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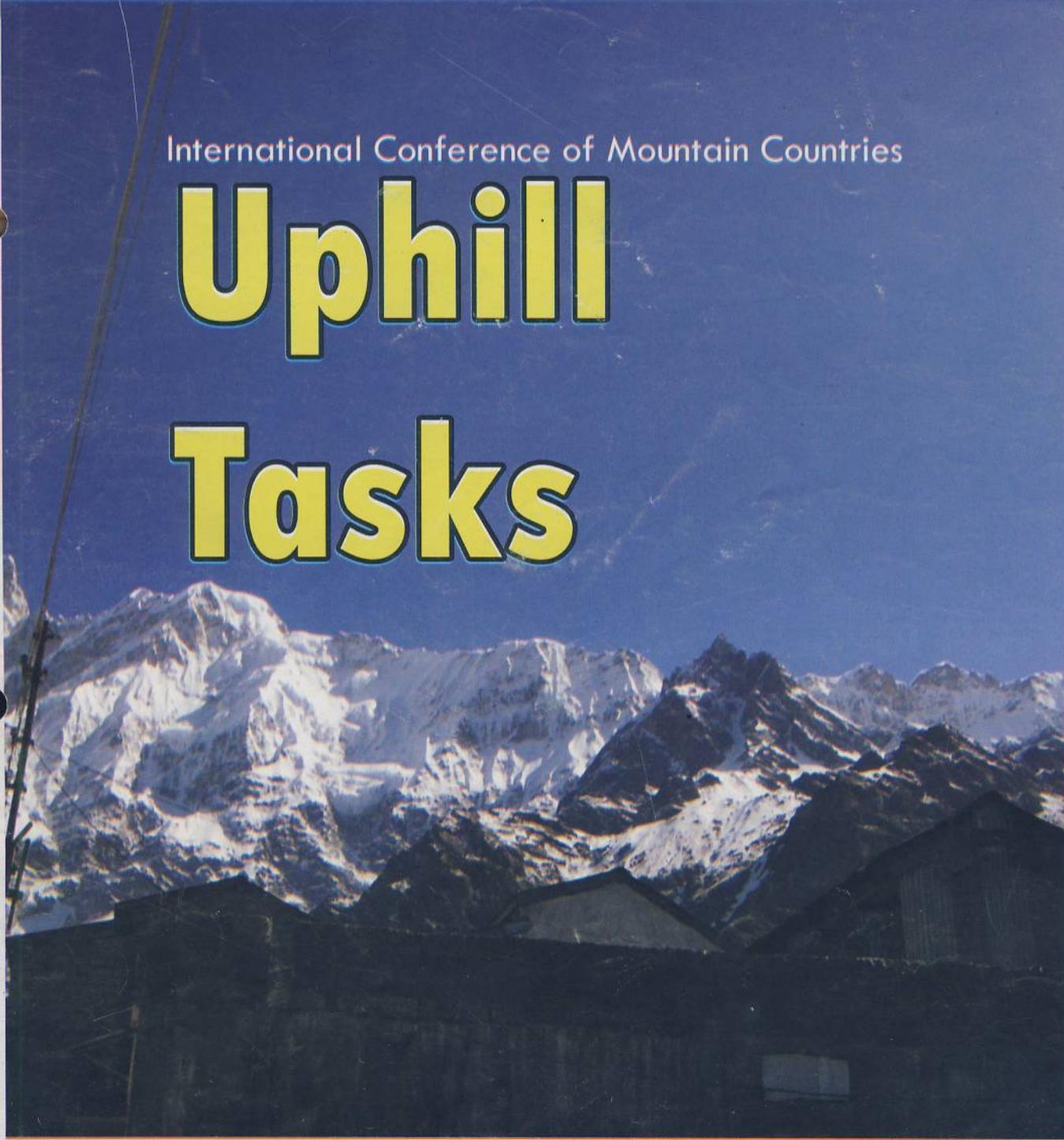
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FORTNIGHTLY

International Conference of Mountain Countries

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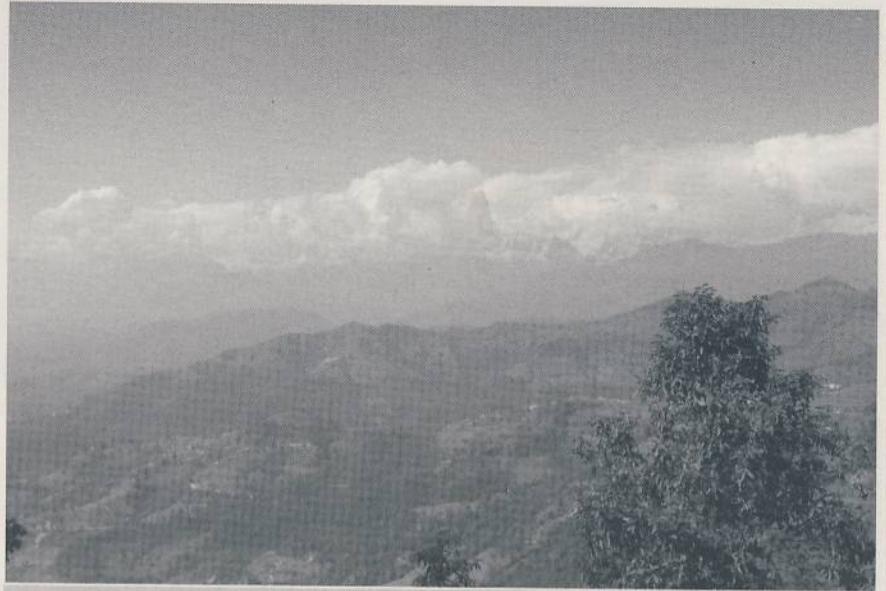


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## Editorial

If recent statements of prime minister and political leaders are any indication, they seem to be heading towards an agreement to extend the tenure of Constituent Assembly through the new amendment in the constitution. As less than 45 days remain before the tenure of CA to end, political parties, which are yet to settle the major issues related to peace process and constitution writing, leaders of political parties seem to be heading to extend the tenure as an easy way out. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court refused to review its earlier decision for the extension of the CA term. A single bench of SC Justice Kamal Narayan Das issued the order to this effect.

Instead of going behind an uncertain political course, we have decided to take up the international mountain conference as a our cover story. Despite several commonalities among the mountain countries around the world in terms of eco-system and resources, they are yet to come closer. From Andes to Hindkush regions and Africa, mountain countries are more vulnerable to climate change than other countries. At a time when rising temperature continues to affect the overall eco-system of the hills, increasing hardship to the life of the people, International Conference of Mountain Countries on Climate Change is a milestone. We look at various aspects of the conference and its importance in the present context in the cover story. Since Nepal has been in the forefront of raising the issue of mountain countries, hosting international conference of mountain countries is another important step for Nepal.



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## 'Nepal Airlines Received 21 Ministers But Not A Single Airplane,'

PABITRA KUMAR KARKI

President of Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA)

After celebrating Visit Nepal Year 1998, the number of tourists increased the following year. What are the chances of seeing a similar increase now?

The main achievement of Nepal Tourism Year (NTY) is increase in public awareness. The number of tourists increased in 2000 after celebrating Visit Nepal Year in 1998. We are optimistic that the effects of NTY 2011 will be seen in years 2012 and 2013. The carryover effect is already seen by the number of tourist arrivals in the first two months of this year.



The government has announced Visit Lumbini and Investment Year at the twilight of NTY 2011 and is organizing various programs for promotions, what effects are you expecting to see in the tourism sector from these announcements?

The government announced these campaigns out of the blue. We can see only political reasons behind it. We all concerned associations were involved in each and step while making plans for NTY 2011 and we all were prepared.

The government declared the Investment Year without doing any homework. Likewise, similar is the situation with Visit Lumbini campaign. Till now, when compared with last year, the number of visitors has decreased in Lumbini and clearly preparations are lacking.

About Visit Lumbini year declaration, didn't the government discuss with NATTA and other concerned stakeholders?

No, we didn't discuss with the government and we didn't have any clue about it either. We only came to know about the event when we received a card from the government telling us that the government will declare Visit Lumbini year and conclude NTY at the same event.

What are the main reasons behind fixing the same fare by all the airlines which are operating international flights for a whole year?

After the Labor Ministry became little strict, the problem had decreased. Airlines companies have helped a lot to increase the number of tourists in Nepal, so we must be thankful to them.

The main reason behind such a scenario is due to weakness of Nepal Airlines. In other countries, the national flag carrier sets the fare, but in Nepal it is not the case. Nepal Airlines has received 21 ministers but not a single airplane, so airlines companies are doing as they like. *(Karobar)*

## CNI To Participate In Boao Forum

A team representing Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) will participate in a high-level conference organized by Boao Forum for Asia in the Hainan state of China.

Upon the invitation from the Boao forum, the team led by CNI president Binod Kumar Chaudhary will head for the conference. Other members of the delegation will include Anuj Agrawal, Vice-President of CNI and Sujit Acharya, Advisor to Clean Energy Development at CNI.

## "No Condition To Provide Loans"

MANOJ GOYAL

Chief Executive Officer of Clean Energy Development Bank and president of Development Bankers' Association Nepal (DBAN)

Balance sheets of all the banks were very bad, why?

There are two reasons for that. First when there was excess liquidity, Treasury bill's rate came down less than a percent. But, the rates provided by banks had still not fallen. Along with the rise in liquidity, bank's cost also increases simultaneously. Loans were not invested properly. Secondly, due to bad debts in the real estate and in the transportation sector (Tipper, Heavy equipment) during the period. This increased losses. So, due to interest rates and bad debts, balance sheets are very weak.



Till when will this situation exist?

These two problems will not be solved immediately. The situation will still exist for another 1-2 years.

Will real estate sector take banking sector to the graves along with it?

This will not happen. The money gone in the real estate is expended, not lost. The value will always be there. Only in bank's balance sheet, bad debts and unrecovered interests will be seen.

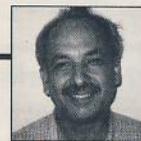
Liquidity is on a rise. But, investments have not been likewise. Why have banks not been able to invest?

In this time, we cannot provide loans. There was liquidity crisis for a long time and then liquidity increased suddenly. Normal increase is 10-12 per cent, but in our scenario, it increased by 22-23 percent. The money we have received cannot be risked. Banks will try to invest it securely. We should not repeat mistakes of the past and we are in no condition to go back to real estate and share market.

There are talks about productive sectors. But, in what should we invest? In the productive sector we cannot recover money quickly. We can commit 10 billion to hydropower, but it will take three years to recover the money. *(Nagarik)*

The Boao Forum is a non-profit organization that hosts high-level forums for leaders from government, business and academia in Asia and other continents.





# Judgementality

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Five individuals who also happen to be the judges of the Supreme Court (that included the Chief Justice) were invited by the dispute resolution committee consisting of leaders from four major political groups. Madhav Kumar Nepal, a former Prime Minister and the leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) vented his ire: judiciary needs to purify itself. He also said that judiciary has not cooperated when he, as the Prime Minister, tried to begin the road expansion in the capital. In a way, he set the tone for 'lenden' (give and take) with the judges.

The judges attending the summon of the political committee will bring the judiciary to public for many days to come, if not months and years.

There are far more important issues that need to be clarified here. One, the five judges who went there were there purely on their individual capacities. They may have put forward many important and right issues, but that should be taken purely as their individual views, and in no way, the viewpoint of the Supreme Court as an institution.

The judges apparently tried to plead their cases on bended knees: that the Supreme Court's role was no

less prominent in having democracy restored almost parallel to the people's movement of 2006 as it had, among other things, dismissed the Royal Commission set up by the King's regime to try 'corruption cases' against some leaders including former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. No doubt, it was a laudable verdict by a full bench of the Supreme Court headed by Anup Raj Sharma. It is also a very clear case that the Supreme Court was free and independent even during that regime, something that cannot be said about post 2006 April situation. For the judges to point out a judgment delivered by a bench in the past as a poof of their commitment to democracy, and beg on that basis the 'indepdence' of judiciary in the future constitution only betrays lack of confidence and conviction on these core values.

Independence of judiciary is an integral and inseparable part of a constitution along with full respect to the principle of separation of powers. Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda are the ones who have been advocating for doing away with the principle of separation of powers and independence of judiciary. They wanted a committed and captive judiciary that would be accountable to the legislature. They have not given up on that.

Soon after the 2006 April movement, the judges in the Supreme Court were asked to take fresh oath on the basis of a provision in the interim constitution. The judges society is not

asserting that the judges should not be asked to take oath once again when the new constitution is promulgated. But failure on the part of the judges then to resist -fresh oath- would land them in trouble no matter what the five judges may have told before the political committee. If they can take oath because there was a provision inserted in the interim constitution, how will they resist it if a 'full fledged constitution to be prepared by the Constituent Assembly has that provision? A compromise made by the judges then will prove to be a slur on the independence of judiciary forever in the future.

No doubt, the judges told the committee that having a separate constitutional court was undesirable and that the

independence of judiciary—that is also linked with the issue of appointment of judges—should be maintained at any cost. True, setting up of a separate constitutional court will reduce the Supreme Court to an extension of the executive, something Maoists would want to pursue very seriously. But independence of the judiciary is not something a political committee would be able to fathom. Not too long ago, had Prachanda said that he recognised only the 'people's



Chief Justice Khilraj Regmi

court' and not the Supreme Court. Incidentally, his comment had come in connection with the Supreme Court's verdict that the Constituent Assembly will stand dissolved even if it failed to have the constitution delivered by May 27 (2012). It may not have been a coincidence that the summon to the judges was issued a day before it was to deliver its judgment on the maintainability of review petition on its last verdict on the tenure of the House. Judges being independent and conscientious should not be enough, they should be seen as being one. After all, when we talk about independence of judiciary, it means independence and freedom of the judiciary as an institution, and that of individual judges. And going by what Madhav Nepal said on the occasion was not charitable either.

The fact that the committee has not called any other legal luminaries to discuss the 'future judiciary' and only senior judges of the Supreme Court merits criticism. As the CA is out to curtail the process of interacting with the people and stakeholders, it merely performed a formality. But there are ominous signs that judiciary would not be as independent and free as it was under the 1990 constitution. It is clearly going to be a 'regressive and anti-people' constitution. The treatment meted to the judges, and the fact that they swallowed it tells it all. ■



Mahato, Gachhadar, Prachanda and Dr. Bhattarai

## POLITICS

# Shifting Alliance

*With or without the constitution, political stability shows no sign of coming even after May 27*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Known radical leaders of UCPN-Maoist Mohan Baidya and Dev Gurung went to offer condolences to Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, who was mourning his father's death, in his house in Budhanilkantha. When they were talking, Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel also joined in the discussions.

