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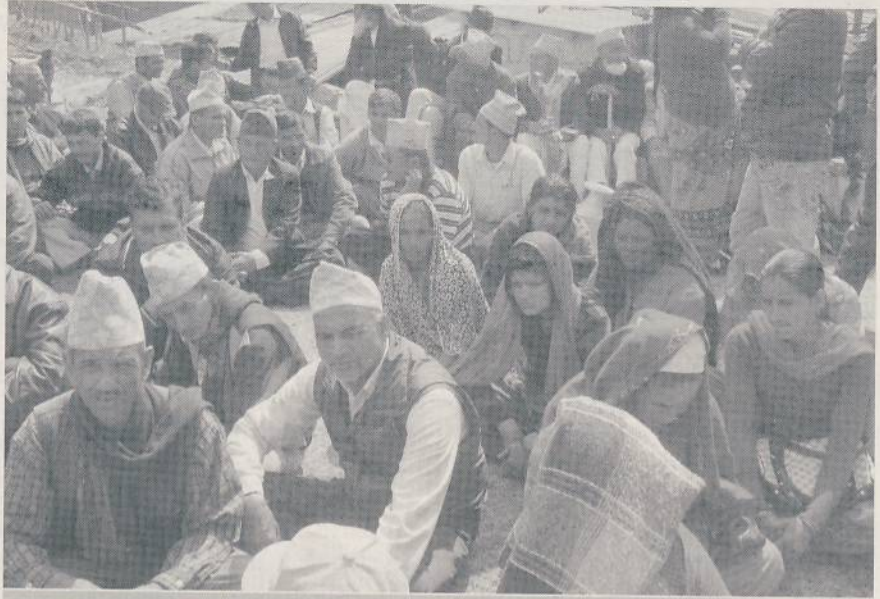
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Nepal's Civil Service is facing a critical time as the country passes through a long course of political instability. Frequent political interventions have pushed Nepal's civil service, which has a strength of 80,000 employees scattered all over the country, to the corner. Trade unions are running the show in the day to day affairs of civil service as weak and unstable governments are not in a position to take any drastic moves to contain their uncalled for activities. As the bureaucracy politicized, its loyalty has also been bitterly divided. In this context, any decision taken by the government is definitely going to land in controversy. As civil servants are celebrating the Civil Service Day Friday, we have decided to analyze the problems faced by the civil service in our cover story for this week. We have also covered the political issues and financial situation of Nepal. There are regular columns on other contemporary issues as well.



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Acting Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Gen. Gaurav SJB Rana inspected the pre-deployment training of the Bishnuld Battalion, which is leaving for Lebanon next week to take up peacekeeping duties.

### Missions Recall Disappeared Victims

On the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared, diplomatic missions in Nepal said they remembered the 1300 or more people who disappeared during the country's bloody ten year conflict. "To this day their whereabouts and their fate remain unknown and their loved ones continue to seek truth and justice," they said in a statement.

The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances as foreseen in the Comprehensive Peace Accord will help establish the facts about what happened during the 10-year long armed conflict and seek to provide justice to its victims. For Nepal's peace process to move forward, it is important that the two Commissions are established soon and with legislation that not only meets international standards but also complies with the Supreme Court's June 2007 ruling.

According to the press release issued by the British Embassy, the statement was made on behalf of the diplomatic missions and representation of Australia, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK and USA.

### Israel Embassy Hand Over Equipment

The Israeli Embassy handed over 20 electronic microscopes to Dhulikhel Hospital. These microscopes are expected to help students in their study and conduct advanced researches in the laboratory. The microscopes were sent by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A ceremony was held at Dhulikhel Hospital to mark the handover.

### New Climate Projections Allow

### Better Planning: ADB

Climate change is expected to increase temperatures in Nepal by several degrees by 2060, but a new database set up by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) should help this geographically diverse country better prepare for the various climate change impacts.

"The potential applications of this database are manifold: If a farmer has a better idea of how rain patterns are going to change, he can make better decisions about the crops he will plant, while the engineer can make a more informed decision about how to build roads that will last, and the government official can better direct public spending," said Cindy Malvicini, Senior Water Resources Specialist, at ADB.

The data show that between 2030 and 2060, the annual mean maximum temperature will increase in most areas of Nepal. While it will rise only slightly in the central part of the country, it will go up by about 3°C in the northwestern high mountain region. Meanwhile, average annual rainfall will increase slightly across the whole country, but increase most in the western and northern high mountain regions.

The projections have been made available through the Nepal Climate Data Portal on <http://dhm.gov.np/dpc>

### Nepal Can Learn From India

Nepal can learn several things from India when it comes to federating the state, but it should refrain from replicating everything, experts from both the countries said at a program here.

