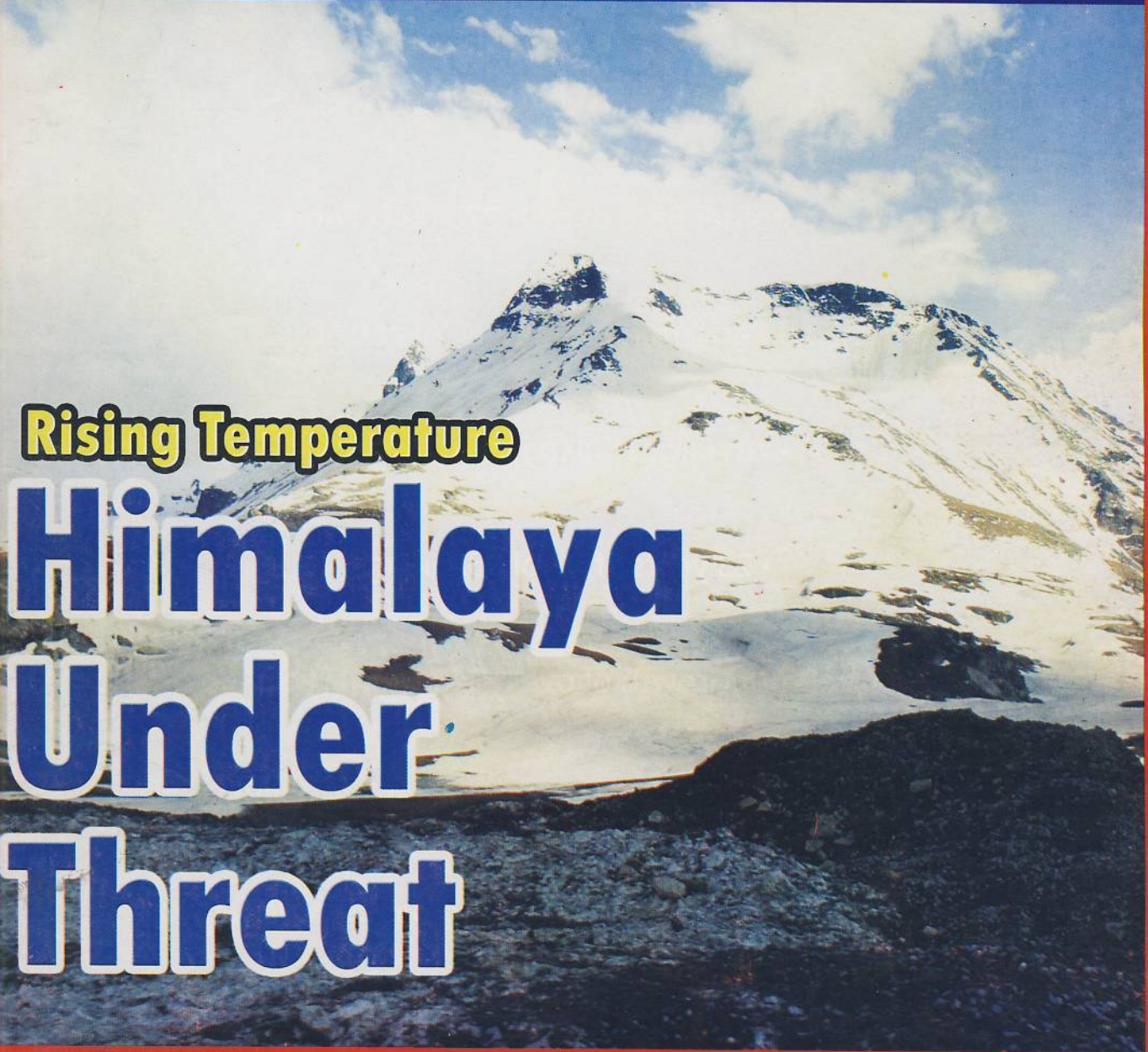
Interview: Upendra Yadav

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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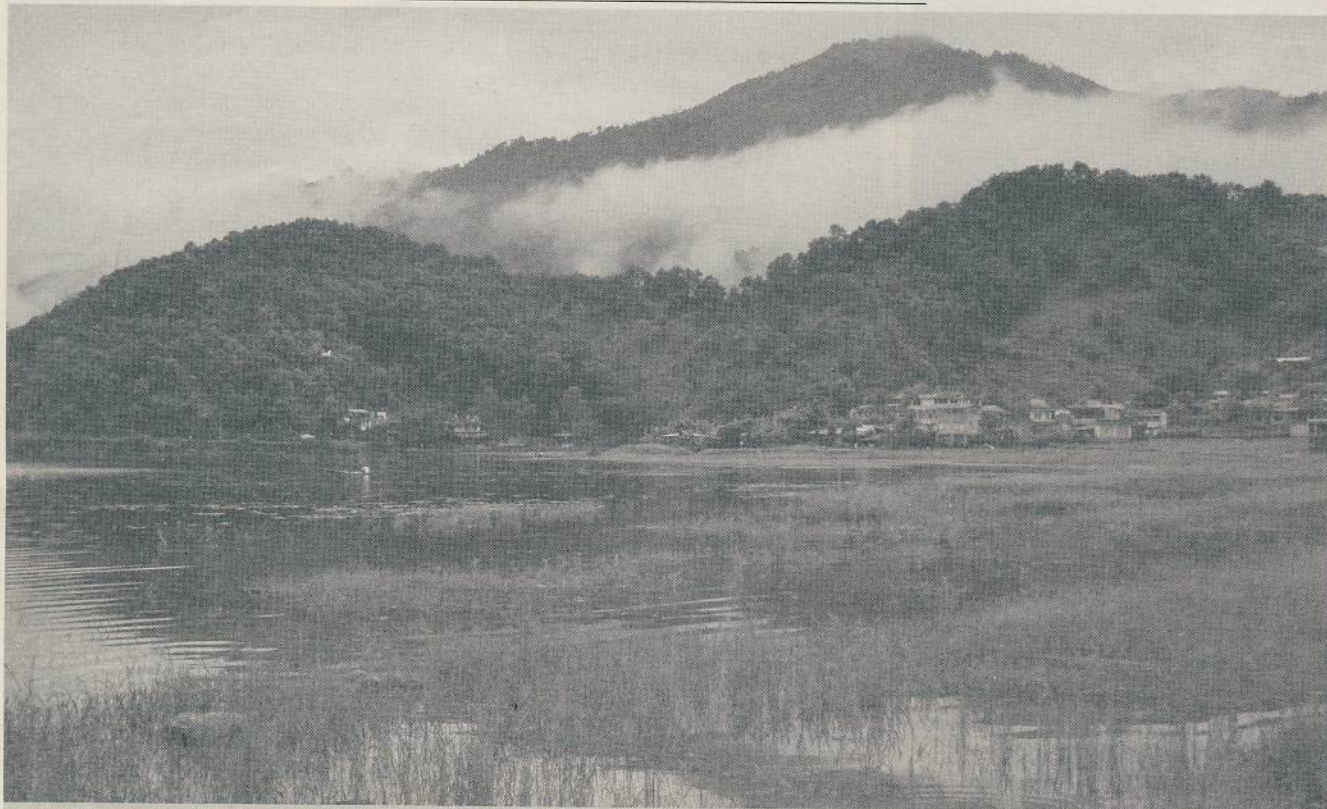
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Young Nepalese International Climate Champions

The British Council announced 10 youth as the International Climate Champions from Nepal. These Champions demonstrated a strong commitment to carry out climate change action and inspire and encourage others to make a difference.

The champions were chosen based on the nominations of influential people in the field of climate change. The ten were chosen based on their presentation to a panel of judges from media, cultural relations and scientific research.

Briefing on the selection process, Ms. Smreety Dewan, Programme Manager, British Council said, "All the ideas that were presented were excellent and innovative and clearly exhibited the passion these young people have for saving our planet."

The British Council supports International Climate Champions in 60 countries across the globe, helping youth develop and implement projects that raise awareness, limit the impact of climate change, and reduce the carbon footprint. Champions work with other youth to share and develop ideas through networking sites and other discussion forums.

The recipients: Manjeet Dhakal, Sushila Pandit, Rojesh Shrestha, Sunder Layalu, Pragati Shahi, Tshering Sherpa, Kriti Shrestha, Kanchan Shrestha, Niraj Tamrakar, and Amita Thapa Magar, were awarded £1000 each for the implementation of their project ideas.

Besides financial support, the young Nepal Climate Change Champions will be exposed to various opportunities which include training, opportunities to meet with government and international representatives and networking with International Climate Champions around the world.

Carter Center Releases Report

The Carter Center's International Observation Mission in Nepal presented its first interim report this past week. The report recognized that Nepal has made significant progress on the path to peace and inclusive democracy, but expressed concern about the future of Nepal's peace process.

According to the report, political leaders in Kathmandu are focused on zero-sum power politics at the expense of constitution drafting, peace process, and basic government services. The current political stalemate is a worrying move away from the common agenda set out in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and subsequent political agreements.

UNCHR Express Concerns

The Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Richard Bennett, met with the acting Chief of Army Staff, Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, at the latter's office to congratulate General Gurung on his appointment and note the important contribution that the Nepal Army (NA) has made to UN peacekeeping missions.

During the meeting, Bennett reiterated OHCHR's concern about the lack of accountability for serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations committed by the NA during the conflict.

Winners of UK-Nepal Climate Change Film Competition

The winners of a 3-minute documentary film competition on the impact of climate change in Nepal were announced at the South Asian Regional Climate Change Conference in the presence of international delegates.

Subas Chandra Nembang, Speaker of Constituent Assembly and Minister for Environment, Thakur Prasad Sharma, presented the awards.

The Minister said, "This is a creative and educational way of spreading important climate change messages".

According to a British Embassy press release, 124 documentary-makers entered the competition, which was organised by the British Council, the British Embassy and the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), in Kathmandu.

Introducing the ceremony, Jim Drummond, Director of South Asian DFID, said, "It is the poorest who are most severely affected by climate change. They are the least able to prepare adequately, respond quickly and adapt effectively to the disasters and changes that climate change will bring, yet they have emitted the least. They must be our focus and that is why films like these – that showcase their stories, are so important."

Korean Medical Team Aids Diarrhea Outbreak in Dailekh

On August 25, 2009, a Korean Medical Team of 14 volunteers, including two medical doctors and several other medical experts, set up a camp in Dailekh, an area affected by diarrhea and other water-born diseases.

According to a KOICA press release, the team is led by Dr Lee Yongman of Bhatapur Hospital, and consists of Dr Shin Chan Jun of Korea-Nepal Friendship Hospital in Thimi and several other KOICA overseas volunteers. The team also includes Korean residents of Nepal.

According to OCHA Outbreak Situation Report from August 6, there have been 14 diarrhea related deaths in the Dialekh district. The toll is likely to rise.