From radical Maoist leader Baidhya to NC leaders Deuba and Poudel, all were discussing what was necessary to promulgate the constitution and conclude the peace process before the May 27 deadline. "I am not an opponent of the constitution and the peace process," said Baidhya, who is projected by media as a hardliner. Nepali Congress leader Deuba and Poudel indicated the possibility of a compromise on the integration issue.

In informal meetings, Nepal's political leaders show a very human and responsive behaviour among one another. However, their posture is different when they speak in the public.

Not only Baidhya, Congress leader Deuba, Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, UCPN-Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, Nepali Congress leader Sushil Koirala and CPN-

UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal and UML chair Jhahnath Khanal often meet and come out with a statement that they have agreed to make concessions.

However, their commitments rarely materialize. Whether it is in the peace process or constitution writing, they are several agenda apart to make agreements. But, all these issues can be settled within a minute as there are not many ideological differences among them.

"One of the positive sides of Nepalese politicians is that they can sit together despite their political differences. This is a hopeful sign that your country will take the right path by promulgating the new constitution and concluding the peace process," said a western diplomat on condition of anonymity. "These kinds of heart to heart relations are not there in other parts of South Asia."

But, their heart to heart relations and commitments to bring stability back in the country are rarely getting materialized. Their statements rarely matter in the context of decision making. Nepal's renowned constitutional lawyer and political analyst Ganesh Raj Sharma used to say that Nepal's political reality is that invisible players are more powerful

than the visible ones in exercising political powers.

He argued that Nepal's political alliance are made and broken strangely. For instance, Nepal's communist parties hold more than two thirds in the CA. However, leader Baburam Bhattarai of radical UCPN-Maoist prefers to head the coalition with rightists and regional parties like Madhesis.

Prime Minister Dr. Bhattarai is a pro-Indian stooge for Maoist ideologue Mohan Baidya Kiran. But they were in the same group, known as Dhobighat platform, to prevent Maoist leader Prachanda from becoming the prime minister. Nepal has a long history of making and breaking unusual alliances for the purpose of the visible players.

Nepali Congress, whose workers suffered a lot during the people's war, joined the front dominated by all radical leftists to overthrow the liberal system and monarchy. Similarly, Baidhya, who is said to be communist ideologue, and is calling to establish the people's communist republic, has just made an alliance with ethnic and caste based groups to launch an agitation. As a communist, Baidhya was supposed to raise the issue of classes rather than of castes. Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao were able to make revolutions through the class war. However, Nepal's ultra left communists and other communists are harping on the agenda of ethnicity and caste.

One may not be surprised at the upsurge of any kinds of alliances. As the prominent constitutional lawyer said, alliances are made and broken not on the wish of visible players but due to the invisible political players. This was there in the past and it will be there for a long time to come.

In a politics of contradictions, whether there is a constitution or not, be it in peace or violence, it is almost certain that Nepal has to go through a long process before installing a political stability. Nepal's hard reality is that the statements and relations of Nepal's political leaders are less a matter in the process of final negotiations. ■

## Federal Republic Irreversible

By PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL PRACHANDA



There is no option before us other than to promulgate the new constitution. We have no option now but to complete the peace process by May 27, 2012. If we fail to complete these twin tasks, the people will put the blame on us. As disputes among the major political parties have grown, regressive forces, that have been making efforts to come back, will benefit from this. At this crucial juncture, the demand for Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's resignation will lead the country towards "darkness and uncertainty."

It is sheer irresponsibility to seek the resignation of Prime Minister Bhattarai. I think this is not the solution, to force Bhattarai to step down at a time when the parties have only two months left to complete the peace and constitution writing processes. I have already held meetings with leaders of various political parties, including our party comrades. Despite their pressure tactics, our party leaders will finally unite for the cause of constitution and peace process. This is just a temporary phenomenon. If necessary, the cabinet could be reshuffled. However, Bhattarai's leadership will remain there until the parties agree to a national consensus government as envisaged by the seven-point understanding signed on November 1, last year.

In the present political deadlock, the Maoist party is the only one party; the opposition parties are also responsible for the delay in forming a consensus government. I am very surprised to see the dual characters of leaders. Earlier, the Baidhya camp came with a delegation to ask me to nominate Baburamji as the prime ministerial candidate, and now the same delegation has been demanding that I overthrow Baburamji.

From within our party and outside, efforts are being made by various factions to sabotage the constitution and peace process. As the country has already embarked on a new political phase, it is impossible to reverse the process. People of Nepal have already decided their destiny by choosing federal, republic and secular Nepal. This is the mandate of the people and Constituent Assembly has to work towards these directions. Every political party has differences within. The main cause of the intra-party rift is that we want to conclude the peace process, but they want to sabotage the whole process. Since the process has already moved forward, it is impossible for us to go back. Of course, there are certain hiccups in the constitution writing and peace. Within two months, we will settle everything. The issue of form of government and state restructuring will be settled through negotiations. So far as the number of states is concerned, it will be decided in accordance with the political agreement. My proposal is for 12 provinces. We can come to a compromise. Provinces must be named on the basis of identity and capability. In the name of capability, there is no question to give up the issue of identity.

It is unfortunate that some so-called civil society members have sabotaged the visit of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to Lumbini. Had he come to Nepal, it would have given a positive message about Nepal's peace process and constitution writing. The visit would have enhanced Nepal's image at the international arena.

*Prachanda is a chairman of UCPN-Maoist. As told to media persons.*



## On Revival Of Monarchy

By KAMAL THAPA

The country has been passing through a very serious crisis. Due to the irresponsibility of political leaders, the country's identity and nationalism are under a severe threat. This is time for us to think about the preservation of the country rather than writing the constitution and completing the integration process. After removal of monarchy and proclamation of federalism, the country is heading towards ethnic divisions. The divisive trends continue to rule the country. In the present context of uncertainty looming at the horizons, all Nepalese need to unite for the cause of the nation and nationalism. RPP-Nepal has been warning of this over the last years, but nobody paid heed.

Given the present political scenario, it is almost certain now that it is impossible to promulgate the new constitution by May 27. As per the verdict of the Supreme Court, the doors to extension of tenure of Constituent Assembly have already closed. Any move to extend the tenure of CA will be unconstitutional and unethical. We will oppose such a move. In this context, after the expiry of the tenure of Constituent Assembly, the country has few options left other than to go for a referendum on major issues Monarchy, Hindu Religion and Federalism. Only the decision taken through a referendum and direct opinion of the people can decide such important issues.

Whatever leaders of political parties have been saying, their actions have already shown that they are neither serious about peace nor constitution writing. If they could not write the constitution and conclude the peace process in the last four years, they cannot deliver the constitution in the remaining two months. The crisis is inevitable now and the remaining two months cannot deliver the constitution.

I don't think the constitution can save the nation and no constitution can replace the nation. Now it is not the time to talk of the constitution, but instead we have to work to save the nation. The people should now concentrate their entire efforts on how to protect the nation and Nepal's own identity. The coalition government led by Baburam Bhattarai is one of the most corrupt governments in the history of Nepal. From prime minister to minister, all of them are looting the country's treasury. Maoist leadership even grabbed the money given to their cadres. Although it was withdrawn following a massive protest, Prime Minister Bhattarai has shown to what context. Since this government has already been proved as the most corrupt and irresponsible one, PM Bhattarai should tender his resignation at the earliest. Not only the people's trust, PM Bhattarai is also losing his grounds inside his own party as his own party colleagues do not trust him. It is the weakest government formed ever in this country.

Monarchy has been shoved off temporarily. The geo-political, religious, cultural, and political background is still ideal for a monarchical rule. Nepal is going to face a major political crisis after May 27. Political parties have already looted the country and people are very frustrated with them. There is no alternative to a fresh referendum on the issues of reinstating Nepal as a Hindu nation and on the future of constitutional monarchy.

*Thapa is a president of RPP-Nepal. Based on his media interaction.*



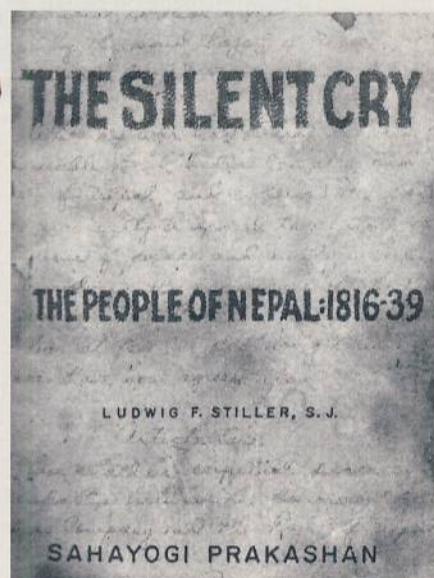
Must-read books on Nepal

## The Story of Silent Years

By BIPIN ADHIKARI

*The Silent Cry* is the story of the People of unified Nepal during a trying period of adjustment and searching of goals. This story begins with the Treaty of Sugauli signed in 1816 and continues through to the death of Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa in 1839.

In this book, Ludwig F. Stiller, a leading Nepalese historian, has described the Treaty of Sugauli as "a beginning rather than an end to Nepal's time of troubles." The Treaty was signed on December 2, 1815 and ratified by March 4, 1816, between the British East India Company and Nepal ending the



Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J., *The Silent Cry: The People of Nepal: 1816-1839* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan, 1976)

Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816).

The Treaty of Sugauli called for territorial concessions in which parts of the unified Nepal were given to British India, the establishment of a British representative in Kathmandu, and allowing Britain to recruit Gurkhas from Nepal for their military service. By virtue of this Treaty, Nepal also lost the right to deploy any British, American or European employee in its service without British approval. Earlier several French commanders had been deployed in Nepal to train the Nepali army.

Under the Treaty, about one-third of Nepalese territory was lost, including Sikkim (whose Chogyals supported

Britain in the War); territory to the west of the Mahakali River like Kumaon and Garhwal (present Indian state of Uttarakhand); some territories to the west of the Sutlej River like Kangra (present day Himanchal Pradesh); and much of the Tarai region. A part of the Tarai Region was restored to Nepal under a revision of the treaty and more territory was returned in 1865 to thank Nepal for helping the British to suppress the Indian rebellion of 1857.

*The Silent Cry* is a book that describes Nepal's people and their polity in the next twenty-three years after the ratification of the Treaty of Sugauli. It is the period that has been largely ignored in the modern history of Nepal.

The book is divided into four parts. The first three chapters provide an analysis of the situation prevailing in Nepal at the time. This analysis covers the seeds of conflict with the British India, the trauma of defeat of the war, the details of village Nepal at that time and government constraints in the post-war perspective.

In the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters, the author covers the movements of Nepal towards greater internal unity at the regional and village level as well as the obstacles that hindered that growth. Here the author deals with Bhim Sen Thapa's authority, the Nepal China affair, the restoration of Tarai, the intrigue in Kathmandu, army discontent, and Nepal's involvement with Sindhia. His analysis of the growth of unity and revenue collection policies in the post-war perspective comes next. After this, the author talks about the 'Sanskritization' process as well.

Chapters seven, eight and nine explore the dialogue that took place between the central administration of the unified Nepal in Kathmandu and its villages and explain the administration's failure to respond to the needs of the peasantry. Here the author discusses insecurity and unrest that emerged in the context of the ceiling on *Jagirs*, the struggle for security, the emergence of a pressure group, the restless army, the conflict between Bhim Sen Thapa and the Residency, and the events leading to his downfall.

In the last chapter, the author has restated the major themes of *The Silent Cry* and tried to explain the nuances of this title.

According to Stiller, the silent years – 'the years of unheard cry' were the cry of the common Nepalis in the postwar perspective. The cry went up from rural Nepal. It was a cry of pain and a cry of protest against official indifference to their plight. It was the cry of the system calling for change. At the root of the problem was the newly set up administration, the tax and revenue system, justice process, and lack of protection to the common people. The cry went unheard. Although he achieved a great deal for Nepal when he succeeded in gaining a restoration of more of the Tarai land than the British governor general had first envisioned when he made his proposal in 1816. But people wanted more efficient administration, some regular and accepted channels of communications, relief from the burden of taxes, and so on. It appeared in the silent years that Thapa was concerned primarily about his own position in society. He remained a strong promoter of his family interests. The essential failure of the Bhim Sen Thapa's administration was simply a lack of vision as to how to run the newly unified country. Stiller points out:

Bhim Sen Thapa lost touch with the people of Nepal because he lacked vision; and the people of Nepal failed to move towards a greater unity and a true sense of Nepali nationhood because he lacked vision. He saw no greater goals to strive for. His administration and his own actions were all bound up in maintaining the *status quo*. He was satisfied with what the state had and with what he had, an attitude no serious politician can afford or accept.

The unified Nepal, according to Stiller, was not able to keep up with three basic ideas that King Prithvi Narayan Shah had bequeathed to the nation. He links this conclusion with Prithvi Narayan Shah's belief that the nation walked on two legs, the farmers of 'village Nepal' as well as the military rank and file; that a rich peasantry made a rich country; and that good government

depended on nobility of service. Stiller points out: "somewhere on the road to conquest, amid the crash of guns and the sweat of battle, these ideals were lost."

The *Silent Cry* that Nepal was living with was not without result. "From 1839 until 1846 Kathmandu would know nothing but alarms, changes in ministries, increasing tension, and finally the explosive night of the Kot Massacre, the fourteenth of September 1846." The author reminds of the close connection between the events and policies of the silent years and the emergence of Jung Bahadur. The silent years ended with such violence largely because the cry of rural Nepal and the Nepali nation had gone unheeded. The author, who released the book in 1976, remarks that the modalities of the cry have changed now and there is change in the content as well. But he argues "the cry is still there." The question is "will it be heard any more closely than it was during the silent years?"

For a student of law, Stiller's analysis of the problem of 'Sanskritization' and its results is interesting. He has tried to explain ethnic diversity and customary law in the newly unified state, the ideal of Hindu law and unity, and the beginning of the process of 'Sanskritization.' Here, the author banks much on references on Hindu law, as practiced elsewhere, rather than legal rules produced in the new state. His use of the term 'Sanskritization' in the contents that he has been reflecting on seems over generalized, or a little too much. One must however agree with his finding that "not only was the legal dialogue of the silent years building up a record of legally sanctioned differences in custom and practice, it was also building up a record of differences in treatment meted out to citizens of different ethnic and caste backgrounds."