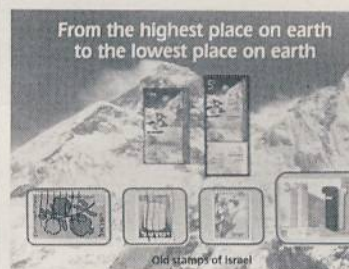
At a conference titled Nepal as federal state: Lessons from Indian experience, the experts said Nepal has now reached a stage where no one can prevent it from embracing federal structure and that Indian experiences of power distribution between centre and states; arbitration between centre and states and among the states; and sharing and utilisation of resources among states could be a template for Nepal while determining the federal states.

While presenting his paper, Prof Lok Raj Baral said Indian states, though, at times, complain that the powerful centre does not allocate adequate funds to them for development, they have never gone against it to an extent which could be detrimental to the integrity of the country. Addressing the program, Indian Ambassador Jayant Prasad said choices for Nepal are more difficult than India as the latter already had provinces before it became a federal country. Former home secretary of India, GK Pillai, gave credit to the Indian federal set-up for ensuring pluralism in the country.

Centre for South Asia Studies Director Nischal Nath Pandey said the whole essence of federalism is that each of us can pursue our individual dreams within our individual states and still come together as one Nepali family to ensure that the next generation of Nepalis can also pursue their dreams and aspirations.

### Launching of Joint Postage Stamp

Though Nepal and Israel established their friendly relations a long time back,



they issued Nepal-Israel Joint Postage Stamps, with themes of

Mount Everest and the Dead Sea, for the first time recently. Mt. Everest and Dead Sea are recognized as important symbols in both countries.

The ceremony, organized jointly by the Department of Postal Services of Nepal and the Embassy of Israel, was attended by a large number of people. The Israeli Ambassador to Nepal noted that the occasion was important for both the countries. ■

## "In Free Market, The First Challenge Is To Start And Then To Survive Through Competition"

**PRADEEP KUMAR SHRESTHA**

Managing Director, Panchakanya Group

How do you rate the 40 years of Panchakanya Group?

Due to our hard work and dedication, Panchakanya Group has laid strong foundations for the industrial sector of Nepal. We are now taking the ups and downs in the industry in a normal way. Although it is not easy to work in industrial sector in our country, but we know hard work pays off. We didn't sit by blaming the government or the acts and laws in our 40 years. When we started our business, it was very difficult to get the license and those who got the license were considered lucky. But it was easy to work after obtaining the license. But now the scenario has reversed. It is very competitive currently. Due to free market, we have to compete with both local and foreign industrialists. Previously, it was politically more stable. Although it was difficult for us to get license, but after that it was easier due to political stability. But at that time, market was small, problems were small and we were also small. But now it is not the similar case.

According to your experience, how challenging is it to succeed in industrial business?

In this free market, the first challenge is to start and then to survive through competition. Nepal has to directly compete with big countries like India and China. If business was easy, then everybody would have come to do business. Only those who have strong will, compete in the market. There is no alternative for the country other than to flourish industrially. Our country cannot move forward on others' aid and support only. So there is no alternative to business. More than 4 lakhs labor migrate to other countries but in those countries it is difficult even to get local manpower. As there are a lot of challenges, it is not easy in Nepal to do industrial business.

People complain that businessmen invest without doing enough market research. What sort of researches do you do?

We first survey the market. Due to our goodwill, people become ready to at least try our products and then people slowly start using the product after seeing its value. We never compromise on our quality and all our products are quality assured. We have become successful many times because of right timing as well. We are the pioneers for many of the market products.

What are the upcoming plans of Panchakanya Group?

After entering free market, we compete with other national and international companies and we became successful as well. Government must also have seen this. Even in our country third generation has already come. They have experiences both in Nepal and abroad. They want to take this industrial business one step further. For them, Nepali market is very small. We have told the government many times that, it should not only try to attract foreign investments but also legally open the door for Nepalis who can earn money by working and investing abroad. Liquidity flows where there is slope. Money is still being transferred from illegal ways, so it is necessary to stop that. We might also invest abroad, but we by no means will take the illegal channels. My aim is to take the process forward legally and I think I can do that.



## Vibor Bank, Bhajuratna Finance Complete Merger

Vibor Bikas Bank and Bhajuratna Finance and Saving Company Limited have officially merged with each other. Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) gave the letter of intent (LoI) for the merger in March 2012.

The two financial institutions have started joint operations from 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2012. According to the bank, the newly merged institution will be called "Vibor Bikas Bank Ltd."

They had signed the memorandum of understanding for the merger in July 2011.

Ajaya Ghimire, chief executive officer of Vibor, said that the joint venture will have a paid-up capital of NRs. 1.36 billion after receiving the LOI from NRB back in March, 2012.