EEC-Nepal and London Chamber of Commerce Sign Agreement

European Economic Chamber (EEC-Nepal) and London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) signed an Agreement of Cooperation on 26th August, 2009. The agreement promotes and strengthens the development of economic and trade relations between the member companies of the Chambers, and paves the way for future trade, investment and technology transfer between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

The Agreement was signed by the President of EEC-Nepal, Mr. Dibya Mani Rajbhandari, and Mr. Peter Bishop, Deputy Chief Executive of LCCI.

EEC-Nepal and LCCI delegations met in Copenhagen, Denmark under the EU funded ECIBON Project aimed at enhancing the capacity of Nepalese Intermediary Business Organizations (IBOs).

Mr. Binayak Shah, Secretary General of EEC-Nepal, Mr. Prabhakar B. Rana,



Nepal Army Chief Gen. Chitra Bahadur Gurung (Right) meets with Chief of Staff US Pacific Command, Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Tomi

ECIBON Project Manager and Mr. Sagar Nepal, Finance Manager of ECIBON Project, were all participants at the meeting.

Representatives from the Danish Federation of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Federation of SME (FSME), Nepal, were also present.

During the Copenhagen meeting, President of FSME, Mr. Jung Bahadur Shrestha, launched a new FSME website. Present on the occasion were Mr. B. K. Shrestha, Secretary General and Mr. Bekha Man Dangol, Treasurer of the same organization.

EBL and Yeti Air Bring e-ticketing

Yet Airlines (Domestic) Pvt. Ltd and Everest Bank Pvt Ltd (EBL) signed a memorandum of understanding on e-ticketing. Director of Sales and Marketing Yeti Airlines, Pradeep Bikram Shah, and EBL deputy general manager B.K. Pradhan signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations. Under the agreement, an EBL account holder can book and pay for a ticket using an online account.

"One need not depend on agents. The airlines are also planning to sign agreements with other banks to make domestic travel easier," said Shah after the signing ceremony. Yeti Airlines flies to 29 places and Everest Bank also 34 Branch offices across the country.

According to a Yeti Airlines Press Release, EBL also offered a zero balance account for the Sky Club members of Yeti Airlines. After this agreement, Yeti Airlines and EBL customers with internet

banking facility can reserve air tickets through the internet and get electronic tickets.

India to Provide Support

Three separate Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, to provide NRs. 6.14 Crores for infrastructure development projects in three Nepali districts.

Two MoUs were signed between the Embassy and the District Development Committees of Baitadi and Okhaldunga, and the third MoU was signed with Kathmandu Divisional Office of Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC) for providing the grant assistance.

According to the Indian Embassy press release, these infrastructure development projects are part of 350 large and small projects currently being implemented under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Program. The program covers the sectors of education, health, community development and infrastructure with an outlay of over NRs.2500 crores.

Korea Supports Economic Development Strategy

Ten Nepalese Government officials from the Ministry of Finance and National Planning Commission are leaving for the Republic of Korea on September 9, 2009 to participate in Economic Development Strategy Training Program organized by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) from September 10-26, 2009.

The prime objective of the training program is to support capacity building for the poverty reduction and environmentally sustainable economic growth, to share Korea's experience and knowledge in economic development and to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between Korea and Nepal. The program includes a series of lectures and group discussions regarding Korea's Development Strategy.

At an orientation program for the participants held at the Korean Embassy on 7 September 2009, Korean Ambassador to Nepal Hong Sungmog remarked that Korea has been one of the poorest countries in the past, but it rose to the challenges, as a result of which it has evolved as one of the economically and technically sound country in the present time. He also stressed that strong leadership and dedication of the civil servants were core factors for the Korea's national development. He expressed his hope that their study in Korea will be informative and the participants will be better equipped with new knowledge and will be responsible to promote economic development in Nepal.

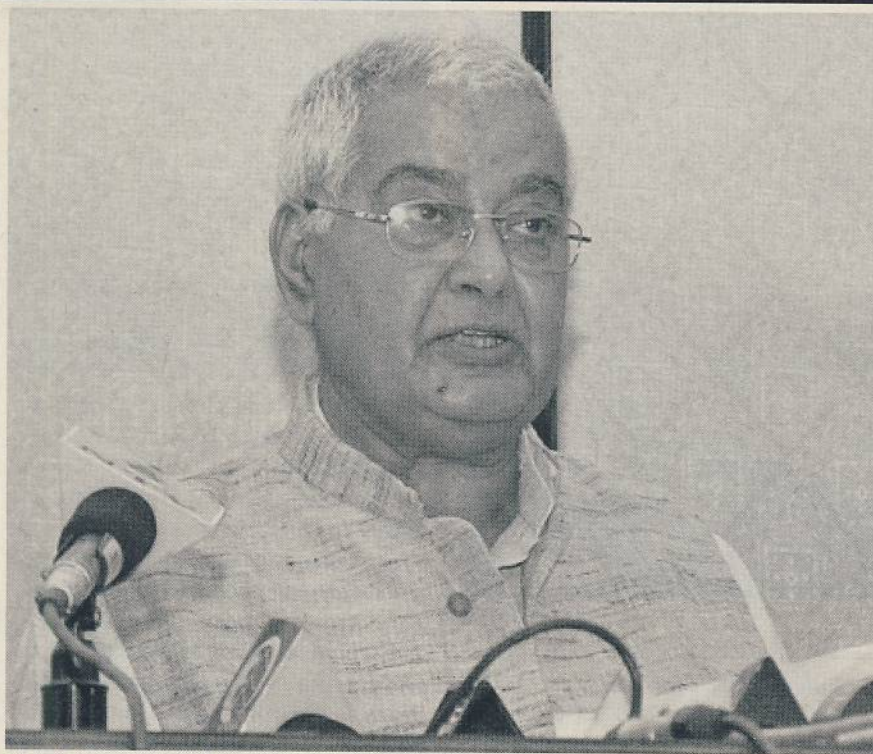
Prize Distribution

Mrs. Kaori Fujiwara distributed certificates at a graduation ceremony for IKEBANA classes organized by the Embassy of Japan, in cooperation with Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN).

"As you know IKEBANA is the traditional Japanese art of flower arrangement, which has been practiced for some 500 years. In IKEBANA, the combination of colors and the creation of



profound space are vitally important. These represent the long history of Japanese philosophy of sense and beauty. It is more than simply flowers in a container. This traditional way to maintain Japanese philosophy is fully recognized, and loved by many people who are seeking for spiritual peace and quietness in their sentiments," said Mrs Fujiwara. ■



Vice President Jha : Defending his stand

THE HINDI ROW

Old Precedent

Vice president Parmananda Jha kicks off a row over language, rekindling a decades-old fire that could snowball into a major political crisis

By SAROJ DAHAL

Two hours after vice president Parmananda Jha came on television screens to announce his defiance of a supreme court order, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal entered the president's office to wait for Jha.

At the president's office the stage had been set for the vice president's fresh oath, in Nepali, in accordance of the court decree.

Jha kept his words. He did not turn up. Disappointed, the prime minister returned to his Baluwatar residence and the president to his private chamber on the first floor of the Shital Niwas.

The direct confrontation between the vice president and the rest of the state is over a language that less than a percent of 27 million Nepalese speak as their mother tongue. There are close to

a hundred languages spoken in Nepal. Even the three Madhesi parties of the ruling coalition felt defied.

The Madhesi intelligentsia is divided. Some justified the VP's defiance of the court, insisting that Nepali can not be imposed. Said joint-general secretary of the Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party, Jitendra Sonal, "Hindi is a common link between all languages spoken across the Madhes."

Others, while not necessarily endorsing the court order, insisted that the VP should instead take an oath in his mother tongue—Maithili.

Argued Amaresh Narayan Jha, chairman of the Mathil National Federation, "The VP's mother tongue is Mathili, but he is seeking to impose Hindi on other mother-tongues which is not acceptable."

Even as the debate raged, the privileges of the vice president were withdrawn. The Nepali army security guards have been returned leaving only the police to take care of the vice president.

The national flag has been taken off the Gaurighat residence.

His lawyer Mithilesh Kumar Singh dubbed the move unjustified. "Since the court order was just interim, the government can not remove the flag and other privileges."

"Where on earth has one taken a fresh oath after 13 months in office," asked an angry Singh.

But the government had been under pressure to act on the court order. Many say that Jha has been reduced to the status of vice-president elect.

The turn of events has a nasty political color not unknown in Nepali politics.

Back in 1954, a noted Indian scholar, Rahul Sanskrityayan, declared that half of Nepal's population spoke Hindi language and that the Hindi speaking people should have a separate state.

The statement was strongly challenged, but the language row picked up two years later and received extensive coverage in the Indian media, as the VP issue has been doing currently.

The then-prime minister Matrika Prasad Koirala was quoted in Nepal's Rajnitik Darpan as advocating to make Hindi a national language of Nepal and claiming that his brother, B.P.Koirala, also supported this.

B.P. vehemently denied the claim and declared, "Nepali language is the main source of Nepali nationalism. Its position will remain at the top."

Matrika also corrected his earlier statement, blaming the Indian media for "distortion."

But a Terai leader, Bedananda Jha, launched a regional Terai Congress Party with Hindi language as its major plank.

The subsequent constitutions, the first in 1959 under a multi-party parliamentary democracy, and the second in 1962, under a direct rule of the king, recognised Nepali as the national language.

The language debate picked up during constitution writing time.

It is occurring again as Nepal prepares for a new constitution.

The man who spearheaded the Hindi language campaign and the Terai agenda went on to become home minister and ambassador to India under the absolute rule of the monarch.

Decades later, the issue has resurfaced amidst speculations and fears of yet another political upheaval.

The constitution-making and the peace process have been imperilled. Top leaders have been warning of an army takeover, presidential domination or a new authoritarian regime.

The main opposition, Maoists are hoping the issue will flare up and cause the fall of the government.

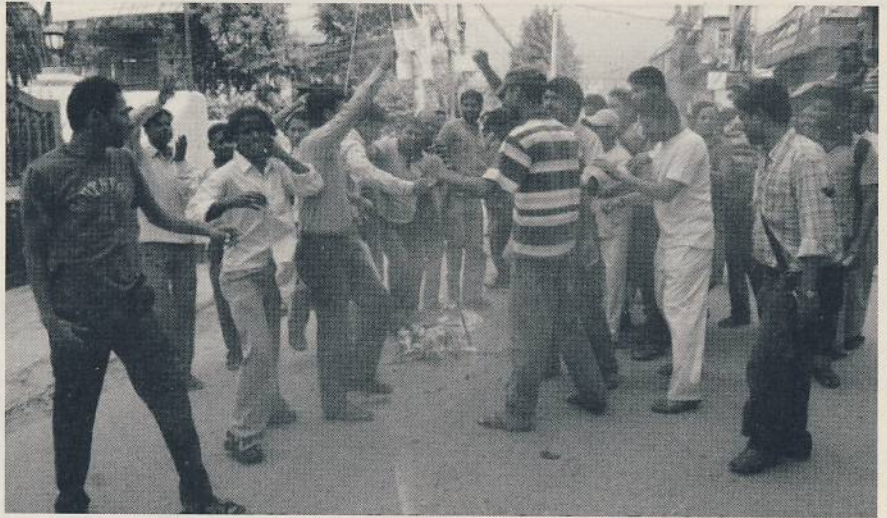
Said a senior leader, "the issue is not limited to language. Powerful forces are behind it and it could put the government in a fix."