Finally, it must be pointed out that in his preface, the author gives an important note of caution: "The reader will be well aware that my conclusions are far from a final statement of the events of the 'silent years'. I hope he will be equally aware that 'the silent cry' chronicled in these pages is not the dying echo of the distant past but a challenge to all of us today to realize that we are in truth our brother's and sister's keeper." This is an impressive book which must be read by anybody who wants to link up contemporary Nepal to its history. ■

NEPAL INVESTMENT YEAR 2012

# Chinese Investment Under Scrutiny

*At a time when Nepal government is asking foreign investors to come to Nepal, three Chinese companies, which came to Nepal for investment, have been facing hiccups*

By A CORRESPONDENT

In the last four months, three Chinese investment proposals have landed in a controversy. In the last week of December 2011, Nepal government postponed negotiations with Chinese investors regarding the investment in Lumibni Development project.

The parliament's Natural Resources and Means Committee (NRMC) has obstructed the entry of China's Three Gorges Corporation International (CTGI) in development of West Seti Project, calling for rectification of a few legal and procedural lapses in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Chinese company

However, the NRMC, which is currently probing the West Seti deal, has a list of conditions that it wants the government to honor. "We are for the development of the project as per the deal signed with the Chinese company by correcting shortcomings in the deal," said Gagan Thapa, a member of the NRMC.

He added that the committee wanted to extract maximum benefits for the country in the West Seti deal.

NRMC chairperson Shanta Chaudhary echoed Thapa. "Terminating the MoU would cause more harm to the national economy. But we need to correct mistakes in the deal."

Similarly, the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature Parliament termed a bid, invited to develop regional international airport in Pokhara, as non-transparent. Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun was found to have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China CAMC Engineering Co, committing to support it to win the tender.

CAAN had invited bids from the

Chinese promoted company on February 9, however, its decision to pledge 45 days' timeline to respond to the bid call drew serious questions from different quarters.

"As the airport is being constructed under soft loans of China's Exim Bank, it is okay to call tenders from Chinese contractors only. But who gave the authority to the FM or the government to make such a commitment on behalf of the country to support CAMC?" said Uapdhyaya.



Chinese Ambassador Addressing Program In Dolkha

Whether it is just a coincidence or geo-political game, Chinese investment is facing crisis in Nepal one after another. "It is shocking to know that Nepalese parliamentarians are blocking the

investment proposal forwarded by Chinese. Our company came here to make Nepal prosper and economically viable," said a senior Chinese diplomat on condition of anonymity. "We can see who is behind the controversy."

Following the visit of Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabo to Nepal, China has shown interests to invest billions of dollars in Nepal's tourism, hydro power and infrastructure projects. Despite the welcome accorded by the government to these possibilities, the parliament is creating hindrances.

"We have been here to support the poor people of Nepal and continue to be here to uplift their livelihoods. I think your members of parliament will also realize this," said the Chinese diplomat. Sandwiched between Asia's two big powers India and China, Nepal's difficulty is to adjust with both for its own survival. ■

## INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

# An Uphill Task

Despite many commonalities in eco-system, resource sharing and livelihood issues, mountain countries around the world are yet to develop a mechanism to share these agenda among them. At a time when studies have shown that climate change is going to adversely affect environment and eco-system of the mountain countries, Nepal is hosting the International Conference of Mountain countries on climate change on April 5-6. As a country having eight out of ten highest peaks in the world, Nepal is always in the forefront to raise the agenda of mountains. Challenges before Nepal now are how to retain its reputation at the international level

By KESHAB POUDEL

With rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns, environment, eco-system and resources in the mountain countries have been facing a serious threat. Mountains cover wide areas or about 35 percent of the total land in all five continents but there is yet to have a common platform to raise the voices.

At a time when various groups have been formed to raise the issue of common interests at the UNFCCC negotiations, mountain countries need to have a group in the UNFCCC. Despite several commonalities and common interests, mountain countries are yet to have a common stand.

Nepal's efforts to bring the agenda of mountain people date back to the 1950s. They continue even today as Nepal took a Mountain Initiative in 2009 at COP 15. Then Nepal's Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal called all mountain countries and stakeholders to come together to form a common platform and make sure that mountain concerns get due attention in the international deliberations. He said that our interests are prominently represented in the future COP negotiations and our efforts towards adaptation get the required international support.

Mountains, which occupy over one third of the landmass of the globe and are home to over 13 percent of the people,

provide essential eco-system, goods and services to the billions of people living in the downstream regions, including the plains. The ice of the Himalayas, the Alps and the Atlas plays a critical role in regulating the global climate system.

As the temperature rises and precipitation changes due to climate change, the environment and eco-system in the mountain countries are highly fragile and vulnerable, threatening the livelihood of poor people living in the mountains and low lands.

With the low capacity to cope with the vulnerabilities and adapt to the unprecedented changes that have been taking place, mountain people face increasing poverty, natural and human induced hazards and socio-economic challenges.

"We have invited 55 countries and 25 institutions around the world. We have also invited 40 international experts. Out of them, over 14 countries have already confirmed their ministerial participation," said Batu Krishan Uprety, joint secretary (Tech) at Ministry of Environment. One of the objectives of the conference is to provide a forum for the mountain countries to share knowledge and experiences on impact of climate change on the mountains and deliberate on associated common risks. Another objective is to forge a common approach to deal with specific concerns relating

to mountain eco-system and livelihood.

"The themes include state of mountain issues and climate negotiations, vulnerability and resilience of mountain systems, opportunities for greater international cooperation, mountain ecosystem services and upstream-downstream linkages, strategic options for mountain climate adaptation and livelihood opportunities and climate financing," Uprety said.

## Nepal's Importance

As soon as Nepal opened to the outside world in 1950s, Nepal's mountain peaks became an inspiration for many. From Swiss Development expert late Tony Hagen, who covered a distance of about 14,000 kilometer on foot, to several others, experts have made several studies on socio-economic, agricultural and environmental aspects of mountains. Nepal's mountains attracted late Edmund Hillary so much that he spent his entire life championing the cause of mountains.

Nepal's renowned personality late Dr. Harka Gurung had also made an equal contribution to bring the mountain agenda, particularly Nepal's mountains, to forefront.

With support from International Center for Integrated Mountain Development ICIMOD, Integrated Development Society Nepal (ISD-Nepal), Ministry of Environment has

## “We Want To Create A New Initiative”

KRISHNA GYAWALI

As Nepal is hosting the International Conference of Mountain Countries on climate change on April 5-6 and preparation for the meeting is at the last stage, secretary at the ministry KRISHNA GYAWALI spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on the agenda and issues of the conference. Excerpts:

**As Nepal is said to be in the leading role for raising the issues of mountain countries, what is there for us in the forthcoming International Conference of Mountain Countries on climate change?**

Nepal has been involved in the mountain agenda for quite a long time. The establishment of ICIMOD headquarters in Nepal was one of the important aspects in this regard. Although ICIMOD covers eight countries of Hindukush Himalayan region, this gives Nepal an opportunity to get involved in the mountain agenda. This conference is different because we want to link it with the climate change negotiations. Nepal's active participation in climate change negotiations is very new. Although Nepal has already taken part in 17 COPs, we have started our active participation just after Bali or COP 8 and COP 9. Nepal has shown its own presence in COP 15 Copenhagen, hosting a cabinet meeting at the highest mountain in Kalapatthar.

already held consultation meetings. ICIMOD will provide technical support and Nepal's other development partners will provide financial support to Nepal to hold the conference.

“Mountains may be considered sacred, sublime and beautiful. They also happen to be marginal areas of human occupancy due to their high altitude and steep gradients. But the mountains are not an amorphous mass but a composite of elevation zones,” writes Nepal's renowned geographer late Dr. Harka Gurung in his book Mountain of Asia: A Regional Inventory.

According to the book, it is estimated that some 40 million square kilometers or 27 percent of the total land area of the world lies above 1000 masl. The

**What is the difference between the past efforts and the present ones?**

There are some major differences in International Conference of Mountain Countries and Nepal's past involvement in raising mountain agenda. Firstly, this is for the first time Nepal is holding such a big international gathering of representatives of mountain countries. Our target is to make it as ministerial level meeting. Of course, all the invitees may not attend due to their own compulsions. However, our efforts will be to make it a high level ministerial meeting.

**What agenda does Nepal have?**

We want to raise the agenda of mountain countries which are the most vulnerable to climate changes. We have some commonalities with all mountain countries. For instance, economy of all the mountain countries is based on mountain ecology and agriculture is a mainstay for all of us. Our tourism is based on mountains. Our mountains are water towers, as well as watersheds.

**Why is water matter?**

As water is a major issue now, our conference is expected to promote the water issue. Another important issue is food security. As a country with varied climatic zone, Nepal has diversity. Nepal can show the world community an example of how climate resilient, climate

breakdown of this elevated land surface is as follows: 24 million square kilometers at 1000m -2000 m, 10 million sq.km. at 2,000-3000 m, 10 million sq. km. at 2,000-3000 m and six million square km above 3,000 m. Another earlier source put the total area worldwide, defined as mountain type to be 50 million sq kilometers. Accordingly, such areas account for 35 percent of the world's total area. The mountain types defined by elevation range were hills 0-300 m, low mountains (300-900m) and high mountains above (900m).

Eurasia dominates all other continents in terms of low and high mountains. Aran geographers in the middle ages, in their imaginative way, regarded as a desirable woman clothed



friendly and climate adaptable agriculture is viable. Other important issue will be energy.

**How do you see the possibility to tap renewable energy?**

As a mountain country, Nepal is rich in renewable energy. Our current definition incorporates micro hydro only. We have solar, wind and biomass. Micro hydro has potential of over 22,000 MW. We have yet to tap the renewable energy. Our efforts will be to see how climate change affects water, energy, agriculture and bio-diversity. Mitigation and adaptation are important components of climate change.

**What are the challenges before Nepal?**

in nothing but a long chain girdle about her ample waist. This girdle was of mountains studied with snow peaks that stretched from the Pyrenees through the Alps, Balkans, Caucasus, and Elburz to the limits of the known world in the Hindu Kush and Himalayas. Most of the mountain areas of Eurasia are concentrated in the Asian region.

According to a study by Trewartha et al, 1968, high mountain 900 M + cover 4 percent in Africa, 1 percent in Australia, and Eurasia 23, North America 16 and South America 11 percent. In total, such percentages come to about 13 percent. Low mountains cover 13 percent in Africa, 12 Australia, 21 Eurasia, North America 10 percent, South America 11 and world 4 percent. Hills (0-300m) covers 11

We have been facing many negative consequences of climate change like rise of temperature and change in precipitation patterns and annual average rainfall. Nepal's glaciers are vulnerable. Due to this, Nepal is fourth highly vulnerable country in the world. Our share in global warming is minimal but it will affect us. Our contribution to climate change may be smaller but our activities increase the green house.

#### **How do you see our level of participation?**

Our level of participation is high in the COP. Our presence was formidable and we are able to hold the international conference. Nepal had declared during the COP that Nepal would host a meeting of mountain countries to highlight the problems faced by mountain countries. This is our initiative. We need a forum to raise our own agenda. We have been using the Least Developed Countries forum for this. Out of 14, there are various countries from different regions. Our aim is not to replace or displace LDC through this new initiative. What we want is to create a new initiative. There are various groups in COP like the Latin American Countries, Iceland country and African countries. We also want to have a group for mountain countries to deal with the problems faced by mountain countries. The group can be formed on the basis of commonalities.

#### **How do you see the potentials?**

There are potentials and opportunities and risks and challenge on the other

percent Africa, Australia 12, Eurasia 10, North America 18, South America 5 and world 8 percent.

The recognition of discrete ranges within each region is based mainly on their contiguity internally and the existence of major rivers and land depressions externally. However, two exceptions should be considered. These are the sub-division of Himalayas of South Asia into sections and the island individuality in South-East Asia. In the case of the former, a separate identity has been given with surrounding seas as their boundaries. Regional treatment is in a clock-wise sweep commencing from South Asia and ending with an outward loop towards Australia. The sequence of regional description, therefore, is as

side. There is high fragility as well. Our needs are very different. If there is a threat in mountains, there is threat downstream as well.

#### **What mountain country needs?**

We need resources, technologies according to our needs and sustainable and affordable capacities building at individual and institutional level as well as governmental and non-governmental level. We need to involve the private sector, NGOs sector and other stakeholders with the government. We want to see gross capacity of the country. If we can put our views in climate change negotiations, we can make a difference. There are various funds including Least Development Fund, Developing Countries Fund, special climate change fund, adaptation fund and green climate fund. This will help to scale up our capacity in technology, finance and capacity. First there was no ministerial level meeting, second we link it with climate change and third separate group to increase our access in climate change fund.

#### **How do you see the conference?**

This is just an event and we can transform this into process like Mountain Initiative. Mountain conference is a one time event and Mountain Initiative is a process. It is impossible to hold the conference all the time. There is the need to institutionalize the issue coming out from the meeting. We will try to build a platform.

#### **How the mountain agenda is important in Rio+?**

follows: South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, North-East Asia, south-East Asia and Australia.

#### **Rising vulnerability**

A study just released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is warning that climate change could exacerbate environmental disasters in Asia and result in a surge of migration by people fleeing crises.

In its report, addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific, the ADB observed that more than 42 million people in the region (more than twice the population of Sri Lanka) were displaced by extreme weather events in the past two years. Some were unable to return home or deliberately choose to relocate. Globally, Asia and the Pacific

As Rio+20 summit is going to be held in Brazil in June, we need to carry the opinions of mountain countries there. There are several regional level institutions to look at the mountain issue. For instance, ICIMOD looks at the problems of Hindukush mountain. We need a global institution that can look at the mountain countries from around the world. More than a dozen ministers will take part and large number of international experts are coming to Nepal. This grouping will include developed, developing and least developed countries. We want to bring together all countries with mountainous countries. We will officially ask for a place for mountains as an agenda of Rio+. We will launch mountain events, energy, water security, food security and bio-diversity. Along with this, there is also the issue of social and cultural things.

#### **Are you going to discuss socio cultural sides of mountain?**

The mountain regions have their own socio-cultural commonalities. We also want to include this. People in the mountains are facing problems. Mountain communities will be there. Mountain is not a static identity but it is a living identity. Mountain inherently means mountain community. For instance, Sherpas are the communities with special identity with mountains. We want to bring the resolution calling it Kathmandu call for global action on climate change and mountains.

is the region most prone to natural disasters.

Six of the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change are in Asia and the Pacific. Bangladesh tops the list, followed by India, Nepal, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Myanmar.

The combined population of these countries is approximately 1.6 billion people:

Bangladesh - 151 million

India - 1.2 billion

Nepal - 30.5 million

Philippines - 96 million

Afghanistan - 32 million

Myanmar - 54 million

All these are the countries having mountains.