## Saurabh Jyoti Inaugurated sales and spare centers

Syakar Trading Company (STC), the authorized distributor for Honda motorcycles and scooters in Nepal, opened five 2S (sales and spare) outlets in the Kathmandu valley on Monday. Syakar president Saurabh Jyoti and Vice-president Shurhid Jyoti inaugurated the new stations. The company said in a statement that it has opened Auto Engineering and MR Centre in Battisputali, Mai Auto Care Centre in Kumaripati, T & T Auto Care in Sitapaila, NISI Enterprises in Kupandol and Friends Auto Link in Pepsicola. The new outlets will help customers residing in the area, the company added.

## Gulf Air earns profit

Gulf Air -- the national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain -- posted significant improvements in its 2012 half-yearly performance against the same period last year across its business operations. Announcing the highlights of the January-June 2012 business performance of the company, Gulf Air CEO Samer Majali said that the airline has recorded six per cent increase in revenue and 13 per cent increase in passenger numbers as compared to the same period last year. Seat load factor has reached 77 per cent for the same period registering a five per cent growth, it said. The airline's Falcon Gold premium class alone has seen a healthy 35 per cent growth, while the economy class has recorded a 12 per cent growth over the same period last year. Gulf Air currently operates one of the youngest fleets in the region with an average fleet age of just 4.7 years. The airline's on-time punctuality has grown to 79 per cent as against 78 per cent in 2011, and 74 per cent in 2010 while its technical dispatch reliability has reached 99.4 per cent.



Saurabh Jyoti (Centre) President of Nepal Automobile Dealers' Association attending Press Conference on NADA Auto Show 2012

# Can We Hope?

By DR. TILAK RAWAL



Probably tired of watching the accentuating inter-party rift and the government's desire to run the country through ordinances, President Ram Baran Yadav, in his meeting with top leaders of major political parties in the last week of August, emphatically urged them to give priority to reaching a consensus on the contested political issues and also be clear about the process to achieve it. The President and the people alike were disgusted that our leaders, instead of narrowing down differences, were seemingly involved in rift-augmenting activities such as the creation of a federalist's alliance headed by UCPN Maoist, and showing of black flag to Prime Minister and other leaders by political activists of different parties. It may be mentioned that twenty political parties had formed a Federal Democratic Alliance, reportedly to forge consensus in favour of ethnic-based federalism, which was not recognized by the two major opposition parties, fearing that this would polarize national consensus politics. Accusing Maoists of trying to draw a line between them and other political forces in political disagreement with them in the country, the two opposition parties

expressed their reluctance to hold further dialogues with the so-called divisive force. Some contribution to the creation of a confrontational situation was also made by Prime Minister Bhattarai who brushed

aside the protestors on the street as having no muscle and challenged them to come up forcibly. This confrontational message from Bhattarai further widened the already huge gap between the ruling Maoists and the opposition parties. Moreover, his controversial remarks that the key to the governance of the country lay elsewhere and his one-on-one meeting with Indian Prime Minister on the sideline of Non-aligned Movement summit in Tehran, ignoring Nepal's Foreign Minister present there, have brewed additional controversies of a serious nature. Anyway, in the midst of a tense environment in the country, came the much desired initiative of the President, which has succeeded in bringing together our leaders for discussion. Prachanda, as the chair of the largest political party, visited opposition party leaders at their respective residences, soon after the meeting with the President, before the commencement of the leaders' formal meetings. Some initial outcome of the meetings made public indicate that the leaders might agree on holding parliamentary elections in the next seven to eight months, but what they should not forget is the fact that holding elections, no matter when, requires amendment to the Interim Constitution and some electoral laws, which need resurrection of the dead CA. One more thing that leaders of this country should not forget

to note is that people of this country would not mind resurrecting the CA for six months provided a deal is struck on goals and the ways to achieve them in a given time period. President Yadav also wants, it seems, political consensus at the soonest possible time, which could open doors for so many things, including revival of CA. He has also made it clear that, in the absence of consensus, he is not going to approve controversial ordinances forwarded by the government even if he is accused of taking politically motivated decisions as did the Maoists after the rejection by him of two election-related ordinances.