According to C.P. Gajurel, the government could fall.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has admitted that the language issue puts the government in a very difficult position.

Following the three Madhesi parties' latest decision not to withdraw support over the issue, close aides of the prime minister seem relieved.

PM's political advisor, Raghu Pant,



Agitating Madhesi Students: Fighting for Language Rights

is confident that the government will be able to weather the crisis following the support of the Madhesi parties.

But the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, led by Upendra Yadav, is hell bent on making a political capital out of the row.

The 'withdrawal' of support of seven MPs of the pro-govt MJF (Loktantrik) is not a good omen.

The Maoists are already licking the wounds. Joined by the Upendra Yadav-led MJF, they have advised Jha to step down. If he steps down, necessitating fresh election for the VP's office, the politics will certainly be not as usual.

And if Jha remains defiant and refuses to vacate the office, political complications will get even deeper.

Either way, it will be anything but a win-win situation for Nepal and the Nepali people. The Hindi language row in the mid-fifties was followed by the dismissal of an elected government and the installation of an authoritarian regime led by the king.

Fifty years later, the monarchy is gone. But not fresh speculations about yet another authoritarian regime. If in doubt, check the speeches of today's leaders. ■

PASHUPATI : Taking Political Turn

After strong protest from the Indian government, Maoist activists stopped their row over the appointment of Indian priests in Pashupatinath temple. The issue seems to be settled, but Maoists have already done harm to Hinduism at Pashupati.

Maoists started the attack on Pashupati temple long ago. When they held the ministry of Culture they tried to open a road, destroying the forest of Pashupati, a World Heritage site. Last year, they appointed two of their party cadres as priests. This time they went to the extreme of physical assault.

Thanks to resistance from all sides including India, Maoists back tracked from their stand. But after the removal of the Hindu Nation slogan, Nepal's Hindu based traditions are feeling a

threat.

Although they claim that they are atheistic, Maoists have made every move to politicize the appointment of priests in the world renowned Hindu Temple. During their rule in January, the Maoist government made an attempt to hire Nepali priests in place of South Indian priests, before withdrawing their move.

The appointment of South Indian Brahmins as priests in Pashupati Temple has been a tradition since the 10th century. However, while chanting the slogan of nationalism, Maoists tried to hire Nepali priests.

From organizing violent demonstration to physically assaulting newly appointed priests, Maoist followers have made many attempts to



foil the temple's plans, but it continues to backfire. Devotees backed the decision to appoint Indian priests as a tradition. Indian government issued strong objections over Maoist acts.

"I don't understand the reason behind their interest in religion as Maoists have said that they are atheistic," said Minister of Culture Minendra Rijal. "We want to continue the century old practices and we cannot change the system under the pressure of handful of communist," said Rijal. ■



Bhutanese Refugees: A long wait

REFUGEE REPATRIATION

In Limbo

Although the process of repatriation began a long time back, the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees is far from finished

By **UMAKANTAKHANAL**

in Beldangi Jhapa

For refugees who repatriated in other countries there are few concerns, but many other refugees have reason to be worried as the process of repatriation of Bhutanese refugees is far from complete.

The refugees have been living in seven camps in the Eastern districts of Jhapa and Morang for eighteen years since their eviction. Among the approximately 100,000 refugees, more than 19,000 have already gone to the USA, Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Norway under the third country settlement program.

Third country re-settlement has become popular among young refugees. They see it as the only solution to improve their future and escape life in the camps. Before flying to the US, with the help of International Organization of Migration (IOM), Dandapani Baral,

who was working as a teacher in a boarding school in Birtamod, Jhapa, said, "We have spent a hell-like life for more than 18 years in camps. We hardly studied and have less chances of employment. How can we make our generations' future better in camps?"

At the time of departure, he was very upset. Sobbing before relatives and friends at Bhadrapur Airport he said, "I am going abroad for my children."

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly 80,000 Bhutanese refugees have submitted their application for third country settlement. External Relations Assistant of UNHCR Damak office, Bimal Babu Khatri said, "The number of applicants is high and even the political leaders who were advocating strongly for repatriation are also attracted by this program." According to him more than 60,000 refugees are

eagerly waiting to be settled in another country.

The refugees along with their political parties demanded programs for repatriation in the camps and at the Indo-Nepal border, Mechi Bridge. But for more than 2 two years no such program has been organized. The vice president of Bhutan People's Party, Jagirman Lama, says that instability in Nepali politics is the major reason why they have failed to pressurize the government for repatriation. He said, "The majority is in the third country settlement process, how could we continue the agitation for going back to the homeland?"

The refugees, who cherish the desire to be repatriated, claim political leaders have become town-oriented and are losing the people's support. Harka Subba of Beladangi Camp, who leads the the collection of signatures of refugees wanting repatriation, said that the political leaders have deviated from their demand for repatriation. Subba says a memorandum has been submitted to the third country hosts requesting them to take initiation for repatriation as well.

National Front for Democracy, Bhutan, a front formed by major political parties to launch agitations for returning to Bhutan, has tried to convince the political parties of Nepal and India to take initiatives towards finding a permanent solution. But no progress has been seen. Narad Adhikari, spokesperson of the front, said, "We would be very grateful if this issue is minutely observed in international level."

The political parties are aggressive because third country settlement is the only option for refugees. They have also been demanding repatriation and assimilation locally in Nepal. According to Adhikari, if only a few people are left after the completion of the third country settlement process it will be a great problem for Nepal. He said, "In our evaluation, India is causing obstruction in repatriation so we requested Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to raise our issue at the time of his visit to India, but we haven't heard about any outcome for us."

A bilateral ministerial level talk between Nepal and Bhutan started in 1993 in Kathmandu. It continued for fifteen rounds until 2004. Yet the demand for repatriation remains unfulfilled. ■

CHINESE CONCERNS

Neighbors Matter

A high level Chinese delegation has given the message that the northern neighbor is concerned about growing instability in Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL



Chinese Leader Zhang Gaoli with NC Leader Koirala (Right) : Sharing concerns

Just a week after the visit of an 18-member, high-level Chinese delegation led by Zhang Gaoli, a Central Committee member in the Political Bureau of Communist Party of China, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Qiu Guohong, pledged China's support to the Nepalese people in the event of any foreign interference.

At a function in the China Study Center, the Chinese envoy said that besides military aid, China would provide economic and diplomatic support to Nepal if Nepal's sovereignty, independence and integrity were in jeopardy.

"I feel sad to say that our nation Nepal, which is the birthplace of Sakya Muni Gautam Buddha, and the cradle of Himalayan Civilization; a land of brave and sincere people and a highly resourceful nation, is still struggling for its bare survival and preservation of its identity. Attempts are being made to disintegrate it," said Madan Regmi, chair-

man China Study Center.

"We are being destroyed but we are not defeated. We are confident that with the sacrifice of our people and the support of our great neighbor China, we will defeat the foreign backed separatists."

After a long gap, the Chinese side is showing serious concern over the growing anti-China activities in Nepal, as well as over Nepal's very independence. Just a week after a high level security meeting between Nepal and China in Lhasa, the powerful Chinese delegation under Zhang, who is also Party chief of China's Tianjin municipality, discussed the ongoing political process with Nepalese leaders.

In the main time foreign minister Sujata Koirala left to Beijing to start bilateral talks with her counter part on September 8.

In all meetings, with leaders from Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to Nepali Congress supremo Girija Prasad

Koirala; and Maoist leader Prachanda to CPN-UML leader Jhalanath Khanal; the Chinese delegation raised one concern without fail: growing anti-China activities in Nepal by India's Dharmasala based followers of the Dalai Lama.

"The government and political parties of Nepal always have a sober understanding of the secessionist nature of the Dalai clique, and have taken consistent stance and effective measures to check the activities of the Tibet separatists to conduct activities in Nepal and to prevent any forces to engage in activities that split China on the soil of Nepal," said Zhang Gaoli, addressing the reception jointly hosted by Nepali Organizations for Friendship with China. "This is in line with common strategic and security interests of both our countries, and is conducive to the stability and development of Nepal itself."

When the team met Prime Minister Nepal at his residence, the Chinese delegation gave a clear message that Nepal should take tough actions against anti-China activities coming from the southern border, said a close aid of prime minister on condition of anonymity.

At a time when Indian media are accusing Nepalese Maoists, who were groomed and trained in India, for taking an anti-Indian stand, the Chinese have shown their own serious concerns regarding the growing activities of Tibetan refugees crossing the border.

Sandwiched between India and China, the challenge for Nepal's policymakers is to balance the relations. During his New Delhi trip, Prime Minister Nepal faced questions of "growing Chinese activities" in Nepal. However, China has repeatedly sought Nepal's commitment to prevent the movement of Tibetan exiles who are crossing open borders between India and Nepal and creating trouble. ■

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KOSHI HIGH DAM

No Watering Down

The more protest the project's feasibility study faces, the stronger seems to become the chances for its construction

By NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

The Kosi river in eastern Nepal hasn't wreaked havoc this monsoon so far. And yet, that hasn't watered down India's increasing bid to build a high dam on it either.

Instead, the Indian inclination to what could be one of the world's highest dam appears to have been galvanized by local protests disrupting feasibility studies of the project.

Even as protestors have kept Nepalese and Indian officials from doing the survey, New Delhi and Bihar seems to be getting more and more confident about building the dam in the Nepal side of the river.

The joint press statement issued during Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's recent visit to India read, "Both sides agreed to expedite progress on Sapta Kosi High Dam ..."

The statement chose to leave out the term "feasibility study", effectively giving the message that the agreement had been on making progress on the project and not on finding out whether it was feasible.

Whereas a joint mechanism is still at work — even if on papers — to find that out.

Nepalese officials point at that ongoing work and refrain from making any comment on the possibility of building the structure envisaged to control flood, irrigate vast swath of land and generate electricity.

But Indian officials have trodden a different path. They have already been advocating about the high dam arguing that it would be the answer to all the menaces the Kosi brings about.

After inspecting the repair works of the Kosi embankment last July, Indian Water Resources Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal said "a high dam is a permanent solution to the periodic ravages caused by the Kosi."

A breach of a section of the embankment last year had caused the river to run away submerging many parts of eastern Nepal and Indian state Bihar and displacing tens of thousands of people.

The incident gave further ground to the Indian officials who had long argued for the Kosi high dam.

But what seems to have given them an even stronger basis to speak for the dam is its obstructed feasibility study.

They have been repeatedly complaining about several groups who have not allowed the surveys to take place.

Protestors and critics have been arguing that the dam would submerge Nepalese land as far as Taplejung and that as one of the highest silt yielding



Koshi Flood : Washing away

File Photo

rivers, Kosi would not even spare the high dam in the long run.

Such protests may have stalled the feasibility study for now but, water experts say, that has not kept India from pushing for the high dam.

Had genuine feasibility study been allowed to go ahead, it would have made clear the possible gains and losses to both the countries.