The entire Asia-Pacific region is home

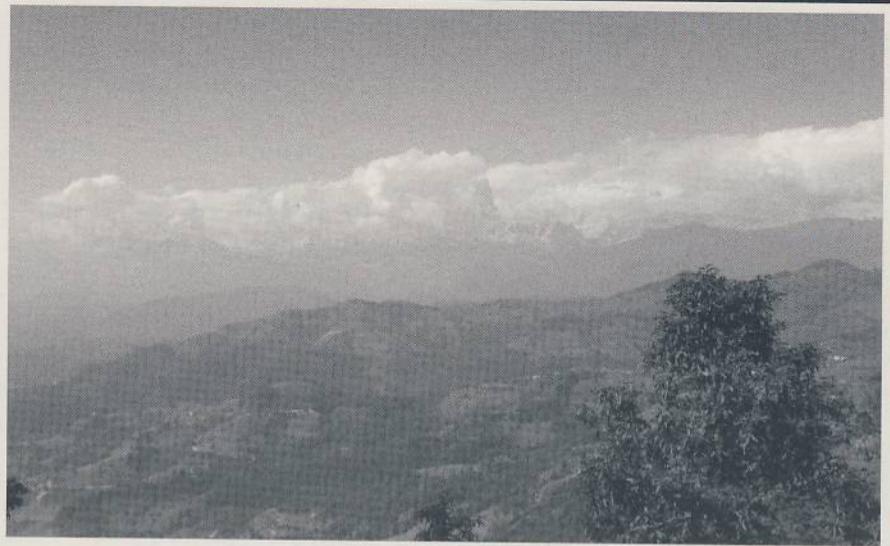
to 4 billion people, or 60% of the world's population, and many live along the coasts and will be very vulnerable to rising sea levels. A majority of them are poor; almost 1.8 billion people live on less than \$2 per day.

One of the main factors why Asia and the Pacific is so affected by environmental disasters is the large population, many of whom live in high risk and high population density areas, and as stated above, suffer from steep rates of inequality. Climate change is expected to only worsen current environmental problems and poses many economic, social, and political challenges.

Climate policymakers and others should assess how demographic factors may affect climate-induced migration and devise responses that can best address unplanned, large-scale migration.

"This is going to be a great time for Nepal. I am very proud to say that the idea to hold the International Conference of Mountain Countries in Nepal was proposed during COP 15 in Copenhagen. It was then prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal who very courageously and boldly proposed this alliance during his address to COP 15. Although mountain countries have been voicing the problems faced by mountain countries in COP meetings independently, it was for the first time such an initiative was taken to raise the collective voice. Former prime minister Nepal needs to be thanked for his contribution.

"Mountain areas also provide essential eco-system goods and services to the billion of people living in the downstream. At a time when there is a



Nepal's Mountain

severe lack of implementation of various international deliberations, including the UNFCCC and Rio + processes, this meeting will put pressure to raise a common voice. Besides, there are inadequate global efforts in addressing ongoing UNFCCC processes on adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, finance and capacity building," said Dr. Dinesh Chandra Devkota, former vice chair of National Planning Commission.

Studies have already shown that global climate change poses a grave threat to the global mountain systems. The rate of warming on the mountains is faster than the plans due to GHG aerosols. Similarly, high elevation plants and animals are losing habitat areas as they move higher. Due to weather change, availability of fresh water for environment flows and for human uses is seriously affected.

The trans-boundary aspects of mountain eco-system services call for regional cooperation. The HKH

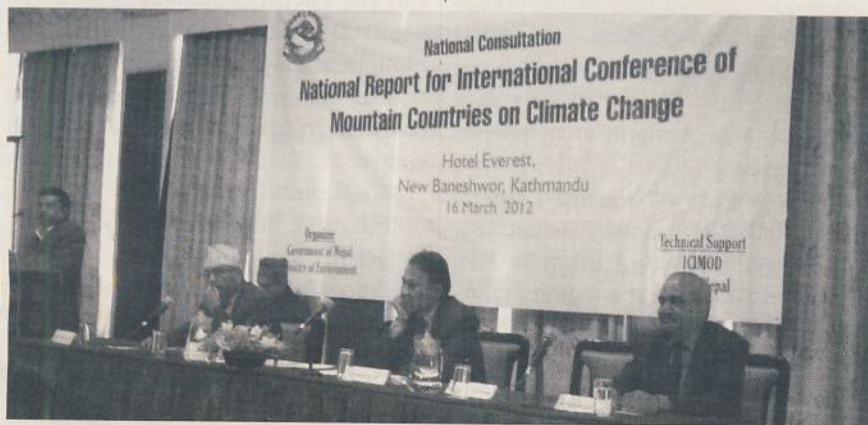
mountains are important for their role as water towers of Asia, mountains are biodiversity hotspots, and shelter for fragile fauna and flora species. China and India can play an important role in the regional cooperation in HKH region. China and India have 17 percent and 14 percent of the respective country's areas in HKH region.

All this is important in the Nepalese context as well. According to climate change vulnerability assessments, more than 1.9 million people are highly climate vulnerable, with 10 million increasingly at risk, with higher temperatures rise, project to increase at an average of 1.2 degree Celsius by 2030.

Along with environmental issues, socio-cultural aspects of the mountains are also involved in this.

Nepal has been involved with the mountain agenda for quite a long time. The establishment of ICIMOD's headquarters in Nepal was one of the most important aspects. Although ICIMOD covers eight countries of Hindukush Himalayan region, this gives Nepal an opportunity to engage with the mountain agenda.

"There are some major differences in International Conference of Mountain Countries and Nepal's past involvement in raising mountain agenda. Firstly, this is for the first time Nepal is holding such a big international gathering of representatives of mountain countries. Our target is to make it a ministerial level meeting. Of course, all the invitees may not attend due to their own



Conference

## “Mountain Meet For Common View”

DINESH CHANDRA DEVKOTA

Former vice chairman of National Planning Commission DINESH CHANDRA DEVKOTA, Ph.D, is one of the leading supporters of the Mountain Initiative, an international initiative to forge an alliance among mountain countries in the context of climate change. During his tenure as a vice chair and member of NPC, Dr. Devkota strongly pursued the cause to hold the International Conference of Mountain Countries on Climate change. As Nepal is holding the mountain meet, Dr. Devkota spoke to New Spotlight on various issues regarding the initiative. Excerpts:

**How do you view the forthcoming International Conference of Mountain Countries on Climate Change?**

This is going to be a great time for Nepal. I am very proud to say that the idea to hold the International Conference of Mountain Countries in Nepal was proposed during 15 COP in Copenhagen. It was then prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, who very courageously and boldly proposed this alliance during his address to COP 15. Although mountain countries had been voicing their concerns in COP meetings independently, it was for the first time the initiative was taken to raise their collective voices. Former prime minister Nepal deserves thanks for this contribution.

**Why do you think International Conference on Mountain countries is important for Nepal?**

With over 13 percent total population covering areas of 25 percent surface of earth, climate change is going to make a major impact in the livelihood of the people living in the world, including Nepal. This way this is important for Nepal. Apart from this, mountain areas also provide essential eco-system, goods and services to the billions of people living in the downstream. At a time when there is lack of implementation of various international deliberations, including the UNFCCC and Rio+ processes, this meeting will put pressure on countries to raise their common voices. Besides, there are inadequate global efforts in addressing ongoing UNFCCC process on adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, finance and capacity building. It is going to be held in the context of mountain countries being unable to

compulsions,” said Krishna Gyawali, secretary of the Ministry of Environment.

effectively influence the negotiations at COP meetings and various multilateral environmental agreements.

**What are going to be major issues which will be discussed in the conference?**

The discussions will take place in the areas, like change in natural vegetation, shift of vegetation types, eco-tones, eco-regions, and loss of productivity. The meeting will also discuss the impacts on forest and bio-diversity of species due to climate change. One of the major issues will be too much and too little water. The conference will also discuss cross-border implications of glacier melting and GLOFs. Rapid rate of ice and snow melting and its impact on region's fresh water resources will also be discussed.

**What are the major issues of mountain countries in the context of global warming?**

Studies have already shown that global climate change poses a grave threat to the global mountain systems. The rate of warming on the mountains is faster than the plans due to GHG aerosols. Similarly, high elevation plants and animals are losing habitat area as they move higher. Due to weather change, availability of fresh water for environment flows and for human uses is seriously affected.

**How do you see the Mountain Initiative in the context of Hind Kush Himalayan region?**

There is inadequate and complex funding system. Current status of mountains in terms of conservation and development is poor. Climate change is aggravating the already bad situation created by globalization, bio-diversity loss and rapid socio-economic changes.

The trans-boundary aspects of mountain eco-system services call for regional cooperation. The HKH mountains are important for their role as water towers of Asia, bio-diversity hotspots, shelter for fragile fauna and flora species. China and India can play important roles in the regional cooperation in HKH region. China and India have 17 percent and 14 percent of the respective country's areas in HKH region.

It is important for Nepal too. According to climate change vulnerability assessments, more than 19

As the International Conference on mountain countries on climate change is approaching, hopes are high that it



million people are highly climate vulnerable with 10 million increasingly at risk of higher temperature increase. The annual temperature is to increase at an average of 1.2 degrees Celsius by 2030, 1.7 degrees Celsius by 2050 and 3 degrees by 2100.

Similarly, precipitation patterns will also change. Annual average precipitation over Nepal is decreasing at the rate of 9.8 mm per decade.

**How do you justify the rationale behind mountain initiative?**

The agenda 21 (chapter 13) adopted during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and the declarations of the International Year of Mountains 2002 highlighted the need to recognize and mainstream sustainable mountain development in national development plans and programs. More than 1.9 billion people are highly climate vulnerable, with 10 million increasingly at risk as per climate change vulnerability assessments. The change in the precipitation and temperature will affect livelihood of people living in mountain areas.

**What outcome would you expect from the Mountain Initiative meeting?**

It will create a common understanding among mountain countries on climate change impacts on mountains and mountain communities in order to present their common priorities in international climate change negotiations UNFCCC and others including the upcoming Rio+ 20 Summit. Another important aspect of the initiative is to build a consensus towards institutionalizing the Mountain Initiative process and creating a common understanding on sustainable mountain development. This will launch a long term journey.

will provide a great opportunity for mountain countries to discuss their main issues and challenges.

# “Our Relations Are Good!”

-HANAN GODER-GOLDBERGER

Since his arrival in Nepal, Israeli Ambassador HANAN GODER-GOLDBERGER has organized a number of programs to explore the possibility to bring Israel's technology here. Israel has supported Nepal in the process of modernization since the establishment of relations more than five decades ago. The envoy shares how good he feels to be in Nepal. Excerpts of his interview with NEW SPOTLIGHT:

**Nepal and Israel have a long history of bilateral relationship? How do you see it in the present context?**

Our relations are good! They are applicable to all different subjects and dimensions of bilateral relations, at the level of people to people, at the level of government cooperation and exchange of visits between peoples of Israel and Nepal. Whenever I go around, there is always a very good feeling, the feeling of good relations between Nepal and Israel.

**How do you evaluate the development of Nepal-Israel relationship?**

The two countries established their bilateral relations 50-52 years ago and our relations have remained good. When Nepal established the diplomatic relations with Israel, that was the only country of the subcontinent with such relations. Our development support is mainly in the field of knowhow. This is the only way to bring change.

**Israel has provided a significant support to Nepal for its modernization in the past. How is Israel supporting Nepal now?**

Under our scholarship program, almost 2000 Nepalese went to Israel in order to have the experience that we practice on a day to day basis in Israel. There is a Shalom Club of the Alumnae. This is a group of Nepalese who went to Israel in one of these programs, came back, and are involved in community projects here. These people meet occasionally and function as an important bridge between our two nations. At the same time, and parallel to those Nepalese that go to Israel, we bring experts here to have workshops, to run seminars for professionals here in Nepal. And again it's about all the subjects, whether you talk about health, agriculture, education, gender issues, NGOs and all kinds of issues that we are sharing the knowhow on and I think this is going very well. Let me tell you something about this cooperation, which comes at all levels. This cooperation comes from the heart and goes to the heart, by the way, this is the reason that so many Israelis love to come to Nepal, that is because of the open heart Nepalese have for Israel, and Israelis.

**From construction to agriculture and health, Israeli support to Nepal covers several areas. How do you view Nepal's progress in agriculture and other sectors?**

You have to look at the statistics. The number of schools that Nepal had 50 years ago and the number of schools that you now. I have seen that you have made a huge progress so far. May be the cup seems only half empty but do not forget it is also half full. It is true that Nepal has a lot of more things to achieve. But, when you look at the achievements in the last 50

years and, let alone in the last five years, it is amazing! The number of schools that opened in Nepal in the last five years is really a major change. The percentage of people that are going now to have formal education is increasing by three to five percent every year. This is an educational revolution! The same thing you can say about the health sector. Forty or fifty years ago there was hardly any treatment facilities, now there is a flourishing number of hospitals. Again, you still have a long way to go, there are a lots of things to look forward and in this health sector you have to run forward all the time, because if you don't run forward, you are left behind as medicines and health services are improving worldwide. So, Nepal should keep on running forward and we will do our best to run together with you and we will do everything needed for cooperation with all sectors.