In the midst of heated political environment, came Prime Minister Bhattarai's televised address to the nation to mark the completion of one year in office, which blamed the failure to achieve expected goals on non-cooperation from NC and UML and the traditional state mechanism. Branding NC and UML as status-quoists, Bhattarai specifically blamed NC president Koirala for poor performance on the political front. He referred to windfalls (balance of payment surplus and comfortable foreign exchange reserve) to suggest that economy

**It may be noted that as high as 55 percent of certain state's gross domestic product in north-eastern India comes in fiscal transfer from the center. Instead of drawing artificial lines of communal disharmony, our leaders will have to struggle to get adequate quantum of resources in the form of fiscal transfer from the center for these poorest regions. Otherwise, no matter what form of polity we have in the country, these pockets of Nepal inhabited by the poorest Nepalese will remain as they are now for decades to come.**

was doing good, completely forgetting the huge current account deficit, the hardship that consumers have to go through on account of soaring prices, mainly food inflation in recent times, and supply mismanagement of basic necessities. Neither did

he speak of the need to control rampant corruption, which has surpassed all records of the past and the epicenter of which is his cabinet, nor the need to improve the deteriorating investment climate in the face of excessive liquidity with financial institutions, including cooperatives. In keeping with the tradition, he did talk of the second international airport at Bara district, expressway linking Kathmandu to Tarai and some other projects, but failed to mention a time line for beginning and completion of these so-called national pride projects. He did not also bother to speak a word about the plight of people in Far Western Nepal where inhabitants are dying this year, as in the past, of cholera and where faulty vaccines have taken toll on children. Political leaders hailing from the region have also not spoken a word about it. Astonishing is the silence of these leaders who were in a kind of rat race to express their views a little earlier in support of the people who had brought the region to a complete halt for more than a month demanding undivided Far West. It may be mentioned that as a result of unscrupulous acts of some leaders, communal harmony that existed between people, mainly between indigenous Tharus and those coming from the hills, is completely destroyed. Needless to mention that equally pitiable is the condition of people living in a large part of hilly mid-west such as Dailekh

district where hundreds of people are affected by viral flu outbreak and death toll on account of it has already reached six. Some districts in mid-west along with Far Western Region require special attention of our government. Tax rebates and subsidies are provided to relatively backward regions in different countries ranging from developing India to developed Norway. It may be noted that as high as 55 percent of certain state's gross domestic product in north-eastern India comes in fiscal transfer from the center. Instead of drawing artificial lines of communal disharmony, our leaders will have to struggle to get adequate quantum of resources in the form of fiscal transfer from the center for these poorest regions. Otherwise, no matter what form of polity we have in the country, these pockets of Nepal inhabited by the poorest Nepalese will remain as they are now for decades to come.

Looking at the divergent opinions of leaders on the issue of fresh election and resurrection of CA, it does not look like the ongoing talks among the major political parties would yield substantive results soon. It would be advisable for political parties to first thrash out intra-party differences before sitting for inter-party discussion to reach consensus on major issues. Fresh polls and revival of CA may not necessarily be taken as mutually exclusive propositions. While the body can concentrate on preparing constitution, parliamentary elections can be held on the specified date, which should be announced on the very day of revival of CA. Leaders should also be ready for timely referendum if they fail to reach consensus on major issues. People are open to any kind of timely, viable, option with a clear cut implementation calendar. They want their leaders to shed their lust for power, some glued to the chair of power and others in queue for the same, at least for sometime so that people with untarnished image in the society could be requested to run the affairs of this country for some months, if not more. Leaders, can we hope, you will not disappoint and frustrate the people too much this time?

(Dr. Rawal is former governor of NRB)



POLITICS

## No Consensus, Agreed!

*Despite resumption of talks to find out political consensus, there is no sign of political uncertainty shortening*

By KESHAB POUDEL

After breaking three months of silence, leaders of the country's three main parties sat together and discussed the ways out of the political impasse. However, the outcome remained the same as all of them agreed to hold the meeting next week to find the elusive political consensus.

Given the recent statements and actions of political forces, there will neither be a fresh election nor the revival of the Constituent Assembly. The formation of a national consensus government by replacing the incumbent prime minister is still a far cry. After taking part in Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Tehran and meeting with Indian counterpart Dr. Manmohan Singh, prime minister Baburam Bhattarai's confidence has gone up. "I am not against politics of consensus but it should help to settle contentious issues in constitution."

However, other leaders consider three party meeting was a big achievement. "We have agreed to work in an environment of political consensus to end the present political deadlock. There is no other way than the political consensus to move ahead in the process of consensus making," said Nepali Congress leader Ramchandra Paudel.

From Paudel to Maoist leader Prachanda and CPN-UML leader Ishwor Pokharel, all of them agreed that political consensus is a must in the present context. However, they have their own terms and conditions for political consensus.

UCPN-Maoist leader Prachanda

proposed that the political consensus is possible only after the agreement on thorny issues like single identity based ethnic federalism, presidential form of government and such other issues. He also proposed for referendum if it is required. "There is no hesitation in our party to form a national consensus government, revival of Constituent Assembly or fresh elections, if the two parties come with a clear stand on thorny constitutional issues."