An uninfluenced report would have

been obligatory to both the countries and it would have perhaps been a possible way for a fair deal.

But in absence of such a study and with India pushing for the high dam,

Nepal could run the risk of being at the receiving end, water pundits say.

They believe India already has had a number of reports and recommendations on Kosi dam since British rule.

In his book "Dui Chhimikeko Jalayatra" (Water journey of two neighbours), water expert Ajay Dixit goes as back as 1893 to show how British engineers debated whether Kosi flood should be controlled by a high dam or embankments.

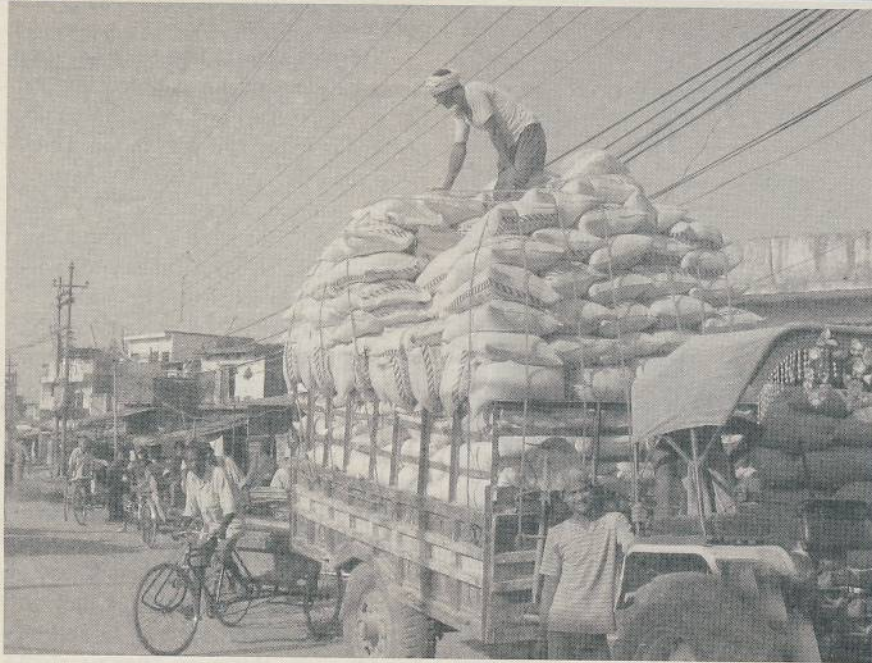
He mentions several reports and recommendations on the high dam submitted at different times, the latest one being in 1951, two years before Bihar was hit by a big flood.

If the present feasibility study does not happen and, more importantly, if India chooses to use those previous reports to advance the project, Nepal will be caught on the waist.

Politically so vulnerable as it is, the country already is in no position to say no to the high dam.

When there were protests on the ground as officials from both sides tried to begin the feasibility study some time ago, Water Resources Ministry had issued a statement.

It carried a couple of sentences dismissing claims that the dam would be built but contained two pages of details on what compensation would be offered to the people who would be displaced due to inundation. ■



Rice in Stock : Marketing with profit

PRICE RISE

Middle Mania

It is the middlemen who are raking in the moolahs from the current price rise of green vegetables

By SANJAYADHAKAL
in Makwanpur

It takes you an hour of motorcycle ride away from the valley to tell you why and how the prices of vegetables are shooting up.

The villages that ring the valley are some of the important producers of green vegetables where farmers have increasingly switched to vegetable farming to gain from feeding the growing masses of Kathmandu.

But more than these farmers, middlemen seem to have gained.

Humane Bhanjyang of Makwanpur district is one such village perched atop the hill that overlooks the valley.

Less than an hour of motorcycle ride towards the southern fringe of the Kathmandu valley, takes you to the hill top of Humane Bhanjyang

Take a road to Dakshinkali temple, and when it reaches Pharping, follow the black-topped road that joins

Pharping with Kulekhani and all the way up to Hetauda.

As you head further south-west, the beautifully built monasteries dot the hill sides that are filled with corn fields fitted neatly with vegetable farms.

Soon the black-topped road dissolves into a dirt road where you will need to negotiate with umpteen potholes before you start climbing the uphill path that takes you to Humane Bhanjyang.

Here, a few minutes of bargaining with 30-something Maila Tamang exposed why the vegetable prices have shot up in the valley.

A resident farmer of Humane Bhanjyang in Makwanpur district that borders to the south of Kathmandu, Tamang sells cauli flower to people who come to pick them up in trucks.

And that was what he was doing last week on Thursday (September 3).

Loaded on large wicker baskets, he

was busy putting the vegetables on the truck headed for Kathmandu.

But he was also ready to sell those vegetables on retail basis to anyone interested on a bargain price.

He agreed to sell cauli flowers at the rate of Rs 20 per kilo at a time when they were selling at over Rs 60 in the retail markets in the capital. The prices of other green vegetables like pumpkin and cabbage, too, were similarly low.

It became clear that middlemen were pocketing three to four hundred percent profit.

Further south is located a village of Phakel where Kanchhi Tamang was selling her vegetable produce on a roadside stall.

The fresh cucumbers, fruits, cabbages were being sold at prices that are dirt-cheap compared to Kathmandu.

"We have been saying for a long time that the rise in the price of food stuffs has not benefited the farmers but the middlemen," confirms Jyoti Baniya, a consumer campaigner and an advocate.

"The existing laws stipulate that middlemen cannot pocket more than 20 percent of profit when they sell stuffs. But here they are making huge profits by flouting the rules and taking the consumers for a ride," Baniya said.

In the last one year, the average rate of inflation, according to Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), hovered at 12 percent.

During the same period the inflation rate for food stuffs stood at nearly 20 percent. If this rate could be further broken up, the rate for green vegetables might be a lot more.

In simple economic logic, the rise in the price of vegetables ought to have benefited its producers – the millions of farmers. However, since most of the profits have been cornered by unscrupulous middlemen, farmers like Maila and Kanchhi have little to be happy about.

But if you are disturbed by the astronomical rise in the vegetable prices and need a time out from the news stories of middlemen fleecing the common consumers, grab a bike and head south.

Apart from fresh vegetables, you will also enjoy the fresh nature that will leave you refreshed to deal with the topsyturvy of Kathmandu life. ■



NA Aircraft: Busy Schedule

TOURISM

The Weakest Link

As the government aims to bring in one million tourists within two years, lack of wide body planes with the national flag carrier emerges as a major handicap

By **Bhagirath Yogi** in London

In September last year, the then Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Mrs Hisila Yami, told a gathering of Nepalese and tour operators from the UK that Nepal government was all set to buy two airplanes for the loss-making Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC).

"The government has already decided to offer guaranty to buy two wide-body aircraft for the NAC," the minister said while inaugurating the Nepal Fair in London in September last year. Exactly a year later, new Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Sharat Singh Bhandari, said the government was in the final stage of procuring aircraft for the national flag carrier.

Talking to a group of journalists and tour operators at the Nepali embassy in London on Sep. 7, Minister Bhandari said a government-formed committee was assessing the proposals submitted by two leading aircraft manufactures, Boeing and Airbus, and a decision will be made soon. He said since the aircraft manufacturers themselves were taking part in the bid, there was no room for hanky-panky this time around.

As the Nepal government has decided to observe year 2011 as 'Nepal Tourism Year 2011,' analysts say the country immediately needs at least one wide body and one medium body aircraft to meet the increased demand. Officials say they plan to bring in around one million tourists by 2011—up from around 500,000 tourists who visited Nepal in 2008.

"We have got enough hotels and other infrastructure to accommodate up to one million tourists visiting Nepal," said Prachanda Man Shrestha, CEO of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)—that is spearheading the campaign. "Nepal is an exotic destination—with an unparalleled natural beauty, bio-diversity and rich cultural heritage—that is suitable for people from all age groups," he added.

He recalled that the BBC holiday has enlisted Nepal as one of the 50 tourist destinations that people must visit before they die.

But, the weakest link in the government's ambitious goal to bring in one million tourists is lack of planes with the national flag carrier, say tour

operators.

"Besides catering to tourists, there is a great demand for national flag carrier in cities like London as the number of Nepalis living and working in the UK is on the rise," said Anand Acharya of Holiday United, a travel company based in London. "But such a demand can't be met unless Nepal Airlines adds wide-body planes in its fleet," he added.

Two Boeing 757s that Nepal Airlines owns right now are both more than two decade old. When one aircraft develops a snag or has to be sent for routine maintenance, the Airlines' international operations are affected badly.

The Nepali Congress government-led by G P Koirala decided to sell two aircraft belonging to the then RNAC in the early 1990s promising that they will be replaced by brand new wide-body aircraft soon. But even after nearly 15 years, the Airlines is yet to get the planes as promised. Instead, subsequent management of the airlines has been bogged into series of controversies and allegations of corruption while leasing aircraft for the airlines.

A number of committees were formed by previous governments to recommend ways to reform the airlines and make it profitable. Following the recommendations made by a committee led by then vice chairman of the National Planning Commission Dr Shankar Sharma, the government announced in 2002 that it was ready to sell-off up to 49% of its stake in the RNAC to either private investors or a joint venture partner.

The government's decision came close on the heels of cumulative loss of whopping Rs 2.4bn incurred by the company in the fiscal year ending in July 2001.

But as the Maoist insurgency escalated and Nepal saw a series of unstable governments one after another, reforming the then RNAC seemed at the bottom of the agenda for subsequent governments. They also refused repeated requests by the state-owned airlines seeking financial guaranty to buy aircraft from the international market. Officials said it would be against the liberal, open market policy adopted by the government.

The Maoist-led government last year, however, seemed to be breaking the ice. Then minister Yami announced that the government had agreed to pro-

A History For Everybody

By Bipin Adhikari

It is unconventional to review a book after twelve years of its publication. Many readers may consider such a book no longer worth a review. But some books deserve a special treatment. Jared Diamond's 1997 science book, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* is one of them.

Diamond is one of the most remarkable contemporary scholars of the United States. In this book, he seeks to explain Eurasian hegemony throughout history - and the reasons behind it. The question before him is - why did history unfold differently on different continents over the last 13 thousand years? Is it because, as racists usually equate, some people are superior to others? He answers the question in four parts.

In Part I, from Eden to Cajamarca, Diamond explains what happened on all the continents before 11,000 B. C.. Then he deals with how geography molded societies on Polynesian islands. After that he explains why the Inca emperor Atahualpa did not capture King Charles I of Spain.

Part II deals with the rise and spread of food production. It is here that he analyses the roots of guns (military superiority), germs (capacity to control diseases) and steel (powerful organizations), and geographic differences at the onset of food production.

Then Diamond discusses the spread of food production and the unconscious development of ancient crops. Completing this, he poses three important questions: why did people of some regions fail to domesticate plants?; why were the biggest wild mammal species never domesticated?; and why did food production spread at different rates on different continents?

It is in Part III that Diamond explores the course of development from food to guns, germs and steel. This is an equally substantial part of his study. Here he provides references on the evolution of germs, writing, technology, government and religion.