**Since your arrival here, a lot of Israel's experts in health, social and other sectors have visited Nepal, how can experts from both the countries benefit from each other?**

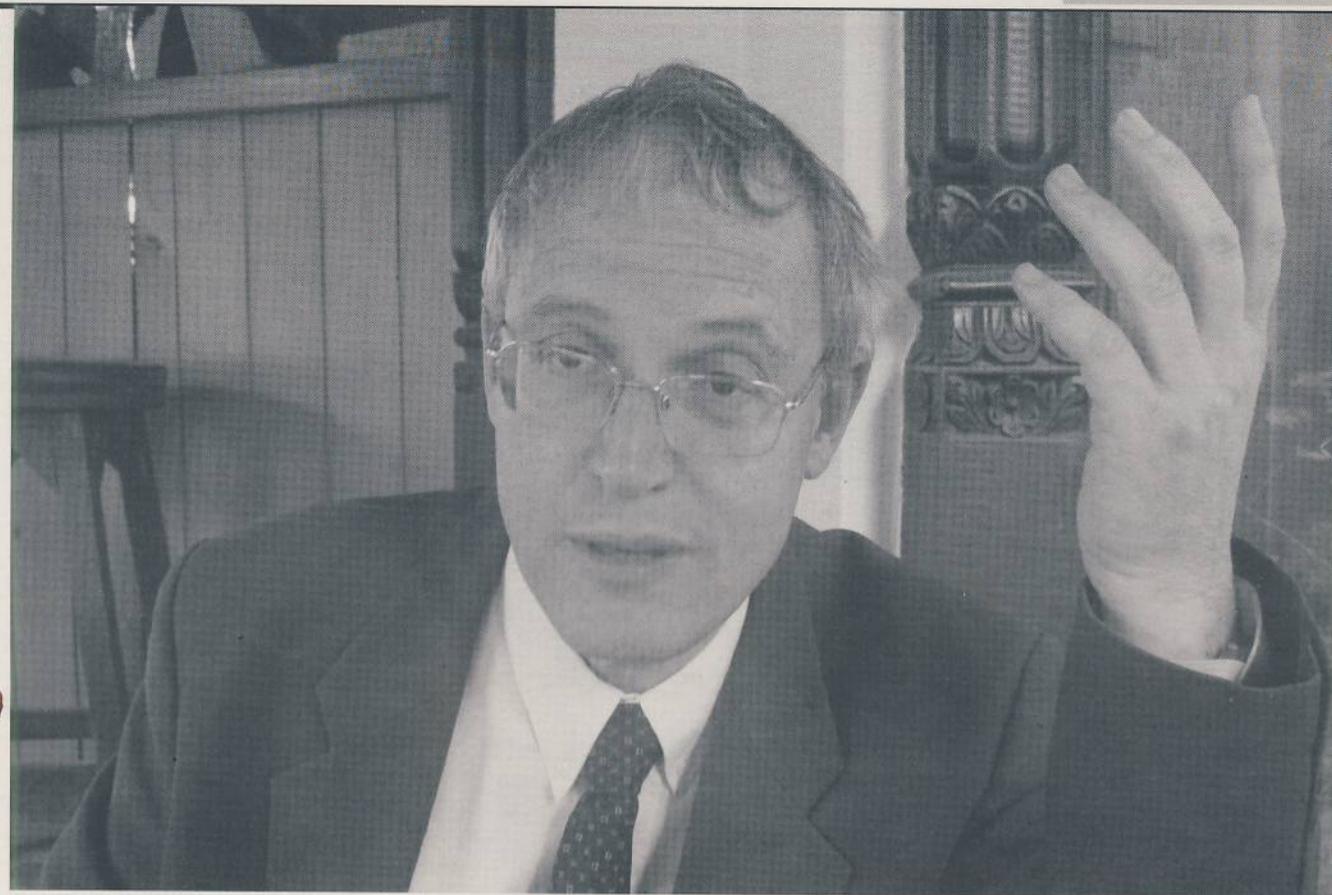
When you talk about knowhow, partnership and cooperation, it is not something that one can measure by volume. The friendship between the nations is going on forward and forward. I really feel that heart is open from many Nepalese and I think this cooperation is good for all of us. Sharing the knowhow does not mean that we give something, we share the knowhow and when experts are coming here they learn a lot from the Nepalese counterparts. Don't think Nepal has nothing to offer to other nations and to other countries, you have a lot to give from what you have achieved and the ways that you practice here. So, every cooperation is good for both nations and we are proud to be part of it.

**Israel is known as a successful model in community health and modernization of agriculture. What Nepal can learn from it?**

Nepalese have shown that they can make a real difference. Provided that technology is introduced, Nepalese too can generate money from agriculture. We have just celebrated the Nepali Israeli Tomato day. We have recently celebrated the first anniversary of the Maha Farm. The idea of this farm started when Nepalese who went for agricultural work in Israel, understood and realized that they can use their working journey to be a professional experience tour. This farm is introducing to Nepal modern agriculture system and brings for the first time here the usage of drip irrigation system into commercial practice. Twelve Nepalese from twelve different districts who worked in Israel came here and established the farm. This is the result of hard work of plenty of people.

**How do you see the future of farm?**

The experts involved in it showed that Nepalese can produce up to 20 tons of tomato from the one ropani instead of 6 tons from one ropani. This change is the result of seeds brought from Israel. They hired the area- the farm, and they invested all their savings and they started producing and this is what we are marking. Now I'm grateful, we are all grateful because



we are all consumers. So let's say thank you to these farmers, to these entrepreneurs that went and learnt and practiced what they learnt and produced here what they experienced in Israel. The potential here is amazing and let me just emphasize one fact, the traditional Nepalese farmers produce 6 tons from a ropani but these farmers are producing 20 tons of tomatoes, three times more than their normal traditional production. I think we have a few workshops in this issue and again we are very happy to share this knowledge.

**Israel is one of the popular destinations for Nepalese workers, what is the present state of Nepalese in Israel?**

Nepalese are considered in Israel as hardworking and disciplined people. They are very hard working and they earn up to one thousand five hundred US dollars per month. This is why many Nepalese are trying to go to Israel in order in the agriculture sector and also as care givers for needed people in Israel. Let me say one more thing, may be, when you have gold in your pocket, you don't appreciate it, but you have a golden country from the Everest to the Terai, to the beautiful parks in Terai from Pokhara to the east, it is a beautiful country and, not only that, excuse me for giving my compliments to my colleagues here, nice people are here, clever people are here.

**Nepal has been passing through a very critical political transition with constitution writing and peace process as top agenda. What is your observation about this in Nepal?**

Things are moving forward and it has reached the stage where Nepalese people think what they think and what they believe and the way they want the future of this country to be looked at and it is up to the Nepalese people to make this

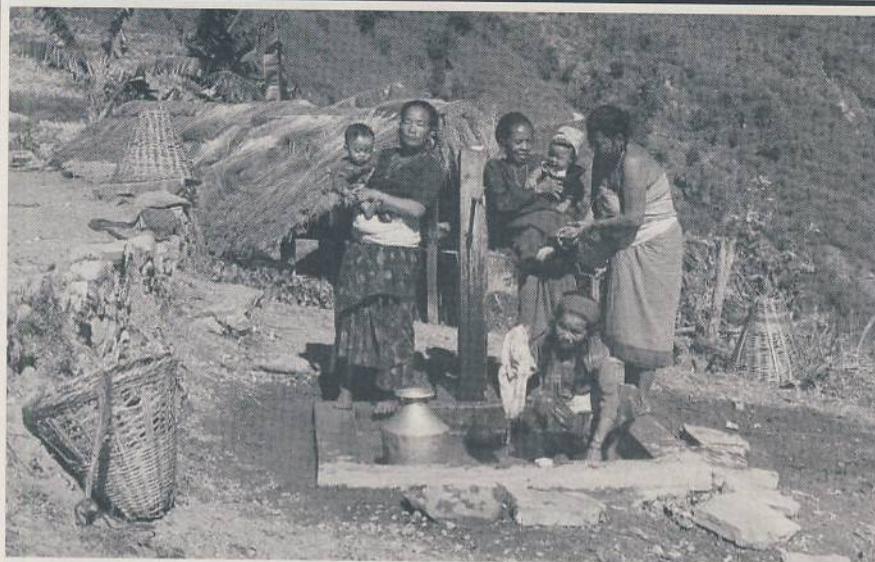
decision. You have chosen a certain process, a certain system. And we will support any agreement that you wish. We will be happy if you come to the settlement as soon as possible and we will go all the way with you.

**How hopeful are you?**

Nobody should rush you, nobody should tell you, whether you should prioritize it, yesterday, today or tomorrow. Only you will come with your solutions and only you will finalize this process. When all parties sit together in a round table, they smile, they talk and they have a dialogue, and this brings me to be optimistic because once there is a dialogue, you would find the way, you would find the Nepali way because you must find the solution.

**How do you see the state Middle East?**

Situated in the place which sometimes can be problematic, the Middle East is not a stable place and unfortunately there are moderate elements in the Middle East and extreme elements in the Middle East. These changes in the Middle East that we saw recently are still unclear. Unfortunately we don't know where the Middle East is going. Some people say that it is going to be an Arab spring. But, in the spring you have flowers, I don't see lovely flowers flourishing out of this development. But we will see if it comes, then it will be excellent for all the peoples of the Middle East. It's not that we do not have to be worried. In order to achieve peace, you have to be prepared for war. Weak nations can not survive and let me SAY: For peace we will compromise wherever a compromise is needed. But, I emphasize, there is one thing we are not going to compromise, which is our security. ■



## ARSENIC

# A Silent Killer

*High prevalence of arsenic in water is killing hundreds of people in Nepal*

By LARA SUYKERBUYK

Nepal is having to deal with a great water shortage. Because of global warming, the Himalayas and glaciers are melting and the water problem is getting more critical every day.

Kathmandu demands 200 million liters of water daily. The government reports to the World Water Organization show that the authorities are able to supply only about 160 million liters of the precious liquid daily. Compounding with this is the lack of unsafe drinking water, which is leading to many diseases. The Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS) estimates that 15,000 children die each year due to diarrheal diseases 'caused' by poor environmental sanitation and lack of access to quality water supply.

Unsafe drinking water can also lead to arsenic mitigation. Arsenic is a silent killer, because the health effects of arsenic poisoning are generally delayed by drinking the arsenic (As) rich water over a long period of five to twenty years. It leads to skin problems, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure and reproductive disorders, especially harmful for the fetus of pregnant women. More alarming, it is not only found in water but also in rice, and Nepali people eat *dal bhaat* at least twice a day.

"The presence of arsenic in water is

strangely enough very natural," said Nam Raj from the World Health Organization (WHO) of Nepal. "Natural arsenic salts are present in all water but usually only in very small amounts. Most of the water in the world has natural arsenic concentrations of less than 0.01 mg/liter."

Arsenic was first tested and detected in tube wells in 2000. Still, no evidence can confirm how or when arsenic occurred in ground water of Nepal. It must be from natural sources. It is found in all Terai districts of Nepal. In some districts, the level exceeds the maximum concentration of 50 ppb (part per billion). Arsenic is mostly found in shallow tube wells. Occurrence of arsenic in deep tube wells is very rare but it does exist, according to authorities.

So far, no significant arsenic concentration is found in places other than the Terai in Nepal. A probe conducted during 2006-2008 tested all tube wells of the 20 Terai districts. Out of the 1.2 million tested tubes, about 1.7% of those were contaminated with arsenic above the acceptable level of 50 ppb. The DWSS notes that the concentration was found to be dangerously high in districts, namely, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa. The reason why only the Terai

is badly affected by arsenic remains uncertain.

A decade later, it was estimated by the government, that about 2.7 million people in Nepal are drinking water with arsenic concentrations above the recommended international threshold of 10 ppb.

"Arsenic poisoning can be prevented in different ways," said Nam Raj. "There are three ways of preventing people from using arsenic contaminated water. The first is to provide an arsenic filter with an individual hand pump."

The Nepali NGO's: ENPHO and RWSSSP developed, together with a team of researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a low-cost biosand water filter at household level. It filters water from arsenic and other contaminants. "Theoretically, filters of any kind bring the arsenic level below acceptable level (50 ppb) also even up to 10 ppb. But it depends on how people do the operation," he warns.

Families in Nepal distributed more than 900 filters in the Nawalparasi District, one of the worst affected areas in Nepal. The filter lasts for 12 years and is easy to use and maintain.

The WHO was initiated arsenic testing in some districts of eastern Nepal more than a decade ago. Later DWSS, UNICEF and UN Habitat completed blanket testing. WHO is providing training to doctors of arsenic prone area on detection and management of arsenicosis. They are thinking about establishing a sentinel site for surveillance of arsenicosis.

As mentioned, arsenic is also detected in food: rice, vegetables, fish, and people might not be very aware of eating contaminated nutrients. American investigators of the Dartmouth Medical School published their research for PNAS, an Academy of Science in the States. The study reveals that rice is also a significant source of arsenic.

Arsenic is known to be a rat poison and hopefully it will stop poisoning people who are exposed to it through their drinking water or the food, they eat by making it an important priority. The soils must be examined carefully before making a tube well or farming field, and people need to take the silent killer very seriously because of the severe health problems it can cause, like cancer.

*Lara is intern from Belgium*



# No Suntala Badaam

By ABIJIT SHARMA

As I landed in Delhi last week after a brief stay in Kathmandu, I was welcomed quite 'warmly' by the weather. The last week of March usually signals the end of spring in Delhi; soaring temperatures characterizing the months thereafter. Whenever I come back to the city, the first few days become pretty gruesome. Thanks to the much cooler summers of Kathmandu, coming to the Indian capital and adjusting to the rather dry and hot summer has never been easy for me. With the mercury rising each day, my third 'summer' in Delhi is going to be equally difficult. I can pretty much predict that already. It is at times like these that I realize how fortunate we Nepali people are in terms of the weather! And it is also at times like these that I miss just lazing around at home in the warm sun with *suntala* and *badaam*!

## The Dirty Picture

With examinations round the corner and pressure in college mounting, I haven't been able to catch up with the recent political happenings. However, a front-page news grabbed my attention a few days back: 'BJP Minister in another porn scandal'. First Karnataka and now Gujarat! It appears that the party's ministers have some serious affliction with adult movies; be it a Kannada minister or a Gujarati one, for that matter. Some hormonal imbalance? Or is it the intense training session of the RSS (from where many of the BJP members come) which leaves them so tired that they relax in the parliament watching the triple X tamasha? This may require some serious research.

Whatever the reason, two such cases in a single month have put a nasty stain on the saffron image of the right-wing party. More such cases can put the BJP's dream of victory in the 2014 central elections in jeopardy. The Congress, on the other hand, which has been gloomy and on a low profile since their poor performance in the state elections, must be rejoicing!

The traditional Indian politicians are not behind their modern American

counterparts could however be a positive side of the story if they like to see that way. After all, didn't President Clinton have a colourful stint at the Oval office courtesy Lewinski? So why not an Indian politician?

allotted by the DU administration, your marks simply determine which college you get admitted to. The better the marks, the better the college.

However, due to the lack of adequate information provided by the University,



## Lucky Us

The admission for the new session in Delhi University (DU) has commenced and like the past two years, I have come across a considerable number of Nepali students who have come here to complete the admission procedure. Foreign students are quite lucky when it comes to getting into DU. While our Indian counterparts face tough competition, thanks to the high cut-offs, we get in relatively easily. Even an average student can hope to get admission although he/she might have to settle for something less than the expected. That is, the college of one's choice may not be guaranteed. Since the colleges are

I find many Nepali students perplexed. Well, that's just a beginning to the muddled system of the DU!

## Beating The Heat

With examination fever catching up on us, times are getting tough and full of stress. So one night, along with a few friends I decided to go to a nearby small town Murthal, just to let our hair down. The place is popular for its highway food, much like our Mugling. The 50 kilometre distance did not even take us 20 minutes to reach, thanks to the well-built and maintained highways of India. A cool *lassi* quenched our thirst in the sweltering heat. However, in no way could it beat the pleasure of having *suntala* and *badaam* in the warm weather! ■

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## REVIEW

## Agent Vinod



A series of seemingly unconnected events across the world leads to Agent Vinod undertaking a globe-trotting mission to discover why his colleague was murdered.