Nepali Congress and CPN-UML hold the view that resignation of prime minister is the first step to find political consensus. "Everything is possible once the national consensus government is formed replacing the present government led by Baburam Bhattarai," said Sushil Koirala. "We don't have any objection to revive the CA or contest the elections after formation of national consensus government."

The conclusion of the meeting of three major political parties did not survive a day. While returning from Tehran, prime minister Bhattarai made it clear that there is no question for resignation as long as there is a clear cut agenda for constitution writing. "I don't want to stick to power for long. However, I will resign only after there is consensus," said Bhattarai.

As politics is game of competitiveness, no body understands how leaders of political parties find consensus. Until the consensus is found, prime minister Bhattarai knows there is no replacement for him. ■

# The Guardian's Choice



By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Is President Yadav getting ready to sack PM Bhattarai?

Nepal's "ceremonial president" is gradually getting active, almost assuming the role of dictating the political course to a country governed for too long by an interim constitution and failed political parties. On Thursday, he called a meeting of the four major political parties — the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (UCPN-M) and the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) — and sent them a tough message that their failure to decide the political course will soon leave him with no option but to act.

Consensus has been a much discredited word in Nepal's politics as these parties that have monopolised the political

process have never tired of promising to go by consensus but failed to do so in practice. The failure to deliver the constitution within the promised deadline is just one example. Caretaker Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai insists on continuing till elections in November, but the Election Commission says holding polls is just not possible in the absence of constitutional clarity. There are fears this is a Bhattarai and UCPN-M ploy to hold on



President Dr. Yadav (Left) and PM Bhattarai

to power and rule without accountability. President Ram Baran Yadav is torn between the PM's (party-backed) "Don't dare touch me" warning and the NC and UML's "Sack him" pressure. President Yadav's invitation to both sides was a message that he has taken cognizance of the prevailing situation, but clearly, he was "unclear" about how to end the deadlock.

Yet, his speeches and warnings to the PM in private meetings that he "should not rule by ordinances" show relations between them are not going to be comfortable in the days to come. Yadav has already rejected two ordinances and given enough hint that he would not sign on the dotted line in future.

Nepal's interim constitution does not envisage an active president, but at the same time it accords him the status of a "guardian" of the constitution. As a ceremonial head, he may have to sign on the dotted line, but what does a guardian do when the PM and the cabinet become errant and do not honour the constitution? "Even the British practice is clear on that. The monarch can sack the prime minister," says Surya Dhungel, legal advisor to the president.

Bhattarai is not retreating either. "It is perfectly

justified for the government to bring out ordinances when there is no parliament," he said in his address to the nation on completion of one year in office, an occasion that got the most hostile media review. His credibility that was at its peak when he took over, is arguably at its lowest ebb. His populist streaks have become counter-productive.

Yet, Bhattarai knows non-cooperation from the president would damage him the most, since the NC and the UML do not have the mass appeal or stamina to fight. Besides, these two parties' blindly following the Maoist agenda for the past six years has harmed their image, credibility and support base.

The UDMF, although as discredited and disunited, however, continues to extend support to the Maoists as "they are the forces of change and support our demand for

federalism". But that support does not bestow legitimacy on the PM's continuation in power. Moreover, Bhattarai recommended an election the EC says cannot take place. If not checked, he will use the power of ordinance to ensure his continuation even if elections do not take place. Meanwhile, facing public fury, the major parties are contemplating either the revival of the dead House or parliamentary elections once again.

Bhattarai's intolerance of criticism and his being perceived as an "idealist" in the past, have all gone against him, with no sympathy left for him in any quarter. The president is only waiting for an opportune moment, which may not be far off. But he knows not acting will make him a collaborator, while acting will vindicate what ex-King Gyanendra did a decade ago: sacking a PM who wanted to postpone scheduled elections by a year and continue without accountability. History seems to be coming full circle.

*Courtesy (Indian Express)*

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## Govt Did Nothing Worth Mentioning

By BHARART MOHAN ADHIKARY



From killing Constituent Assembly to promoting rampant corruption and working against the national interest, Baburam Bhattarai led government has done all kinds of anti-national works in the last one year. Due to price hike in essential commodities, the life of common people has become difficult. However, the government has not cared much about the people and they are protecting their own chair at the cost of the country's interest.

Baburam Bhattarai-led government is one of the worst governments in the history of Nepal. During its year in office, this government has taken a number of issues to defame Nepal's interest and interest of the people. The price hike in petroleum products and other commodities has made the life of common people difficult. For a commoner and poor, the life is virtually impossible. This government has committed many sins against the interests of the country and the people. I don't think there is any mentionable decision it has taken over the time.