In Part IV, Diamond brings in the histories of Australia and New Guinea. He also refers to the history of Austronesian expansion. The histories of Eurasia and the America have also been compared with each other. The last item here is the history of Africa - the question being 'how Africa became black'.

Jared Diamond's answer to the biggest question of history - why history unfolded differently—is environmental not racial. For example, differences in the availability of

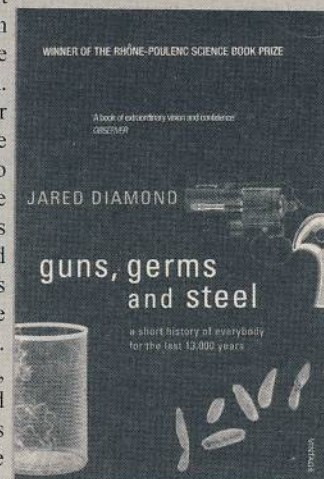
wild plants and animals suitable for domestication have been one of the important factors in the evolution. Another difference had to do with the shapes and orientations of the continents. As such, Diamond argues that the gaps in power and technology between

human societies do not reflect cultural or racial differences. Rather they originate in environmental differences powerfully amplified by various positive feedback loops.

Diamond holds that even when cultural or genetic differences have favored Eurasians (for example Chinese centralized government, or improved disease resistance among Eurasians), these advantages were only created due to the influence of geography and were not inherent in the Eurasian genomes. As a result, the geography of the Eurasian landmass gave its human inhabitants an inherent advantage over the societies on other continents, which they were able to dominate or conquer.

No doubt, the book *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* is a short history of everything. Diamond has hundreds of references from ecology, archaeology, genetics, linguistics and various historical case studies to prove his thesis. Still, his study does not pay adequate attention to the historical variables of the Arab and Asian regions, which have significant contribution to what is known as civilization. One can also observe from the sideline that he has generalized too much when arguing his case. But, with all these comments, it will be difficult for anybody to counter his conclusion in significant ways. This is the most readable special work on the history of mankind.

Suitable books for review may be sent to:
Email: lawyers_inc_nepal@yahoo.com



Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (London: Vintage Books, 1997)

wide guaranty to the Corporation (which was renamed NAC after the fall of the monarchy) to buy two wide-body aircraft. But, the Maoist-led government did not last long to oversee the process.

The 'Yellow Book'—that chronicles performance of the state-owned enterprises— published by the Finance Ministry this year says the government is taking necessary action for receiving one Boeing 757 jet plane on lease and for procuring four narrow body and two wide body planes within next five years. "Study and analysis is taking place for procuring two suitable planes for domestic flight (trunk routes) and receive a new Twin Otter plane by swapping or exchanging the existing Twin Otter plane," the Ministry said.

Sources, however, say choosing a supplier to buy two wide-body jets is going to be a major bone of contention for the beleaguered government led by Madhav Kumar Nepal.

NAC formally initiated process to purchase the aircraft in April this year by floating a 45-day tender notice inviting only aircraft manufacturers to participate in the bidding. In June this year, a committee formed to evaluate the bid documents submitted a report to the NAC management on the offers made by the two companies — Boeing and Airbus — that had participated in the bidding. A highly placed source at the NAC said Boeing has offered to make available its aircraft to Nepal no sooner than 2011 while Airbus has offered to make its aircraft available earlier than that. While the government would like to buy new planes ahead of 2011 just ahead of the campaign, Nepal Airlines staff and pilots are said to be in favour of the Boeing planes saying that they have better knowledge of handling and maintaining Boeing aircraft compared to the Airbus. NAC, which once had 21 airplanes including four Boeings, is currently operating with three Twin Otters and two aging Boeing 757s. Unless it moves fast to acquire new aircraft, its dream of bringing in one million tourists within two years is likely to remain a pipedream only. And, given its history, whatever the government decides it is likely to generate fresh controversy ruffling many feathers. ■

“I took The Oath in Hindi and There Is Nothing Wrong With It”

- UPENDRA YADAV

President of Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum **UPENDRA YADAV** is a well known politician. He was the foreign minister of the first Maoist-led government. Yadav started his political career as a worker of Nepal Communist Party led by Pushpa Lal back in 1970s. He was close to Maoists during their insurgency. Following the collapse of the Maoist government, his party split. Yadav, who champions the Madhesi cause, spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL AND SAROJ DAHAL** on contemporary politics. Excerpts:

Hindi is a common language of Madhesh and it is also the mother tongue of many Madheshis.

You reportedly declared that you will inflame Madhesh in case vice president Parmananda Jha is dismissed for taking his oath of office in Hindi. What is the stage of agitation?

We are now persuading political leaders to amend the constitution to allow the vice president to take his oath in his mother tongue Hindi. If political elites of Nepal don't listen to our genuine calls, we will resort to agitation. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has also assured us not to take any harsh decision yet on the issue.

But the government has already withdrawn the privileges of the vice president, including his guards, and the national flag. What remains with the vice president now and what remains with you to rely on the Prime Minister's assurances?

This is a very objectionable step and we have already condemned it. The government should have shown the guts to ignore the biased and personally motivated vendetta of the Supreme Court. All of us know that the court went to the extent that it does not have constitutional rights to issue orders to vacate the residence of the vice president.

But the lawyers said the Supreme Court decided on the basis of the interim constitution and it is mandatory for the vice president to take oath again.

I don't agree with this. From the very beginning, the court is always biased against Madhesh and Madheshi issues. An overwhelming number of judges in the courts belong to particular groups of people. Vice president Parmananda Jha is a victim of this discriminatory policy.

Since there are many other national languages in Nepal including Bhojpuri, Maithali, Abadhi and others, what prompted the vice president to take oath in Hindi?

Hindi is a common language of Madhesh and it is also the mother tongue of many Madheshis. I don't see there is any constitutional barrier stopping anyone from taking oath in Hindi. I took the oath in Hindi, which is the language related to the identity of Madhesh. Vice president's struggle is for the recognition of the identity of Madhesh.

Lawyers argue that there is no provision in the constitution to take oath in Hindi and the court also has issued orders in a similar vein. How do you look at this?

Don't talk about the court which has given a biased verdict in the case of the vice president. Even I took my oath in Hindi. If the judges have guts, they should declare

all oaths taken in the mother tongue as unconstitutional.

Since all political parties have been suggesting that the vice president should take oath in a national language like Maithali, Bhojpuri or Abadhi, why is he stressing Hindi?

I want to stress that Hindi is the language related to the identity of Madheshi people and to the aspirations of Madhesh. The issue of Hindi language is now linked with the struggle for linguistic identity of Madhesh.

Since the issue of the vice president is a pertinent political and constitutional issue, do you have suggestions for solving it?

Vice president Jha has already made it clear that he is not going to retake oath without amendment of the constitution. It has already created a constitutional deadlock. Our suggestion is that recognized languages should be put in the annex of the constitution. We can write all the languages spoken in Nepal, including Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithali, Tamang, Newari and others in the annexes.

How can you register the proposal seeking amendment in the interim constitution when the Maoists continue to disrupt the Legislature Parliament?

We believe that disruption of work at the Legislature Parliament cannot solve any political problem. Maoists must pave the way to start the parliamentary session so that the government will be compelled to bring the bill for amendment of the interim constitution.

What about Prime Minister Nepal's commitment?

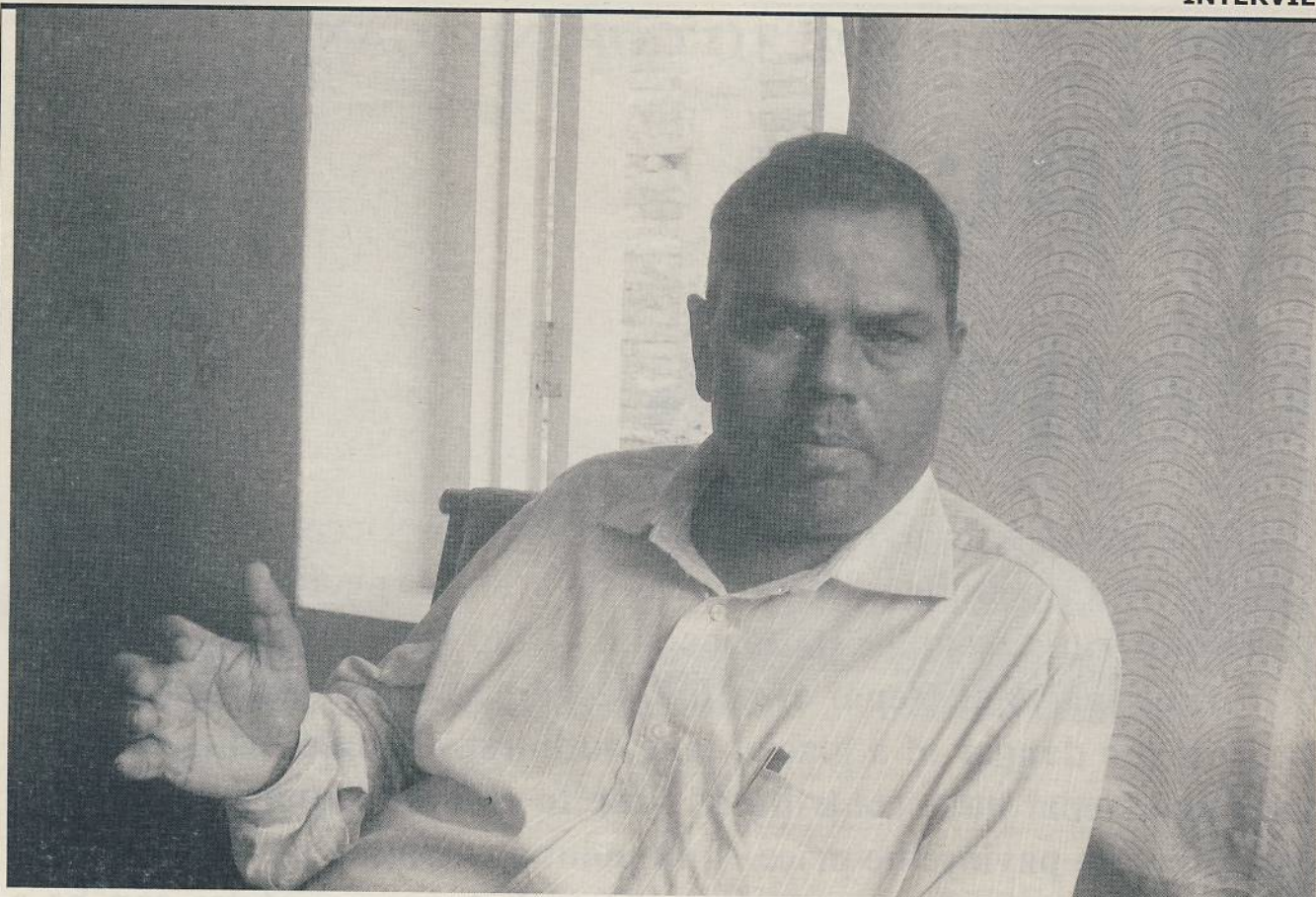
It may seem bitter but I have to speak the truth. Madhav Kumar Nepal is one of the most confused, helpless and incompetent prime ministers in the history of Nepal. He talks in a childish manner, not as a politician. The Prime Minister assured us that he did not take any hasty decision, but he took it.