**Director:** Sriram Raghavan

**Writers:** Sriram Raghavan (story), Arijit Biswas (story)

**Stars:** Kareena Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan and Malika Haydon

An ambitious script, set in various



countries, AGENT VINOD is by far the most credible secret agent movie made in Bollywood. This hi-octane thriller has style and substance, both!

The story begins with a series of seemingly unconnected events, all over the globe.

One expects AGENT VINOD to be an elegantly defined story with an exquisitely structured screenplay [writers: Sriram Raghavan and Arijit Biswas], with some unanticipated betrayals, sensational locations, slick action but with the absence of gadgets. If that's precisely the way you are looking at AGENT VINOD unleashing before your eyes, you've got it right.

AGENT VINOD is a hi-octane espionage thriller with a heart. It is not just brawny and dynamic, but witty and crazy too. Ultra slick and stylish, this desi Bond movie adheres to the formula and succeeds in meeting the humungous expectations. AGENT VINOD has all the potential to develop into a triumphant franchise!

Courtesy: [www.bollywoodhungama.com](http://www.bollywoodhungama.com)

## MOVIE PREVIEWS

## Wrath of the Titans

Perseus braves the treacherous underworld to rescue his father, Zeus, captured by his son, Ares, and brother Hades who unleash the ancient Titans upon the world.



**Director:**

Jonathan Liebesman

**Stars:** Sam Worthington, Liam Neeson and Rosamund Pike

## The Bourne Legacy

A story centered on a new CIA operative in the universe based on Robert Ludlum's novels.



**Director:** Tony Gilroy

**Writers:** Tony Gilroy (screenplay), Dan Gilroy (screenplay)

**Stars:** Jeremy Renner, Rachel Weisz and Edward Norton

## The Dark Knight Rises

Eight years after Batman took the fall for Two Face's crimes, a new terrorist leader,

Bane overwhelms Gotham's finest, and the Dark Knight resurfaces to protect a city that brands him an enemy.



**Director:**

Christopher Nolan

**Writers:** Jonathan Nolan (screenplay), Christopher Nolan (screenplay) and others

**Stars:** Christian Bale, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Gary Oldman

## The Expendables 2

Mr. Church reunites the Expendables for what should be an easy paycheck, but when one of their men is murdered on the job, their quest for revenge puts them deep in enemy territory and up against an unexpected threat.



**Director:**

Simon West

**Writers:** Sylvester Stallone, Dave Callaham (characters), and 2 more credits »

**Stars:** Sylvester Stallone, Liam Hemsworth and Randy Couture

## Men in Black III

Agent J travels in time to MIB's early years in the 1960s, to stop an alien from assassinating his friend Agent K and changing history.



**Director:** Barry Sonnenfeld

**Writers:** Lowell Cunningham (comic), David Koepp (screenplay), and 3 more credits »

**Stars:** Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones and Josh Brolin

## The Amazing Spider-Man

Peter Parker finds a clue that might help him understand why his parents disappeared when he was young. His path puts him on a collision course with Dr. Curt Connors, his father's former partner.



**Director:** Marc Webb

**Stars:** Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone and Rhys Ifans

Courtesy: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)

## TOURIST ARRIVALS

# Good Start

*Despite a growing sense of political instability, Nepal's tourism sector has shown positive growth*

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

What tourism entrepreneur and national coordinator of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 Yogendra Shakya said during the closing ceremony of NTY 2011 seems to be coming true. Talking to media person, Shakya had said the investment made in NTY 2011 would bear the fruit for days to come as the year helped to market Nepal's image abroad.

Although promotional activities started at the last minute, NTY 2011 had great impacts. Lack of promotional activities about NTY 2011 hindered Nepal from achieving the 1 million tourists' goal.

Aditya Baral, spokesperson of the Nepal Tourism Board, said there had been persistent growth in the tourists arrival,

particularly of the Chinese. Nepal has immense prospects of attracting the Chinese tourists and the country has been unable to reap the benefits fully.

"There is a need for collaboration between the private and public sectors to boost tourism in Nepal," he said.

Nepal needs to do more to attract a million tourists this year. Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has also recently publicly accepted that the lack of aircraft with Nepal Airlines is making deep and serious negative impacts on the Nepalese tourism sector.

Despite lack of aircraft, in January and February of this year, tourist arrivals increased by around 20 percent compared to the same period last year. According to the Immigration Office, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), some 84,747 tourists arrived in Nepal in the first two months through airways.

Among the two neighbors, India continued to dominate the numbers, and registered a growth rate of 29.2, 28.8

percent respectively in January and February over the same period last year. The number of Chinese tourists also saw a whopping rise of 107 percent in January when compared with the last year. Some 6,631 Chinese tourists visited the nation. But, in contrast, in February, the number decreased by 23.1 percent than that of previous year.



Yogendra Shakya

Tourist arrivals from the other Asian countries, Europe and America were also very encouraging and were mostly on a rising trend.

Experts say the carryover effects of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 and the Visit Lumbini campaign are the main reasons for very encouraging arrival of tourists in the first two

months of the year.

January and early February are considered as one of the lowest tourist seasons. Hence, tourism industrialists seem very excited from the positive tourist arrivals in one of the lowest tourist

arrival periods and are optimistically looking up to the main season, which starts from March.

According to Hotel Association Nepal, the occupancy in five star hotel rooms will be more than 80 percent for this March and April.

According to the data, till the first week of March, star hotel's capacity will be pushed to the limits for these two months. This rise is 10-15 percent more than previous year. In March of previous year, only around 68 percent of the eight five star hotels were used, whereas in April the number rose to around 74 percent, according to the Tourism Ministry.

The ticket booking to the major tourist destinations of the country is also encouraging and the domestic airlines are planning to increase the number of flights for this tourist season. According to airlines companies, 90 percent of air tickets on Pokhara-Kathmandu-Pokhara route have also been booked till May.

Forbes magazine's recent listing of Mount Everest in the top Ten Stunning Travel Destinations around the world has made sure that Nepalese tourism will be one of the talking points in the international markets and will definitely arouse interests among the concerned travelers and aid in the promotion of Nepal.

But still the main questions will always be — will 2012 overshadow the tourists' arrival of 2011? Will Visit Lumbini Year 2012 be a bigger success than Nepal Tourism year 2011?

Only time will tell.

But as the year kicked off, Lumbini has comfortably beaten NTY 2012, at least in the first two months. ■



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# "I Am Not A Gay: I Support Gayism"

By PRATYUSH NATH UPRETI

The only source of knowledge is experience (Albert Einstein). Every experience makes you learn and helps to enlighten others. I too had a wonderful experience of knowing third gender.

It was a Monday afternoon when I was coming from Itahari to Biratnagar with a lot of satisfaction and excitement, as I got the license to drive. After a hectic time, I boarded the bus. A man, aged around thirty eight, came and sat beside me. We started our conversations about the political situation of Nepal; gradually, we started sharing our views with comfort. After a little more of conversation, he came close to me. When my senses came alive and my active response from my stimulus, it made me feel that there is something fishy, and I gestured at him with anger... and he quickly responded to me by saying "are you gay"? Spontaneously, I replied, "I am not a gay, I support gayism". Till I reached my destination, I had a nice experience to know him as a person and the difficulties he faced being from the third gender. He narrated his story: he had two daughters and a son. I asked him: if you were a gay, then why did you get married. He answered that because of the society he could not tell his parents about his being a third gender. To marry as a transgender is looked by the society as a social evil. He was aware of consequences like hatred and discrimination. I was in the intermediate level when this incident happened, now I am pursuing law when I realize how LGBT community is facing discrimination in our society.

It reminded me of the law lecture delivered by Justice G.N. Ray, former supreme court judge of India, where he said that biological existence is not the goal of human life. A man must have a meaningful life touching all facets of a dignified life. To achieve this, the most important component is liberty in its full manifestation. Therefore, life and liberty are inseparably intertwined. Man is not only born free but has inherent right to live free. The religious script of the Hindus, the 'Bhagvad Gita' mentions, that after passing through numerous life forms, a creature attains the highest

living form of mankind. The bible indicates that God has created man in his image. In Nepal, homosexual and third gender are considered as minorities and are subjected to inequality and continuously restricted to enjoy all facets of a dignified life. We are all fully aware of several incidents which show that these minorities have been victimized.

However, in Sunil Babu Pant & others vs Nepal Government, the Supreme Court made an historic decision, ordering the Government of Nepal to recognize third gender according to their gender identity and protect sexual and gender minority rights as natural persons.



If we analyze the preliminary draft prepared on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles by Constituent Assembly, it has been expressly mentioned about the equality status to any person inspite of color, sex, race, caste, tribe, gender, sexual orientation and biological condition. This shows that upcoming constitution will remove the discrimination faced by these communities.

This provision is similar to the Constitution of South Africa, which has seeks to ensure non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. South African Constitutional Court has construed that no person is subjected to the discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation which includes the third gender as well. In the same line, the constitution of Fiji has incorporated a similar provision.

The Supreme Court decision, however,

remains on paper. The government is still not able to implement the decision. It has come to light that, in fact, in many districts, many third gender people are denied Citizenship ID, the officer arguing, that they are not authorized by the Ministry to issue the Citizenship ID to them.

Nonetheless, the Supreme Court decision and support from social activists have led to the third gender gaining recognition and on verge of getting legal rights. In recent years, Nepal has become more gay-friendly. The main problem with this issue is of social stigma, so homosexuality is still a taboo and there is no specific law against gay or same-sex marriages while, decision of Supreme Court is not implemented.

What I believe is, one should respect its culture, tradition and religion but should not allow creation of taboos, which lead to discrimination against certain people. I think it's the youth who can eliminate the discrimination in society because one must know that law only governs one's action but never changes the thinking of the people, so it can be a weak tool for social change. The challenge for Nepal is not only a political change of getting legislation, but the challenge is winning the hearts and minds of the family members and of the society. Law can only protect us from discrimination but cannot eliminate discrimination. Youth can only end discrimination because older generations, with time, have developed a mindset which is difficult to change whereas other people are immature to understand about transgender people. We youth should come for transforming society's understanding of gender in order to make our country safe for all people, regardless of gender identity or expression. People need to be open minded enough to discuss this issue based on rational grounds. Let us not analyze "who said what when", instead we need to analyze our self, what we are doing. I think to hate for a biological susceptibility is to hate the human soul. ■



# Only Rice Is The Food?

By DR. ARUNA UPRETI

"How much do we have to pay for food?" I asked the hotel owner of the Doti district a few years ago. We were five health workers.

"For you, it is 20 rupees and, for others, it is 75 rupees," the hotel owner said. We were very surprised.

"Why special favor to me?" I asked the hotel owner, smiling. Looking at me, he said, "You did not eat food (khana). You ate only chapatti and vegetables."

He meant that I did not eat rice. All our colleagues had rice and all the vegetables. That was the smart lesson I learnt and everywhere I went, I told the hotel owner that I would not eat food (khana) but only chapattis. I had to pay only 1/3rd of what my colleagues paid in the far western part of Nepal.

The whole concept of rice versus food has been deeply coded now in daily habits of Nepalese people even in those places where rice is not grown and people cannot live without rice and on top of that rice has been associated with status symbol.

"Have you had your khana?" when I am asked in many places and if I reply that I have not eaten khana but only chapati and vegetables, then people would say, "Oh are you fasting?"

When I was in Achham a few years ago during a health camp, one pregnant woman came to me and her complaint was that she had not been able to eat khana (food) for 15 days. When she thought about khana, she felt nauseated. I checked her and in fact I was quite surprised that a woman who had not eaten for 15 days (and she was pregnant), she still looked quite healthy. I told her that her physical condition was good and she did not look malnourished for a person who had not eaten for 15 days. "Oh yes, I have not eaten khana for 15 days, I am living only on chapati, vegetables and milk. Rice makes me nauseated. Please give me some medicine

so that I could eat rice, otherwise my child will die," she told me in her local dialect.

I should not have laughed but her statement in a very serious voice made me laugh. "No one dies because of eating chapati and vegetables. You do not have any problem and need no medicine. Just continue to eat what you eat and after a few months your nausea will be gone."

With my advice, the lady was not very happy. She made her face and went away.

"People here think that if they do not eat rice they will be weak. And rice is brought from Tarai and it is very



expensive. But people have changed their habits and if we eat chapatis they make fun of us," one nurse told me later. "They do not eat rice only when they are fasting, they eat chapatis."

The CDO of Achham had told me, "Achham used to export wheat and had enough for its population. But now-a-days, people do not grow wheat and, instead, rely on imported rice. Rice is brought by mules and porters and is expensive.

"As this place is not suitable to grow rice, we are all the time in food insecurity Zone. The policy of the government that all Nepali should eat rice has done more harm than good," many nutritionists say this. But lessons have never been learnt.

Four years ago, I was in Mugu and went to Rara. I stayed in a small hotel for four days. The hotel owner gave rice and vegetables. I told him why you don't give me "(buckwheat) phapar and vegetables."

"Are you joking? Who eats phapar these days. I cannot give you phapar, you are from Kathmandu. You are our guest. It will be an insult from my side if I give you phapar," Bricha Bahadur said.

I asked: "But, how will you get rice. You do not grow rice here?"

He told me, "We go to Gamgadi and stay there in line for a few hours, may be the government distributes rice, five kilos for one family. Then I buy from the shop more but that will be more expensive than the government rate." I asked again: "What did people use to eat before the government brought rice?"

He said "Phapar. Potato, etc. We stupid people what else could we eat, that was the staple food," Brikha Badur said.

That was the lesson I learnt from far western part and remote areas of Nepal that "stupid people eat Buckwheat (phapar.) And wise people eat rice."

How the habit changes can have negative impacts

on health was felt when I was in Mustang and I had seen porters eating Tsmpha with milk and butter in 2002. But in 2007 the porter had switched to rice and when I asked the 19-year old porter why he was not eating Tsmpha, he felt insulted and looked with angry eyes and said, "people earn good money, so why they should eat food like tsmpha, we can afford to buy rice."

I was astonished by his answer and tried to explain that Tsmpha was better than rice but he did not want to listen.

No one from the agriculture ministry has raised any concern about this situation. Neither has the health ministry. They are continuing sending rice to Karnali and Acham and people in those places have forgotten "how to grow and eat buckwheat and barley." My telling the people will not make them switch to phapar or kodo, which is far more nutritious and much cheaper than rice. ■

# "Private And Boarding Schools Live Under Uncertainty"

DR. BABURAM POKHAREL

Having spent more than three decades in education sector, Dr. BABURAM POKHAREL, founder of VS Niketan Higher Secondary School, has been recently elected the president of Private and Boarding Schools Organizations of Nepal (PABSON). At a time when private and boarding schools in Nepal have been facing several problems, Pokharel spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

**Despite their contributions to provide education to a large number of students, private and boarding schools have been living in constant physical threat and extortion from various groups and threat of the government. How do you explain the present state?**

Private and boarding schools have been providing education to one third of the total students. It is very sad to say that private and boarding schools continue to live under the cloud of uncertainty. For instance, a bomb was planted in front of a boarding school in Balaju for declining to pay ransom. Similarly, an unknown group lit a fire in a private school in Baglung recently. Private and Boarding schools are under constant threat.