The government has been consistently interfering in bureaucratic affairs while the prime minister claimed to be promoting good governance. When there is rampant corruption at all levels, prime minister Bhattarai's call for good governance is just hollow. By signing BIPPA agreement with India, Bhattarai government sold out Nepal's interests. It kept other parties in the dark, ignoring diplomatic protocol while participating in bilateral talks with India and secretly awarding an Indian company the contract to upgrade the Tribhuvan International Airport and other 15 domestic airports. In the name of providing relief, the government is encouraging corruption at all levels.

The Maoist-Madheshi coalition made a mockery of the prime minister's austerity measures by forming a 49-member cabinet, the largest ever in the country's history. Not only this, the government also appointed a large number of political advisors and encouraged nepotism in almost all appointments. This is the reason that this government should not continue any longer.

Despite our flexibility in settling the current political impasse, the government has been trying to further deepen mistrust between the major political parties by forming an alliance of "pro-federalists" and terming others as anti-federalists. The prime minister and his party have invited confrontation by further polarizing the political forces and giving inflammatory statements.

Along with violating constitution, the present coalition has also made a mockery of the rule of law by seeking clemency from the president for Maoist-lawmaker Balkrishna Dhungel, who has been convicted of murder. There are other incidents where the government violated the unconstitutional provision, guided by partisan interests of the ruling parties. The present government had announced several populist programs but the government did nothing to implement them. In practice, everything is just the opposite. The prices of daily necessities have skyrocketed. The government hiked petroleum prices four times within the year. The government also failed in the development front as the government has not taken any initiative to generate electricity and to control leakage from the national grid. The country will have to see the severe power cut in the coming days due to failure of the government to execute any new programs. The government also bulldozed the houses in urban areas not giving any compensation. This showed that this is a despotic government. The government has embezzled state funds and is trying to run the government through ordinances. This government has no moral and legal ground to continue in power as this is just a care taker government. Our party holds the view that the longer this government lasts, the more the damage it will incur to the country's interests.



## Govt Did Everything So Well

By RAJENDRA MAHATO

Despite non-cooperation and hostile behavior from the opposition parties, the UCPN-Maoist and SLMM coalition government led by Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has made a number of progresses in the last one year. This government was able to maintain the law and order as well as the pace of development. This is the first ever government in Nepal which has been trying to protect the interests of Madheshis by mainstreaming them in Nepal. For the cause of Madheshi people, from induction to Nepali Army to other civil services, the government has already proposed an inclusion ordinance. After the promulgation of the ordinance, Madheshi's rights will be further strengthened.

This government has also been making efforts to find the political solution. Although the Constituent Assembly died due to the failure of the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML to accept the demand for a single identity based state, if the two parties had not held anti-federalist views, the country would have a new constitution by now. The government still wants a new constitution through the Constituent Assembly. Hence, the call for them to participate in fresh elections. Prime minister in his recent statement has appealed to all political parties to come to consensus at the earliest to seek a solution to the present political deadlock. I don't think present government will collapse at any time and the government will resign anytime soon. This is the legitimate elected government and it will not leave the office till a new government is formed legitimately.

Even the frequent appeals by prime minister for dialogue to find a way out, CPN-UML and Nepali Congress are harping on just an agenda to go to power. In the last one year, this government has shown such a flexibility with the opposition that no government has done so far. Thanks to the bold decision taken by the government, we are able to make a significant progress in the peace process. Now the issue of integration of Maoist combatant is in the final stage and we will close this chapter soon. Similarly, the government has also made significant progress to bring armed outfit of Madhesh in national mainstream. This is the reason the law and order situation in Madhesh has improved a lot. This success became possible only due to the flexibility of the UCPN (Maoist) and the sacrifice of the People's Liberation Army. The process of change has been blocked by Nepali Congress and CPN-UML and the traditional state mechanisms. I think this government is trying to settle all the problems in the country to fulfill the people's expectations.

Along with bringing the Maoists into the mainstream, the handover of the keys of the arms containers to the Special Committee, bringing the Maoist army and the cantonments under the control of the government, progress has been made in resolving many outstanding issues of constitution making, immediate relief to poor, conflict-affected people, widening of capital roads. Road expansion will complete in Dashain.

Establishing Hello Sarkar to receive people's complaints round the clock, efforts to check irregularities in foreign employment, establishment of Nepal Investment Board, Economic Advisory Council, Awarding construction contract for the West Seti Hydropower to a Chinese company are some of the major achievements.

Similarly, the government has also started several new projects including the construction of the Hetauda-Kathmandu fast-track road and achieved highest economic growth in past three years. Limiting power cuts to 12 hours and signing BIPPA with India are other major achievements. The work is in progress toward democratizing the Nepal Army. This is for the first time this government is able to make such a progress in the country.