Is that a fair comment?

My comment is based on the reality. Have you seen any government dominated by defeated candidates of the previous elections? Over 16 cabinet members are defeated in elections at one or the other place.

Why did you not raise the issue when the previous Maoist-led government had similar ministers?

There was a couple of such ministers but not like now. Here every Tom, Dick and Harry is a minister.



Given your statements, it seems that you are also in the mood to pull down the government. What do you say about the future of this government?

We don't want to get involved in dirty politics of making and breaking governments. The way experienced and expert players in the game of making and breaking governments have issued warnings to this government, I am pretty sure, it will fall within its own contradictions.

It is reported that Maoists are now in close contacts with your party to topple the government?

It is a baseless reporting. As I have already told you that the old players having expertise on pulling down governments are in the race and Maoists too are with them.

Recently your CA members voted for Maoist stand on the judiciary in the CA committee to decide the forms of judiciary. Is not it the reflection of your closeness with Maoists?

I have to admit that there is technical error. Of course, we want the judiciary system as in the United States where judges are appointed with approval of the legislature. Our CA members did not realize that the Maoist proposal was purely guided by communist philosophy of party supremacy.

The rebellion in your rival party might make you happy?

This is what I predicted when my party was

split. There is no hope in a party which was formed on the basis of petty interests and for personal gains. The present rebellion is a natural political course.

As a former foreign minister, how do you assess the recent visit of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to India?

It was a goodwill visit and such a high level visit is natural between the two countries having centuries old traditional relations based on geography, culture and religion. I don't see anything to boast in Nepal's visit.

As a politician, tell us on the future of this government?

I am not an astrologer to predict the future of the government. Looking at the existing political exercise, I can say that this government will fall after Dashain and Tihar.

That means as predicted by Maoists?

I don't know about Maoist prediction but this is my own political calculation. You can also see some simmering voices coming from different corners.

Out of four major parties from Madhesh, three are in the government. How do you see their role in the vice president's case?

It is very unfortunate to say that these Madheshi parties sacrificed the interest of Madhesh just for the sake of power. Had they been sincere to the cause of Madhesh, they would have resigned en mass protesting the decision of the government to pull out security personnel from the residence of the vice president. ■

Madhav Kumar Nepal is one of the most confused, helpless and incompetent prime ministers in the history of Nepal.

FROM KATHMANDU TO COPENHEGAN

Climate Concerns

As authorities prepare their agenda for this December's climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, they are expected to take into account erratic weather patterns and rising temperatures observed in various parts of Nepal over the decades. Topping the list of concerns is the danger of a glacial lake outburst. People living in countries like Nepal have contributed little to climate damage. Nevertheless, they are paying the price. A 10 point agenda for the Copenhagen Summit agreed upon by officials of South Asian countries can be a good beginning to address the climate concerns. Nepal's major development partners have offered to provide necessary support to carry adaptation programs, which is something of an added assurance. The big question remains: How will all this translate into practice?

By KESHAB POUDEL

Hundreds of reports, case studies and research findings have predicted that mountainous countries like Nepal will be at severe risks due to climate change.

As flooding, erratic rainfall, drought and rising sea levels are becoming harsh realities in the South Asian region, one positive thing to come out of SAARC nations was the regional meet on climate change in Kathmandu, held from August 31 to September 1. The meet was hosted by Nepal's government, with support from Asian Development Bank (ADB), DANIDA, DFID, and the World Bank, with the intent to find a common position

for the nations to take to the Climate Summit in Copenhagen this December.

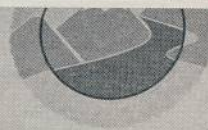
Government officials and experts realized the need for joint action to address the climate change issue. Thanks to the conference, Kathmandu to Copenhagen: A Vision for Addressing Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities in the Himalayas, SAARC nations developed a regional approach to climate change for the first time.

Government representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal of South Asia and the Kirgiz republic of central Asia, discussed the risks posed by climate change and agreed on ways

to overcome the crisis.

A ten point message stressed the need to translate the respective capabilities and historical responsibility of the developed countries, as envisaged in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), into operational practice. The message noted that the world had spent more on corporate/financial bailouts than on promoting sustainability, and had spent the least on addressing climate change.

"We are happy to announce a message agreed by all the participants of the regional meet to be taken to Copenhagen as a common agenda," said



kathmandu
TO COPENHAGEN 2009

VISION FOR ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES IN THE HIMALAYA
A Regional Climate Change Conference

Opening Ceremony

August 31st - September 1st, 2009

Kathmandu, Nepal



Regional Conference : For common cause

Dr. Udaya Raj Sharma, secretary at the Ministry of Environment, while addressing a press conference.

“Despite several weaknesses, a consensus regional message to the world regarding the issues faced by us is a good beginning. We have reached a consensus on approaches like adaptation, sharing knowledge and funding,” he said. “We have also agreed on issues like development and transfer of clean technologies by Annex 1 countries to non-Annex 1 countries and financing mechanism on adaptation and technologies.”

The worries of the region are understandable. According to a 2007 study conducted by ADB, nine of the countries with the highest death rate caused by extreme weather lie in Asia. The countries most affected included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

“The Himalayas are the water towers of South Asia. Himalayan glaciers form a reservoir that supports perennial rivers on which millions of people in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal depend for survival. About 10 percent of the volume of Himalayan Rivers comes from melting water from the glaciers, which are essential to sustain river flows during dry seasons,” states ADB’s study on Building Climate

Resilience in the Agriculture Sector in South Asia. “Due to rising temperatures, these glaciers are now receding faster than any glaciers in the world.”

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has noted the gravity of the issue. “Climate change is threatening human existence. It is a global agenda and we must work together to support the people affected as a result of rising temperature,” he said. “We are ready to work jointly to address this issue.”

From the challenges of adaptation to other issues, the countries of the region have been facing the same problems but previously had not common agenda. “It is good to see the common agenda agreed upon by government representatives of the region at the final days of the conference. The effective management of water resources across the region is vital if we are to combat the potentially-catastrophic impacts of climate change such as floods and droughts,” said Jim Drummond, DFID’s director for South Asia, while pledging an extra 2.7 million sterling pounds for improving the management of regional water resources in South Asia.

“Through the spirit of regional cooperation demonstrated here at the climate change conference, we hope to see long-term solutions to the

challenges,” Drummond concluded.

Experts defended the need of a common approach to meet the challenges. “South Asia’s vulnerability to climate change has extremely serious implications for agriculture and therefore food security,” Kunio Segal, director General of ADB’s South Asia Department said while addressing the press conference.

Preliminary findings from an ADB study revealed that melting Himalayan glaciers and other climate change impacts posed a direct threat to the water and food security of more than 1.6 billion people of South Asia. The study warned that if current trends persisted until 2050, the yields of irrigated crops of South Asia would decrease significantly.

“Unless actions are taken to combat climate change and adapt to its impacts, progress achieved in meeting the Millennium Development Goals could soon be reversed in the next generation,” said Robert J. Dobias, senior advisor, Climate Change program.

Nepal’s Scenario

Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change. As the world faces a prolonged period of planetary warming, Nepal is already experiencing the impacts of increasing temperatures, particularly at higher altitudes where temperatures are



Farmers Planting Rice : Little rain

rising faster.

“In the last few years, we have recorded extreme weather patterns in different parts of the country. There are more warmer days in winter and less cooler nights. Similarly, we have had the warmest day in summer. The rainfall is also varied with concentration of rain and precipitation,” said Sarju Vaidya, senior meteorologist with Department of Hydrology and Meteorology.

According to ICIMOD reports, the warming in the Himalayas has been much greater than the global average. Nepal’s temperature is rising 0.6 degrees Celsius per decade compared with a global average of 0.74 of degrees Celsius. If the earth continues to warm at the present rate, Nepal’s poor communities will suffer.

“Poor and marginalized communities tend to be those most vulnerable to climate change and least able to cope with weather related disasters because

of lack of access to information and resources to reduce their risk,” said Prabin Man Singh, coauthor of Oxfam’s report on climate change, poverty and adaptation in Nepal.

In conjunction with the regional conference, the government of Nepal, DFID and the World Bank hosted a dedicated Nepal day to discuss the agenda of Nepal and the commitments of Nepal’s development partners. One of the achievements of the conference was a pledge from Nepal’s major development partners to provide necessary support for climate change programs.

Resource constraints and lack of expertise have hampered the implementation of the programs in the past.

According to a recent study conducted by Oxfam, ‘Climate Change, Poverty and Adaptation in Nepal’, poor crop yields, water shortages and more

extreme temperatures are pushing rural villagers closer to the brink as climate change grips Nepal.

The report estimates that currently more than 3.4 million Nepalese require food assistance, due to a combination of natural disasters, including last year’s winter drought—one of the worst in the country’s history. Although isolated droughts cannot be attributed to climate change, climate models predicting less winter rain indicate the current situation is worsening.

The Nepal day concluded with an understanding between the government of Nepal, Ministry of Environment, and development partners on ways to address climate change challenges.

Presented by Nepal Climate Vulnerability Study Team (NCVST), the report entitled ‘Vulnerabilities through the Eyes of the Vulnerable’ described climate change induced uncertainties and Nepal’s development predicaments.

“The conference was successful”

-PURUSHOTTAM GHIMIRE

PURUSHOTTAM GHIMIRE, joint secretary at the Ministry of Environment, is leading the focal point on climate change in his ministry. After hosting the regional conference on the global issue in Kathmandu, Ghimire spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on the outcome of the conference. Excerpts:

What is the impression of the government of Nepal on the recently concluded regional conference on climate change?

It was a matter of pride for all of us to hold the first regional level conference on climate change in Nepal. The conference was successful. As organizers, we are very happy.

What achievements has the conference made?

One of the important achievements of the conference was that the countries of the region have built a consensus 10-point agenda. The 10 points agreed by SAARC countries will guide our participation in the upcoming climate change summit in Copenhagen. This is historic.

Will SAARC countries push for adoption of the 10-point agenda in the coming days?

There is a consensus among us on the 10 points. We have agreed to take them to climate meetings in Bangkok and Copenhagen.

How do you view the donor's pledge on climate change?

This is a good beginning as Nepal's major development partners have come together to express their commitment to containing the effects of climate change. The message of donors is clear: Nepal will not have to face

resource constraints in implementing its plans and programs.

What specific agenda will Nepal take to Copenhagen?

We don't have a specific agenda for Copenhagen in terms of country's own needs, although the affected population in Nepal is pressing us to raise their concerns. We have to join in a group that is going to be effective. For instance, all countries with mountain terrains are going to Copenhagen with a common agenda. The aim of the recently concluded regional climate change conference is also to build a vision for addressing climate change risks and vulnerabilities in the Himalayas.

What issues will Nepal raise?

In totality, our agenda will be to press Annex 1 countries to reduce greenhouse gasses. We will also demand funds from Annex 1 countries to run the adaptation program. Although developed countries are providing the funds through various channels, we want the funding to be channeled through UNFCC mechanism. Major funding should come from UNFCC and not from bilateral donors.