**Do you mean private and boarding schools continue to live in fear?**

Yes. Private and boarding schools seem to be the milking cows for everyone. We are tired of dealing with student unions of various political parties, their sister organizations, employees' unions and underground outfits. Everyone comes with a letter for donations. If we decline donations, they can physically harm the schools and even founder.

**What about the government. Does it not protect you?**

Don't talk about protections. The government is there as a more sinister factor. Other groups do things in an illegal way, but the government destabilizes us through a legal way. The work of every education minister seems to destabilize the institution of education. Whenever a new minister



takes charge of the Ministry of Education, he starts his work issuing a threat to private schools over different issues, including fee structures, physical infrastructure and employee salary etc. Now the Ministry of Education is asking us to change the name of schools which are in English. This is another sheer nonsense. Instead of talking about the quality of education offered by private and boarding schools, the ministry is concerned about foreign names. If the minister wants Nepalisation of the name, he must start by changing the name of his own party.

**As the government has recently announced that it is going to formulate the new education policy, have the private and boarding schools been invited in the discussions?**

It is unfortunate that the government has never recognized our contribution. Had they recognized it, our situation would not have been like what it is in the present. The government changes policy and laws as per its whims. Despite our opposition, the government asked us to register as a private company a few years ago. Now the government is saying that schools cannot be like companies and they must register as service oriented institutions. Similarly, the government registered +2 education institutions, but now they are saying that the government will make the high school education up

to +2. They have rarely considered what will be the state of hundreds of private +2 colleges. Recently, the government even signed an agreement with the teachers association to increase the salary of the teachers without consulting us. Who will pay the increment in salaries for the teachers in private schools. When we tried to raise the fees to meet the requirements, the government opposed it.

**What are the implications of the destabilization of private and boarding schools?**

The first impact is in the quality of education. After the opening of private boarding schools, Nepalese parents virtually stopped sending their children to neighboring schools and parents were satisfied sending their children in private boarding schools here. It saved billions of rupees going out of the country. As education system is destabilized and uncertainty will prevail. Parents are beginning to send their children to the neighboring countries again. Various schools from our neighboring countries are organizing marketing campaign every week in star hotels. You can see the advertisements from schools of various cities of India and abroad. If the process of destabilization continues, more students will leave Nepal and Nepal will be seeing the flight of billions of rupees for education.

**How do you compare private boarding schools and government community schools?**

Despite spending over 62 billion rupees annually and feeding on the government coffers, community schools have failed to provide quality education. Their pass percentage in SLC is just over 16 percent. So far private boarding schools are concerned, their results is almost over 90 percent.

**What is the state of private boarding school in the country?**

There are 9,000 private boarding schools with 1.5 million children's enrolment as against 29000 public schools with 6.6 million students. The private sector is annually saving over 16 billion rupees of government coffer by providing employment to tens of thousands of people.

**What plans do you have to increase the share of private boarding schools in policy level?**

We want our share in all policy level bodies, including education reforms task force. Now, we cannot remain silent as in the past. We want recognition of our contribution from the government. We want our representation in all policy level committees. Our demand is a separate education policy and act for private and boarding schools. We want strong regulatory mechanism, but the government also needs to recognize our contribution. The government rarely consulted us on +2 education, university umbrella act. The government is taking all decisions unilaterally. This is the reason there is always confusion in education policies. We are opposing all unilateral matters. As stakeholders, we want our representation in all policy level issues. We are talking about public private partnership. We also want to support the schools in remote parts of Nepal. Unfortunately, the government is yet to listen to us on this. We want our voices to be recorded in the new constitution, new act and new regulations. ■

## ARMED TO MANAGE DISASTERS

# Training Manpower

*Nepal's Armed Police Force has opened a disaster training center right when it is needed as the country has been living under the shadow of disaster*

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

Asian Development Bank's recently released report said that Nepal is the fourth vulnerable nation in terms of natural disaster. From earthquake to landslide, fires and floods, Nepalese have been facing all kinds of disasters. In this context, opening a Disaster Center by Nepal Armed Police in Kurintar, 90 kilometers west of capital, is important.

Clearly, there is a lack of training in Nepal's disaster management to cope up when disasters strike.

Armed Police Force (APF) is the main organization that is currently looking after disaster management. Looking at the need to enhance the training to tackle any disaster and to effectively deal with various calamities, the Armed Police Force (APF) has established a "disaster management training center" at Kurintar, Chitwan.

Located at a place where landslides and road accidents are frequent, the training center will provide international standards training. APF Chief, Inspector General of Police Sailendra Kumar Shrestha formally inaugurated the training center on Thursday, March 15, 2012.

APF has made a five-year training work plan and it expects to provide three months training to some 28 percent of its force within that period.

According to APF, a team which came back from the Philippines and India after receiving disaster management training will instruct the trainees.

The center will provide training on Collapse Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR), Medical First Respond (MFR), Dead Body Management (DBM), Mountaineering and Climbing and Water Rescue.



APF Chief Sailendra Kumar Shrestha

The training center at Kurintar is one of a kind in the whole region and was a must for the country, says APF.

With the establishment of this training center, the APF believes that it will be able to train its force in a more effective and managed way and improve the overall quality in disaster handling.

The proposal to establish the training center was accepted by the government back in December 2011 and APF aims at expanding the training center to make a much wider reach. The training will be given to members of the force up to the post of deputy superintendent of police (DSP).

Disasters can happen anytime. They can neither be predicted nor can be avoided. Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters like earthquakes and is a frequent recipient of other disasters like floods and landslides. The news of death of people due to road accidents and fire outbreaks makes headlines more often than not. Sometimes the lack of prompt rescue from the accident site also takes away lives of many people. ■

# “Many Of WFP’s Beneficiaries Have Very Small Holdings And Little Arable Land”

NICOLE MENAGE

NICOLE MENAGE is a country representative of World Food Program in Nepal. Menage, an American citizen, joined WFP in 1987 as Assistant Project Officer, WFP- Malawi. After working in different countries in various positions in WFP, Menage, who completed Masters of Arts –International Affairs/Economics George Washington University, USA, has been here since 19 September 2010 as a Country Representative, WFP, Nepal. Excerpts of her written interview:

The World Food Program has been providing food stuffs in food deficit districts in Nepal for long time, which is the state of WFP program now?

The World Food Program provides assistance through several windows including “Assistance to Food-insecure Populations in the mid and Far West Hills and Mountains”: Under this program WFP provides food and/or cash to participants in exchange for their work on community asset-building projects in 16 districts of the mid and far west hills and mountains. This enables participating households to meet their short-term food needs whilst constructing productive assets at the community level that build medium-term food security safety nets. Assets created include: micro-irrigation schemes, link roads, orchards and plantations, and are aimed at improving the communities’ livelihood and income generation opportunities and strengthening their resilience to shocks. WFP assistance is provided during the lean season between the planting and harvest periods when household stocks and agricultural activity are at their lowest. In selected districts, where there is more availability of food in the markets and they are a shorter distance away, WFP is implementing primarily cash-based interventions to improve access to food for the targeted households, which helps in stimulating the local economy. WFP also distributes a micro-nutrient supplementation powder to the children of the beneficiaries through this program to reduce acute malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies.

As many of WFP’s beneficiaries have

very small holdings and little arable land, it is important that they are able to gain greater purchasing power. WFP works with partners in many of its food/cash for assets activities to improve the quality and quantity of the staple foods they produce, at the same time as enabling these subsistence farmers to begin producing some form of cash crops such as fruits and vegetables, or medicinal and aromatic herbs in the mountainous areas.

How about “School-Feeding” Program?

WFP provides a nutritious mid-day meal of locally produced fortified wheat soya blend to 210,000 pre-primary and primary school students living in 11 mid and far west hills and mountain districts. This program effectively improves the nutritional status of children while increasing children’s access to education and ability to learn. WFP has also partnered with the Open Learning Exchange Nepal to provide laptops and Nepali curriculum-based interactive teaching and learning materials to primary schools, which contributes to improving the quality of education. In addition, WFP provides a monthly take home ration of cooking oil to 64,000 girls from grades two to five who maintain a minimum of 80 percent of attendance, encouraging parents to send their daughters to school.

What is about “Mother and Child Health Care”?

WFP’s mother and child health care program provides a monthly take home ration of locally produced fortified blended food to 40,000 pregnant and lactating women and their children (6-36 months) attending health care facilities in nine districts mainly in the mid and far west hills and mountain regions. This encourages mothers to participate in the various health services offered at these facilities as well as nutrition education. Providing nutritional support to women and children during this critical period can have a very positive effect on the health and mental and physical development of children, giving them the strongest foundation possible for a bright and healthy future.



What is “Food Security Monitoring and Analysis”?

The Nepal Food Security Monitoring System or NeksAP as it is popularly known, was established in 2002 and is currently managed by WFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. It is considered the most comprehensive food security monitoring system now operational in Nepal and has as its primary objective the collection, consolidation and analysis of food security data to be used by decision makers to take coordinated and timely action to alleviate food insecurity in the country. A team of 32 WFP field monitors collect data in 72 of the 75 districts. In these same districts, District Food Security Networks have been formed, composed of officials and representatives from district based government agencies, local and international NGOs, and civil society. The NeksAP reports on such topics as household food security, emerging crises, markets, agricultural production and nutrition and produces several informative monthly bulletins. It is expected that this system will be gradually transferred to the government over the next few years.

How do you see the role of WFP in the present context and now many districts?

As is explained above, WFP works primarily in the mid and far west hills and mountains regions as these are the areas that consistently show the highest levels of food insecurity. In many parts of these regions smallholder farmers can only meet 3-6 months of their food needs even in a good year. Hence, our programs are particularly important in assisting to build the beneficiaries' resilience to food insecurity through asset creation while encouraging children to attend school and nutritionally supporting mothers and children through health care facilities.

It is reported that WFP has down scaled its program in Nepal. How will it affect the people living in remote food deficit districts of Nepal?

I am afraid that due to funding restraints we have been unable to reach all of the most highly food insecure we had originally targeted. WFP is presently facing funding shortfalls in all three of its main programs, food/cash for assets, school feeding and mother and child health care.

Many roads have been constructed including the Hilsa-Taklokot road in mid western region under WFP's Food for Work program. How do you look at them?

Yes, the first 25 kilometers portion of the Hilsa-Taklokot road was built under WFP's food-for-work program and the Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) program of the Ministry of Local Development (MoLD). WFP continues to collaborate closely with MoLD on a number of infrastructure improvement works through the RCIW program even today. In addition to small link roads, WFP also supports the creation of mule trails and footpaths. Road infrastructure is widely regarded as a crucial part of long term development in the remote regions and poor transport infrastructure underlies many of the disadvantages faced by those isolated in the remote rural areas, including high food prices, high costs to move agricultural produce to markets, more limited access to services and the opportunity costs of travel.

What are the main priority areas of WFP now? What is the volume of food WFP is currently delivering in remote parts of Nepal?

WFP priority areas are outlined above and are all aimed at increasing the resilience of communities to food and

nutrition insecurity. The volume of food/cash distributed by WFP varies by season and funding availability. All of WFP food and/or cash assistance is provided in support of specific development objectives, not solely to fill a food gap.

As Nepal is vulnerable to climate change and it will affect the food security, what does Nepal need to do to avert the crisis in future?

There is growing consensus amongst the international humanitarian community that adaptation measures are urgently needed to help the vulnerable cope with the changing environments in which they are living. This requires adapting global and local food production methods through investments, technical capacity transfers and technological innovations, while also making existing agricultural production systems more resilient, sustainable and equitable. Adaptation strategies must be supported by strong institutions and enabling policy and legal frameworks. They must also be complemented by other responses that address the immediate effects of climate change and protect those who cannot adapt. This entails enhancing social protection and safety net systems, programs and capacities at regional, national and local levels to support the most vulnerable. It involves, as well, developing capacities and systems in risk reduction and disaster management, and in emergency and response.

How do you see the state of food production in the far-western and mid-western region now?

The cereal crop production has increased in these regions over the past two years (2009/10, 2010/11) as it has in the rest of Nepal. Nepal experienced a food deficit during the period 2005/06 through 2009/10; however the cereal crop production increased by 10.9% in 2010/11 compared to the previous years, resulting in a national cereal balance of slightly over 443,000 metric tons. Despite this surplus, the mountain districts in the far-west and mid-west regions were deficit by 42% and 22% of their requirements respectively. The hill districts in the far-west region were deficit by 24%, and the ones in the mid-west region were marginally balanced. As above mentioned, even in a normal production year, many of the farming households in the hill and mountain districts of the far-west and mid-west regions can only produce sufficient food

to meet 3-6 months of their basic needs. These areas are also highly prone to natural disasters like drought, excessive rainfall, landslides, and disease infestations, further exacerbating the food security situation, as was the case during the severe winter drought experienced in these regions in 2009. According to the NLSS-III, the far-west and mid-west regions also suffer from the highest rates of poverty, which is a major factor contributing to increased food insecurity. More information published by NeKSAP can be found at <http://sites.google.com/site/nefoodsec/>

As WFP has been releasing Market Watch on food production, how do you see the overall scenario?

"Market Watch" is a monthly information bulletin that is produced by our Food Security and Analysis Team in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) and the Consumer's Interest Protection Forum. The latest issue of Market Watch (February 2012) shows the prices of the most monitored food commodities, which includes broken black grams, red potato, broken lentils, coarse rice, soybean oil and wheat flour, to have remained stable over the past four months. This reflects a normal functioning of most of the commodity markets across the country and a relatively good harvest over the most recent seasons. However, the continuous rise of fuel prices will likely increase transport costs, thereby contributing to a rise in food prices in the future. The average cost of production has shown an upward trend as well, especially in the hills, which could be attributed to the rise in the prices of inputs such as fertilizer, labor wages and seeds. There is wide concern that farmers could not get a reasonable price for paddy, although their production costs rose. The prices of potato, tomato, broccoli and green peas are also likely to increase in the next month due to the near end of their production season. The outlook for the winter crop production is quite positive so the prices of cereal crops are expected to remain stable but close monitoring is warranted to see if the hike in fuel prices and production costs will have an impact and to inform decision makers, allowing them to take the appropriate actions to ensure that agricultural production is not consequently inhibited.