*As told to New Spotlight*

# “Nepal Enjoys Geographical Advantages”

YANG HOULAN

Chinese ambassador YANG HOULAN joined his office in Nepal a year ago. Since his arrival here, many new developments, including the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, have taken place. Chinese premier Wen Jiabao visited Nepal in December 2011 during his tenure. At a time when Chinese investors have been showing interest to invest in Nepal, the Chinese ambassador gave a written interview to KESHAB POUDEL. Excerpts:

**After Nepal turned a federal republic four years ago, how do you see Nepal-China relations at present?**

The international situation has gone through dramatic changes in the recent years while Nepal is in the course of political transition, during which uncertainties are increasing. But the friendly relations between China and Nepal have steadily developed as China-Nepal relations have solid political, social and civil foundation. Both China and Nepal abide by the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. We treat each other as equals, respect and trust each other, and sincerely assist each other. The relationship between our two countries has set a good example of state-to-state relations.

Early this year, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid a successful visit to Nepal and brought the bilateral relationship to a new high. Following that, Chen Zhili, Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and President of All-China Women's Federation also visited Nepal. Recently, Fu Ying, Vice Foreign Minister, came to Nepal for the ninth round of diplomatic consultations and the two sides agreed to speed up implementing the consensus reached by Premier Wen Jiabao and Nepali leaders. With growing exchanges and cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields, the China-Nepal Comprehensive Partnership will have a bright future.

**During a recent visit of China's high level delegation, what issues did Nepalese and Chinese officials discuss?**

During her visit, Fu Ying, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, called on Prime Minister Dr. Bhattarai, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Shrestha, and co-chaired the ninth round of diplomatic consultations between the two countries with Foreign Secretary Durga Prasad Bhattarai in Kathmandu. The two sides exchanged views on extensive issues, such as bilateral relations, international situation and regional affairs, and reached broad consensus.

Fu spoke highly of the bilateral relations and expressed appreciation for Nepal's firm pursuit of the One China policy. She reiterated that China will support Nepal's efforts in safeguarding independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity and is willing to work together with the Nepalese side to actively implement the outcome of Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Nepal, and make the Year of China-Nepal Friendly Exchanges a full success and achieve greater progress of bilateral pragmatic cooperation. The Chinese side abides by the principle of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs and wishes Nepal complete the peace and constitution-making process at an early date and achieve peace, stability and prosperity.

The Nepalese side said that the bilateral relations enjoy a long history and profound foundation and the two countries have been promoting exchanges and cooperation in various fields. Nepal sincerely thanks China for its support and help over the years and expects to benefit from China's economic development. Premier Wen Jiabao's successful visit to Nepal has set up a solid foundation for the long term development of the bilateral relations. The Nepalese Government will firmly pursue One China policy, and will never allow its territory to be used for anti-China activities by any forces. Nepal hopes to expand cooperation with China in economy and trade, investment, tourism, culture and other areas, enhance cooperation in international

and regional affairs and achieve common development.

**It was reported in the Nepalese media that China also expresses its willingness to sign Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPPA). What do you say on this?**

Trade and economic relationship is one of the important aspects of the China-Nepal Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation. China will continue to encourage competent and well-established Chinese companies to invest in Nepal and help Nepal achieve the economic and social development. If we could sign the BIPPA, it would create a fairer and more friendly environment for the Chinese enterprises, expand mutual cooperation, promote common development and benefit the two countries and their peoples.

**During Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Nepal, Chinese government proposed so many economic and development packages to Nepal, what are the states of those packages?**

During Premier Wen Jiabao's visit, leaders of the two countries reached broad consensus on friendly cooperation, making an overall planning for the future development of bilateral relations. The two sides signed several agreements, issued a Joint Statement, and declared 2012 as China-Nepal friendly exchange year. The two sides are working together to materialize the outcome of the visit.

**Recently, a high level Nepalese delegation visited China to talk with Three Georges Company on West-Seti Project. How do you look at it?**

The West-Seti Hydropower Project is very important to the economic and social development of Nepal. I noticed that all sectors of Nepalese community expected much of it. However, immediately after signing the MoU, some negative speculation came up in Nepal's media, which has drawn much attention of the international media. This time Nepal sent a high level delegation to visit China and discussed with Three Georges Company on West-

Seti Project showing Nepal's strong will to push forward the project. If the project could be implemented smoothly, the power shortage problem of Nepal would be relieved, and the social and economic development would be highly promoted. I hope the two sides could resolve problems concerned through friendly negotiations and create conducive environment for the project.

Despite Nepal's geographical location between two economic powers of the World, Nepal is unable to take economic benefits from its neighbors. How do you see the possibility of making benefits in the future?

Both China and India are the world's largest developing countries as well as the emerging economies. As a neighbor of both countries, Nepal enjoys geographical advantages. China hopes the political parties of Nepal could meet the fundamental interests of the nation and the people's common aspiration, complete the peace and constitutional writing process as soon as possible, realize the long-lasting stability and rapid economic and social development.