Why do you prefer UNFCC?

We want to have a direct access to the funds. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) mechanism gives us this access. We want to have direct relations between donors and recipients. This is what we have also included in the 10-point agenda and the national agenda.



Do you have the capacity to manage resources?

We need support to enhance our capacity but nothing has taken place in the past. In the name of capacity enhancement, resources have been spent to hire the consultants. We used to sign the documents but they enhanced the capacity and capability of consultants.

What are the government's major targets for Copenhagen?

We have set our targets on the following issues: shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer, financing and REED. We are preparing country papers on these six issues.

What is the government's view on mitigation?

At the international level, mitigation is not our agenda. Nepal is one of the countries which contributes insignificant emissions. For our national agenda, we are trying to do our best to reduce greenhouse gasses. We are the sufferers and Annex 1 countries should pay funds to launch the adaptation program for us. ■

Nepalese and international experts prepared the report.

By signing the commitment, Nepal's development partners, the World Bank, DFID, ADB, SNV, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Ausaid, UNDP, CEDA, SDC and

European Commission have shown that they are committed to support Nepal's efforts to cope with climate change.

As the Copenhagen Summit approaches, climate change dominates the headlines and talks among

stakeholders. After signing the agreement on climate change in Nepal, Nepal's development partners have also shown that they want to support the poor people of Nepal to overcome the new challenges. Climate Change is now on the agenda. ■

Feminist Vision in Development

-By: Prof. Pushpa Shrestha PhD¹

1. Background

The female's contributions are marginally recognized in the contemporary world. Generally, the government policies and programs are prepared by the males and they are less sensitive on female inclusion and participation. As society transform from a goods-based to money-based economy, women were highly sidelined. Generally, the men dominate the professional works in the factories and offices and received monetary rewards for their services. On the other hand, the women are engaged in the household affairs which are rarely rewarded in monetary term. Though women are engaged on the paid workforce, their incomes are considered supplementary to that of male household member and their work is consider as an extension of their unpaid work at home. So the work of female are under valued and less rewarded.

It is well known fact that the women make tremendous contributions to the economy with their paid as well as unpaid works in the family, community, society and country.

Specifically, females' have responsibilities inside the household which include cooking for the family, cleaning the house, washing the clothes and caring the children, the ageing, and sick family members. The women also cultivate land and harvest the food for the family around the year. These works are categorized as unpaid work which does not generate monetary income. These contributions of unpaid works have made greater impact on national income than GDP of the Nepalese economy that largely depends on the agriculture productions as industrial sector of Nepal is the poor. The poor females who are the backbone of the economy are exploited and getting poorer as their contribution are marginally recognized and rarely rewarded with monetary income. This



phenomenon is one of the worse examples of patriarchal structure of Nepalese society.

In this context, the major thrust of the article is to look the Nepal's development agendas, strategies, and activities through "gender lens". In other words, the articles evaluates on how far the Government of Nepal's plan, policies and strategies justifies the females of this country whose roles are limited in the job markets.

2. Gender Lens

The gender empowerment in society, state, politic and development lies in "gender lens" which encompass beyond the division of economic actors into males and females. The desegregation of information on the basis of gender won't fulfill the entire concept of gender lens. The "gender lens" is a vision that encapsulates the system of socially constructed power relation that tends to discriminate and disadvantage the females in compared to the males and places the women in low level of family, society and state. Specifically, in the development approach, the gender lens incorporates the feminist vision in development economics which has not been incorporated in the "engendering development approach" proposed by the

World Bank in 2001. So, the gender lens encapsulates the feminist vision in development which will revise the development approach into newly revised version with inclusive development.

3. Decision Makers of Nepal

The major decision and policy makers of a country are high level personal of the country. In case of Government of Nepal, they are prime minister, the highest positioned ministries, development planner and secretaries. The Civil Service in Nepal is staffed with only ten percent of female. Out of sixty four designated secretary post - the highest post in Civil Service of Nepal - there are only two females which account approximately 2 percent in share. The scenario is similar in high level ministers, development planner, corporate houses, public institutions, professional sector and others. The females are nominally represented in main decision-making position of government as well as private sectors. So, it is not imaginable that the major strategic and policy decision on development issues of country will address the female's issues.

4. Unpaid Work

The feminist development economist

argues that the economic analysis and approach needs substantial revision as it doesn't incorporate the unpaid work of women which is the major contribution of women in social and economic affairs. The relation between various organs of economic system should be redefined in term of relation of gendered power as well as relation of exchange. The unpaid works required for social system use huge amount of the time and energy of the poor females specifically of the poor countries but such work are less defined in economic circuit. The difficulties also lie in the struggle to give priority to the needs of people within the budget constraints. The females find themselves more isolated in the increasingly stressful effort to change the balance of social imperatives because the market and other institutions respond mainly to the requirements of rich, male and high level peoples.

5. Gender Sensitive Governance of Revenue Structure:

The governance of revenue structure should be gender sensitive and there should two substantial measures in this line.

Gender Friendly Budget: There should be female-friendly and female-responsive governance structures at centre as well as local levels. Specifically, at the national level, Ministry of Finance needs to design the budget pronouncing Gender responsiveness. In fiscal year 2066/ 67, 17.0 percent of the total budget of the

The females cannot get exposure to outside world inter alias to work at non-farm activities for income generation unless the male partners do not share the household work. The patriarchal social system prevailed in all most all segments of the society irrespective of castes, ethnic groups, Dalits, and Janajaties, poor and marginalized communities.

country has been allocated for gender empowerment which amounts nearly NRs. 49,000 millions. Interestingly, the budget does not spell out any concrete activities to spend this allocation. The scenario is similar in FY 2065/66 when the budget allocated 13 percent of the total budget for gender empowerment but the activities related to this allocation had neither been well defined nor been properly implemented in real term.

Income Tax rebate on females' income: In Fiscal Year 2065/2066, the budget of Government of Nepal had decrease the Income Tax rebate on females' income to ten percent from 15.0 percent. Due to tax rebate for females' income by ten percent, females have more income in hand and they are empowered. Specifically, if the husband and wife have same income level then this provision has increase what wife draws from her job place than that of her husband. This provision of the government has provided justice to women in the society. This type of social security measure reduces the burden of females and it is also important to maintain justice in the society.

6. Conclusion

The females cannot get exposure to outside world inter alias to work at non-farm activities for income generation unless the male partners do not share the household work. The patriarchal social system prevailed in all most all segments of the society irrespective of castes, ethnic groups, Dalits, and Janajaties, poor and marginalized communities. So, the gender empowerment is formidable challenges for the society and state. In this regard, the education curriculum should be amended with gender friendly approach. The new generation students should realize the nexus of female's unpaid work and its economic relation. There are examples of females' participation in the national building and successful country leadership which needs to be

well disseminated to new generation student especially girls. In the work place, there should be gender friendly working hours, provision of childcare centers and other female related provision. There is positive impact of government's provision to decrease the land transfer fee if the transferee is women. In fiscal Year 2063/064, 35 percent of lands are owned by female which is seven times higher than 5 percent reported by the population census of Nepal in 2001.

The feminist development economist views the process of economic development through the gender lens which is typically obscured by conventional economic analysis. This new approach should be incorporated by economist as well as policy maker as it will lead humanly and egalitarian development process. The Government of Nepal should also accordingly revise its strategic development plans and policies.

In 2009 United Nations Conference, which has just concluded in Cairo, the women activists raised the voice that the Washington stationed financial institutions has repeatedly made the mistake. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund accept the fact and argue that the measure to resolve the world economic crisis should not only deals with the general business transaction of the big business houses and capitalists. It should also address the discrimination of women which share fifty percent of the world's population.

The National Accounting system of Nepal should be revised so that it incorporates the females' unpaid work in country's major economic indicator. If such works are not incorporated then the country has biased attitude toward women's contribution. In this light, the feminist development is an useful approach for inclusive development. ■

¹ Prof Shrestha is chairperson of Social Inclusion Research Fund's Interim Screening Committee. The views presented are that of writer's own.

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Feminizing Development: An Approach for Inclusive Good Governance and Nation Building

By Mohan Das Manandhar
Rojan Bajracharya¹

“The development approach should be viewed through the eye of women” was the conclusion of the one day seminar on “Feminizing Development for Inclusive Good Governance and Nation Building” organized on 31st August 2009 jointly by Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) and Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA). The program was organized with an aim to give further mileage to the current discourse on feminizing the development approach. The inauguration session of program was chaired by Mr. Bharat Pokharel, executive director of CEDA. Honorable Finance Minister Surendra Pandey was the Chief Guest of program and Mr. Mohan Das Manandhar honored the panel on behalf of SIRF. The program started with welcome speech by the coordinator of program, Ms. Menaka Rajbhandari Shrestha of CEDA. She highlighted on the relevance of this program in the current raising debate on women’s inclusion.

The speech of chief guest followed in the program in which Hon. Minister Pandey highlighted on Government of Nepal’s concern on the issues of Inclusion and Exclusion. He said that the government is dedicated for equitable development of all populace regardless of gender, caste, ethnicity and spatial geographical location for which the focused poverty reduction measures have been designed and implemented. Such measures include reservation and scholarship for women, Dalits and Karnali residence. He further added that the current budget of the government has allocated 17.3 percent share in directly supportive gender responsive budget and the budget also has provision of admission without entrance examination in Nursing and Community Medical Assistance course for the girls of highly marginalized group, Muslims

and Karnali. He also expressed that this one day seminar would provide fruitful recommendation to government.

In the address to session by Mr. Mohan Das Manandhar, he briefed on the SIRF’s activities and future plan. He said that the SIRF’s past researches has substantially highlighted the issues of women inclusion/ exclusion and the leading identified issues of SIRF researches is women’s access to justice which perpetuate the violence against women. He also informed that SIRF’s research finding has been provided to Constitutional Assemble Members as such findings will be fruitful insight for constitutional building process. He also expressed that there is gender insensitive development approach in Nepal whose cause and consequences need to explored and addressed. Further, he added that there is raising issues identity politic whose cause and consequences also needs to be identified. Mr. Manandhar expressed that the program will provide fruitful insight on women inclusion debate and the SIRF further researches will highlighted other evolving inclusion issues.

In the speech to session by Rector of Tribhuvan University Dr. Soorya Lal Amatya, he highlighted on the low level of women’s participation from low to high level of social, cultural and political affairs. He claimed the traditionally nurtured patriarchal social system favors the discrimination of women at low to high level He added that the root cause of less participation has been highly ignored so that women’s inclusion has not been substantially addressed. So the country should also adopt Bottom Up approach to address the discrimination persists in all level of the society.

The inauguration session ended with vote of thanks by Mr. Bharat Pokharel

of CEDA.

He highlighted one low socio economic indicators of women and its causes. He expressed

that the program will good input for the intellectual debate of the country.