# Invisible Children: Kony 2012

By *SHRADHA GYAWALI*

Jason Russel founded the non-profit group, Invisible Children, to stop African war atrocities. The Kony video that went viral was watched by millions of people around the world in less than a week. This attention was great for raising awareness against Joseph Kony. The year 2012 is an important year for the organization, Invisible Children. In 2003, a group of filmmakers took a trip to Africa to find a story. What they ended up finding was a sickening war where children are being used as weapons.

The villain in this story is Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA. Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a brutal Central Africa militia that has kidnapped thousands of children and forced them to become sex-slaves, fight as child soldiers and kill family members during a 26-year campaign of terror. Kony fights for nothing. There is no "cause" that the LRA is fighting for. Kony's goal is to have power and to maintain power. Nothing more.

The LRA began its attack in Uganda in 1980's, when Kony sought to overthrow the government. Since being pushed out of Uganda several years ago, the militia has terrorized villages in Congo, the Central Africa Republic, and South Sudan.

To reach his goal, he has built an army of many people, including children. The LRA abducts children from their villages and forces them to become child-sex slaves and soldiers. They are forced to kill at the mercy of Kony's orders. An estimated 66,000 children became soldiers and 2 million people have been internally displaced since his rein.

The LRA abducts both young girls and boys, to become sex slaves indefinitely. Kony is using children only to gain power. He is now the number one war criminal in the world

and it has become a global priority to arrest him.

Invisible Children has been working to stop Kony and his army: the result is Kony 2012. The campaign is designed to make him famous, to expose his face to every person, everywhere. In order to do this, it is necessary to involve as many people as possible. Invisible Children is on to something.

They have just released a video explaining the importance of the situation and how to help. What's more, it isn't hard to help. Visit the Facebook page (Invisible Children). Visit the website ([www.invisiblechildren.com](http://www.invisiblechildren.com)).

Getting involved is as easy as visiting their website and pledging. There are also options to donate money as well as buy the materials that will come in handy for the next step.

On the night of April 20, Invisible

Children has urged every person to take the posters that have been created bearing Kony's face, and plaster them all over cities across the country. In the morning, there will not be a single person that can escape the image of his face. In the morning, everyone will know his likeness. Americans are uniting to capture Kony, but what about their own soldiers who are responsible for killing the innocent children in Afghanistan. They should be stopped too!

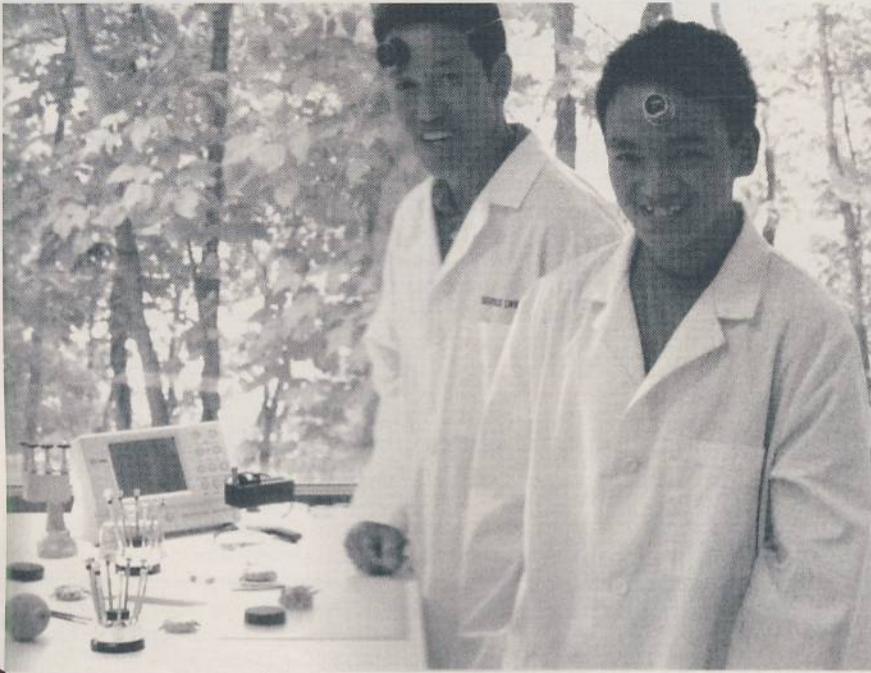
Any one person can help bring down Joseph Kony. All people have to do is expose him to the world. Plaster his face on every wall, every window, and every blank inch of space in sight.

Again, to get involved: Watch the Kony 2012 video on YouTube and also visit [www.invisiblechildren.com](http://www.invisiblechildren.com) and pledge. ■

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र बनाऔं ।



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## KOBOLD WATCH

# Made In Nepal

*Watchmaker Michel Kobold shows that Nepal has the potential to make its own brand in watch market*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Caught in the midst of a prolonged political instability, a large number of frustrated Nepalese youth are leaving the country, but American watchmaker Michael Kobold has shown that Nepal can make world class watches by employing its own people.

"It is my hope that by printing Made in Nepal on the dial of each watch that is assembled in our workshop in Kathmandu, Kobold will enhance the international reputation of Nepal as a place of skilled labor and ingenuity. Nepal, a country synonymous with the word adventure, now boasts a watch company that embraces adventure in everything it does. This is our small contribution to the aid provided to the people of Nepal," said Michael Kobold.

The watch made in Nepal is special as was handwork of two Sherpa guides. When this idea was proposed by Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the English adventurer, back in 2008, it seemed impossible.

Every Kobold watch follows the design

principles of the Bauhaus movement, which banishes all clutter and prescribes that form follows function. As a result, one can tell the time on a Kobold from a great distance, even in suboptimal lighting. The Kobold Himalaya is no exception to this rule.

According to Kobold, shockproof, water resistant to a depth of 100 meters and antimagnetic, the Kobold Himalaya isn't just a pretty face. A mechanical movement caliber K.2651/ base Foerster 197, with automatic winding mechanism, powers the watch reliably even in extreme conditions.

To pay tributes to the majestic beauty of the highest mountain on earth, Kobold created a watch dial made from a small rock collected 30 yards below its summit.

However, after four years, Kobold produced Himalaya brand Made in Nepal watch in Nepal by two Nepali Sherpas. The Kobold watch companies showroom was inaugurated recently at Babarmahal Revisited amidst a big gathering.

"When we are celebrating 2012 as Nepal Investment Year, this is a good beginning," said Radhesh Panta, executive director of Nepal Investment Board. "The government will encourage more foreign investors by bringing in investment friendly policies."

At Mount Everest Base camp, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the English Adventurer, presented his friend, the watchmaker Michael Kobold, with a lofty idea to teach their Sherpa mountain guides how to make watches. "We climbed with Ram, Mike and his future wife Anita Ugyan, two more times. By the end of the third expedition, Mike invited us to live with his family in the United States so that we could become watchmakers," said Lakpa Thundu Sherpa and Ang Namgel Sherpa, who are now co-owners of the tiny watch company in Kathmandu.

"One year in America was challenging. We missed our families, who continued to live in Nepal and learning the art of mechanical watchmaking was no simple task. Mike and his teachers crammed enough material for a two year program into the



Michel Kobold

timeframe of ten months," said Sherpa duo, who were invited by Mike.

When Sir Ranulph Fiennes had the idea for two high altitude porters and mountain guides from Nepal to learn how to make watches, his sights were set high, perhaps higher even than his attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

The Himalaya Everest Edition is limited to a total of 25 watches, each with a unique dial. It is the perfect way to commemorate a special achievement and stand out in any watch collection. ■

# Mallory's Everest

-By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



Even as school children we repeatedly read about the attempt of Mallory and Irvine to reach the summit of Everest. And the mystery about whether they actually reached the top or not was endlessly debated even with our limited fund of knowledge. Mountains seem to evoke the romantic nature that is in all of us. Indeed it is amazing to see how people who have never ventured out for a simple trek in the Himalayas are carried away by the talk of mountains. This is a good thing and testifies to the magnificent attraction that many mountains hold for us. Nowadays with colorful pictures and documentaries of mountain climbing and rescue in the mountains, this whole area has been even more successful in drawing a greater audience to vicariously enjoy the thrills of being in the mountains.

But the undying debate about whether George Mallory (standing, second from right) climbed Everest continues. For three reasons (dehydration, hypoxia, and hypothermia), I do not think he made it to the summit. Clearly Mallory was an extremely motivated and wildly talented, magical climber of his day. He represented the British generation post World War I that had been greatly affected by the horrors of the war. Mallory himself wrote eloquently about the devastation wrought by the Battle of Somme which he fought. It was time to rescue the British

psyche from this mental slump, and his successful bid to the summit in 1924 would certainly have achieved that purpose.

Everest however had other plans. At the extremely high altitude of about seven thousand meters, the climber is breathing so hard (hyperventilating) that a lot of moisture is lost this way, in addition to loss from sweating and urinating. Snow needs to be painstakingly melted with a stove for drinking water. In all likelihood Mallory and his friend Irvine who accompanied him were



unable to melt water for drinking and were severely dehydrated. Compare this with the successful climb of Hillary and Tenzing almost three decades later who drank plenty of lemonade and "peed" large amounts of urine on the summit.

For certain with just his tweed jacket and trousers and hobnailed boots, Mallory was very cold (hypothermic) in the subzero temperatures at that altitude not to mention the wind-chill factor. Compare this with the heavy down jackets and well insulated boots that a modern climber uses today. Both hypothermia and severe dehydration predispose climbers to life-threatening brain and lung edema of high altitude.

Finally, Mallory felt that it was very unsporting (therefore very un-British) to use supplemental oxygen to help him climb. Indeed there are many climbers who have summited Everest without oxygen, but there is no question that with Mallory's other two problems (extreme dehydration and hypothermia), severe hypoxia (lack of oxygen) is the last thing he could handle. Actually, even if he wanted to use supplemental oxygen, the oxygen apparatus of that time was so cumbersome and heavy that it may have been counter productive.

It would have been only right that this romantic figure of Mallory with his intense dedication and skill, reading Shakespeare's soliloquies in camp, clad in his tweeds and simple boots should have been successful. But the 3 deadlys, (de)hydration, hypothermia, and hypoxia, got in his way to the summit. ■

## Kathmandu Hosts Track-II Dialogue On SAARC

The Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), hosted a major track-II dialogue on March 12-13th on ways to reinvigorate the SAARC process. Rarely do such prominent personalities like Ambassador Shamshad Ahmad, former Pakistan foreign secretary, Ambassador Meera Shankar, former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. and Germany, Ambassador Nihal Rodrigo, former SAARC Secretary General along with delegates from all SAARC countries share the same platform chalking out the weaknesses of SAARC and analyzing the remedial measures.

Initiated by CSAS which has come out as a premier think-tank of Nepal headed by well known Nepali strategic analyst Nishchal N. Pandey and supported by Tomislav Delinic of the KAS, which is a German political foundation affiliated with the ruling CDU party, the two day conference was inaugurated by Vice-President Parmanand Jha.

Maj. Gen. (retd.) Dipankar Banerjee, Mentor of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) based in New Delhi, in his keynote address, said, "SAARC has achieved a great deal in the last 27 years but it would indeed have achieved much more. However,

looking back will not help us achieve our goals." Amb. Shamshad Ahmad advised that a troika consisting of outgoing, present and future chairs of SAARC must be constituted in the SAARC process and the Secretariat must be reconstituted with less emphasis on the bureaucracy. "The SAARC Secretariat should be reinforced as a dynamic and action-oriented organization, like any other international organization, equipped with adequate professional, financial and technological resources as well as requisite operational tools to enable it to respond effectively and professionally to its increasing responsibilities in promoting regional cooperation in South Asia," he said.

Amb. Meera Shankar said that "there is greater optimism today that South Asia will be able to build a better future characterized by the potential of cooperation rather than the constraints of mutual suspicions. The task before leaders, policy planners and opinion makers is to sustain and accelerate this process."

Former general secretary of SAARC Nihal Rodrigo who has seen the weaknesses of the organization from a very close angle diagnosed

the last Addu Summit by revealing that "at Addu, adequate time and opportunities were provided for private quiet consultations on sensitive bilateral issues between countries concerned, ensuring a calmer, more conducive atmosphere at other Summit meetings for consensual, region-centric agreements on the Declaration."

One of the notable features of the conference was the success in bringing an Afghan lady participant Mariam Safi who is Deputy Director of the Institute of Conflict and Peace Studies based in Kabul. She said that Afghanistan has high hopes from SAARC. "SAARC can play a major role in revitalizing the ancient Silk Road", she said.

SAARC countries can assist Afghanistan's extractive industry by helping the nation in creating the capacity and infrastructure to extract these resources. The benefits of Afghanistan's extractive industry will come if there is a downward trickle effect in which locals can reap the benefits while a portion of the profits help assist the Afghan government in extending its services to the local population, sustain its security forces, create a sustainable economy and better infrastructures which will ensure the revitalization of Silk Road in the long-term.

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## On Long March

Last week a mob killed a woman on charges of being a witch. This occurred in Chilwan, 100 kilometers southwest of the capital, Kathmandu. Similarly, a group of villagers physically assaulted a woman in Gindhupachowk. Widows are seen as witches in Nepal and sometimes face horrendous repercussions – they are not allowed to wear red, the color of life and passion.

Nepal is one of the most significant recipients of international financial aid in South Asia. This funding has helped the country to make many improvements in the realm of women's empowerment. But still, much

### CURRENT ISSUE



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Past Issues

### MAIN HEADLINE

## Choice Of A Governance System

Differences still persist amongst the major political parties and Nepalese scholars as to what form of government Nepal should opt for. The Constituent Assembly is in dilemma. A reformed governance system, whether it be of parliamentary model or presidential model, or a combination of the two (m...

By Dr. Surya Dhungel



### OTHER TOP STORIES

## Urgency To The National Debate

The 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Hydropower Project, which can be regarded as the world's one of the most astonishingly attractive mega-project, is the nature's&nb...

By -Dr. AB Thapa



### NEWS UPDATE

#### Market reports

Urbanization leaves hundreds of millions of children in cities and towns excluded from utopia.

#### China's rise and India's obvious partner (the U.S.)

The release last week of an Indian think tank report entitled "Non-Alignment 2.0: A Fusion and

#### Election results: Akhilesh new UP CM, Akalis keep Punjab

Samaiwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav won

## Constitution Will Be Promulgated

Our party is honestly and sincerely supporting the constitution writing and peace process. We don't want to deviate from our position. UCPN-Maoist has already sacrificed many things for the peace process. Other political parties, however, see our flexibility as a weakness. Constituent Assembly i...

By Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda



## "The demand of Apollo tire is good in Nepal"

Satish Sharma guides all aspects of Apollo's largest and most crucial market – India. Prior to this he was Chief of Marketing, where he is credited with Apollo's steady sales g...

By Satish Sharma



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