The three papers were presented in the program after the inauguration session. In the first session, Dr. Pushpa Shrestha, Chairperson of SIRF’s Interim Screening Committee, presented the paper titled “Feminist Vision in Development”. Mr. Bharat Pokharel, executive director of CEDA chaired this session and Dr. Niranjana Upadhaya, joint secretary of Public Service Commission, commented on the paper. Dr Shrestha’s paper highlighted on gender exclusive approach in the development practices of Nepal which result low socio economic development of women. The paper argues for the revision of development approach in light of gender lens so that there is inclusion of women in the development activities. The paper also reports on the low representation of women in decision making level of Nepal’s public as well as private sector which partially credit to less gender sensitive decision. Further, the paper argue for the gender sensitive strategic planning and policy making of the county and stressed for the continuation some of gender sensitive decision of government viz. rebate on women’s income. The paper strongly criticized the Gender Responsive Budgeting of government as there is not specific program for the allocated budget. Dr. Upadhaya commented that the paper has raised highly relevant





issues in the development practices of the country.

In the second session, SIRF researcher Ms Sarala Sigdel presented the paper titled "Role of Women in Civil Service". Dr. Indira Joshi, Chief of Research Division of Tribhuvan University, chaired the session and Dr. Yagya Prasad Adhikari, executive director of CNAS commented on the paper. Ms Sigdel's paper highlighted on the contemporary fact of women's status in civil service. The paper reports that there is substantially less share of women in the officer level post of civil service and the share marginally increases in case of low level staff. In both of the case, the share of women is less than 15 percent. The share of women is also low in the applicant for vacant civil post. The paper find that the women civil staff are not discriminated in the work place. The paper recommended that the women should be encouraged to apply for the vacant civil post which will lead to increase in female civil staff. For this, the government need to set up application processing units in various part of country; the government need

to enhance the advertisement of civil staff vacancy notice by using local FM; and the government can launch special training program to the women from rural area to make them competent candidate for vacant civil service post. Dr. Adhikari commented that this paper had brought out the stylish fact on the status of women in civil service and its recommendation would be highly useful to the government on the restructuring of the civil servant's recruitment process

In the third session, Prof. Amuda Shrestha, Honorable Member of National Women Commission, presented paper titled "Women in Political Parties, Private Sector, Media and Judiciary in Nepal. Mr. Gauri Pradhan, Honorable Member of National Human Rights Commission, chaired the session and Prof. Kapil Shrestha commented on the paper. Prof. Shrestha's paper reported on low participation of women in political parties, private sector, media and judiciary of Nepal. The participation of women in decision making position is substantially low with some being designated for the sake of representation and their opinions are

marginalized. The paper added that the organizational structure of public as well as private sector along with political parties and judiciary is highly influenced by the patriarchal social structure prevailed in Nepal which is the main reason for low participation of women. Prof. Shrestha comments the paper as the informative account of women's low participation in every sphere of development activities. He strongly demanded the government to address the issues of low women participation highlighted by many studies.

This one day conference is step forward in the discourse of female participation in the development practices. Specifically, the paper presented in seminar and the floor discussions evolved the new approach of feminist involvement in development practices which has been overlooked by the development practitioners particularly economist. ■

¹ Mr. Manandhar and Mr. Bajracharya are engaged with Social Inclusion Research Fund. This article is based on the proceeding of one day seminar titled "Feminizing Development for Inclusive Good Governance and Nation Building" organized on 31st August 2009 jointly by Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) and Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA).

“Don’t pretend that we have any silver bullet for the new constitution of Nepal”

- ROBERT PIPER

As head of the UNDP and Resident Humanitarian Coordinator to the UN, **ROBERT PIPER** oversees the largest humanitarian aid organization in Nepal. As UN bodies and the UNDP are helping Nepal through the current transitional process, **SHARMINI** sat down with **PIPER** to talk about some of the issues. Excerpts:

You’ve said that this is a critical time in Nepal’s history and that the UN can play an important role in it? Why do you say that?

It is a historic moment. It’s a key juncture where Nepali’s have decided that everything is up for reconstruction, what I would call open heart surgery. And open heart surgery is always a risky procedure but also it’s an extraordinary opportunity to deal with really complex underlying challenges of Nepali society that have been there for centuries. If you’re going to address them you’re probably going to need to be dramatic in your surgical procedures.

And what can the UN do?

Firstly, the UN is fundamentally an organization of collective security. The UN does peace, it does development, it does human rights, it does many things but it all starts with this principle of keeping the world more secure and safer. And so the UN’s got, firstly, that expertise on peace processes from all over the world. Its got 60 years of experience in Nepal doing humanitarian work, its got 2,500 people physically in Nepal all over the country that can help deliver the kinds of activities and changes that can make a difference. All of that is at the disposal of the Nepali people at the moment.

What kind of programs are you working on to support the constitution process?

Certainly the biggest intervention is the UNDP project in support of the CA. I think there are some 40 staff working there, they’ve helped set up the center for constitutional dialogue, which is providing constitutional dialogue, conference programs, workshop



programs and so forth to CA members and members of the public, but also working with the BBC world trust to do big public outreach to get Nepalis of all kinds of walks of life engaged in the constitution making process.

You say the UN has experience and expertise, what does this mean for the Nepali peace process?

We’re very careful as the UN to not pretend that we have any silver bullet for the new constitution of Nepal. It’s about us bringing the experience of the world to bear, the mistakes and the successes of other countries in their constitution making process so that Nepali decision makers, but also the public that need to participate in this process, learn how others have gone about it and the unexpected challenges and the unexpected successes.

And you are also promoting dialogues between different parties on the peace process.

At the national level, the UN has certainly facilitated lots of conversations between different people from different walks of life around the constitution making process.

You say it’s a time for redefining and restarting in Nepal. This sounds

very positive but the scenario doesn’t seem as positive with recent bhandas, strikes, basically unrest. How do you view these difficulties in terms of the work you need to do?

These are huge challenges and they’re probably going to get worse before they get better. So it’s with caution that we look at the months ahead. Nepal is poorly equipped to deal with these types of tensions and conflict. There’s a real absence of mechanisms in this country that allow issues to be negotiated in a peaceful manner, or around tables or in the columns of newspapers, etc. Taking to the streets and burning tires seems to be the first step in a negotiation progress in this country.

Social inclusion is one of the issues that you have addressed in the recent UNDP Human Development Report. When you have all these marginalized voices vying for attention at the same time, how is it possible to reach a consensus or compromise?

The proposition in our recent development report point is that you actually derive a great deal of strength from the diversity of your stakeholders in your constitution, in your nation on

the building process. If you see it, and interest groups see it as a zero sum game, 'if I don't get a state of my ethnic identity now then we've lost the battle' then it can be extraordinarily negative. But we argue that it can be harnessed very much in a positive way.

How can it be harnessed in a positive way?

The important thing is that all these voices are heard in the context of an overall framework, for the overall state. There are many different ways of accommodating different interest. But if not done well, of course, it can also promote lots of problems. We're promoting the kind of federalism that turns all that diversity into a strength instead of a weakness.

Recent disasters including flooding, late monsoons and droughts, have become a serious problem in Nepal. What are you doing to work on these issues?

Well the UN and their NGO partners have got a fairly strong emergency response capacity working with the government. WFP is feeding several million people. During the Koshi floods last year we were very heavily involved in providing emergency assistance and

now working on the recovery process with the survivors. In the diarrhea process in Jarjakot and elsewhere the UN and the world health organization has been pretty involved in supporting both the health ministry and supplies particularly water and sanitation, and food in the case of the WFP.

These disasters continue year after year. Can anything be done to reduce the impact?

Nepal has an endemic disaster profile. Roughly 1,000 people lose their life every year from some kind of natural disaster. And there's more we can be doing to reduce next year's victims. And that's something we've been impressing on the government.

What more needs to be done?

Whether it is in building codes in the Kathmandu Valley, which is a huge concern for us if a large scale earth quake hits. Whether it's doing contingency planning across the Terai for the inevitable annual flood, getting supplies there, or whether it's working at issues at the water sanitation in a place like Jarjakot where we've seen a huge crisis in the past six months. We know who are the most vulnerable and what we can do. It's not simply raising standards

across the country. That's worthwhile too but we can be much more targeted in what we can do.

Over the past years, have you been successful in your development goals?

Without doubt we're not satisfied. We've have to be more ambitious in terms of where we want to get to and Nepal is still the poorest country in S. Asia, it is 142 out of 178 countries in the human development index around the world. Income distribution gap is the widest in Asia and it continues to widen.

How do you see the recent UNMIN controversy in the Maoist cantonment?

I think UNMIN were given a very strict terms of reference on what they were asked to do by the government of Nepal in this peace process. And their role in the cantonments was defined around the monitoring of weapons. No one ever suggest that UNMIN would be standing at the gates counting and controlling the people going in and out anymore than they would in the Nepal army barracks. In the peace agreement that was tasked to the individual army commanders to control under some prescribed general conditions about how many people can be out at any one time. ■

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GURUKUL

The Drama School in Nepal

Gurukul is committed to the development of drama in Nepal

By PRADIPTI BHATTA

Established in 2002 as a drama school, Gurukul which was formed under the Aarohan Theatre Group has contributed a lot in the field of drama in Nepal. Apart from producing various dramas, Gurukul runs the only two-year theatre course in Nepal. The success of

drama in Nepal is the result of the effort of this organization.

Before becoming established as a drama school, The Aarohan Theatre Group had been performing various kinds of dramas for many years. Twenty seven years since its establishment and still they are equally focused in perform-

ing dramas regarding various subjects.

Not only does Gurukul perform dramas on stage, they also perform various community based plays which are performed at various remote areas of the Country. These plays are mainly focused on different social issues. Through these plays, they have been able to make people aware about different social problems and also give them a solution to such problems. These plays are mainly focused on discrimination, child labor, gender discrimination and so on. The social problems and its solution however are brought up by the people living in the community itself.

The dramas performed at Gurukul are all in Nepali. Some of the plays are translated from various languages into Nepali. These dramas are performed everyday at its premises at Baneshwor itself. Some of the famous dramas performed there are 'Dr. Kanak', 'From Life to Life', 'Dreams of Mayadevi', 'Dreams of Peach Blossoms', 'A Doll's House', and 'The Fire in the Monastery'. Most of these plays have been performed for more than fifty time and some have even been performed for around a hundred and thirty times. These plays have not only been performed in Nepal but also in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Norway and Denmark. ■

While this young singer performs before hundreds of people, the atmosphere is filled with a lot of curiosity, a little charm and some sort of disbelief. The 11th grader captivates the audience.

Astha Bhandari, an up and coming artist, promises to become a modern singer in the music world of Nepal.

With the release of her first album, Astha proves that her voice is unique and therefore, has the potential for a good market.

"After listening carefully to six of her songs, I have found that Astha has the potential to capture the hearts of the Nepalese," says Yadav Kharel, a renowned cine critic and producer. "What she requires is some dedication and commitment to music."

Reeyaz Music produced her album.

"I started singing just three years ago and this is my first public appearance," said Astha.

ASTHA BHANDARI

Promising Voice



As Nepal's music market is growing, younger artists like Astha will make it

big if they continue to improve on their art to captivate music lovers. ■

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