After completion of Rasuwagadhi-Syaphrubeshi road, there will be another connecting point between Nepal and China. How will it help to increase bilateral trades and relations?

During the past few years, both China and Nepal have been trying to expedite construction of roads and trade ports between the two countries. The interconnection of the roads would further promote trade and people-to-people exchanges and realize common development of the two countries.

Whenever there is political instability in Nepal, anti-Chinese forces try to create problems for China. As Nepal has been passing through a prolonged course of political instability, don't you think it will encourage anti-Chinese forces in Nepal?

China and Nepal have been always trusting each other, supporting each other and respecting each other's core interests. Both sides keep close contact and cooperation on the security issues.

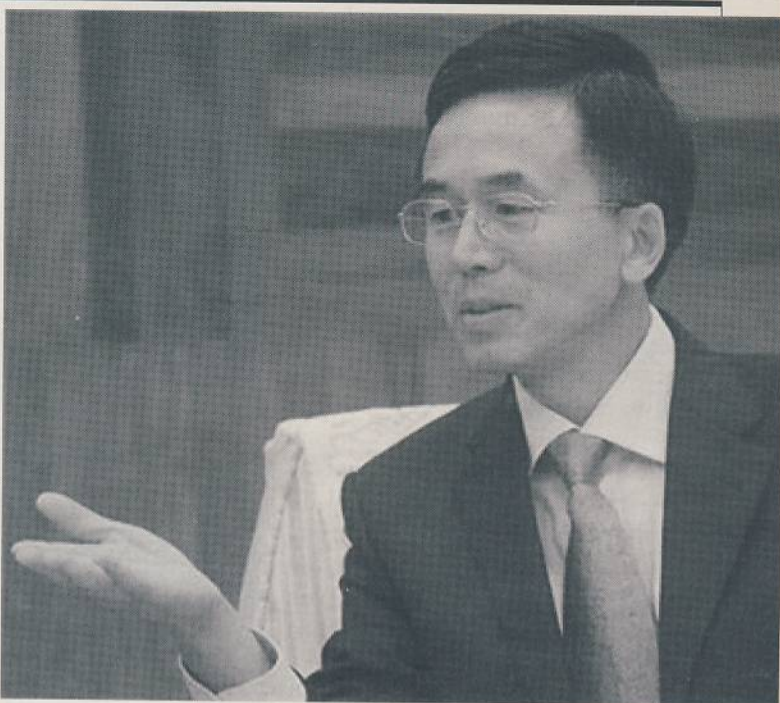
China respects the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nepal, as well as the developing path chosen by the people of Nepal. Nepal always firmly pursues One China policy, and never allows any force to use its territory for any anti-China activities. It's a

clear-cut position taken by people from all walks of life in Nepal. Nepal's government, political parties and society are all very clear about that. Therefore, I'm confident on the further development of China-Nepal Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation.

How does the Chinese Government see the ongoing political course in Nepal?

Currently, Nepal is at a crucial juncture of political transition and faces a historical task of writing constitution. Though there are disputes on some issues, I feel that all parties want to achieve the goal of peace, stability and development. As a friendly neighbor, China always sincerely supports Nepal's stable development. We hope the various parties in Nepal could reach consensus through active consultation and dialogue. China supports Nepal's efforts in completing the peace and constitutional process at an early date, and respects the social system and development path chosen by the Nepalese people. We would also like to see a stable, united and prosperous Nepal.

You have been visiting different parts of Nepal and meeting local people. How do you see people to people relations between China and



Nepal?

I've visited many parts of Nepal during my stay. I'm deeply touched by the profound friendship of the Nepalese people towards China. China and Nepal have a long history in culture exchanges. Today, a lot of wonderful stories are still widely spread among the two peoples. Carrying forward China-Nepal friendship has been deeply rooted in the people's heart.

In recent years, the people-to-people and cultural exchanges have been rapidly expanded. Early this year, during Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Nepal, the two sides jointly declared the year 2012 as the "China-Nepal Friendly Exchange Year". A 100-member youth delegation from Nepal visited China in May. Next year, a 50-member Chinese youth delegation will come to visit Nepal. The exchanges among social, cultural groups and media also have been increased. Confucius Institute, Confucius Classrooms and Chinese volunteer teachers in Nepal are very popular in Nepal. Last year, the personnel exchanges between the two sides reached more than 130,000. Now, 3,000 students from Nepal are studying in China. The bilateral cooperation in the fields of culture, education and tourism has maintained a very good momentum.

Despite Nepal and China being neighboring countries, Nepal is yet to lure tourists. Is there any possibility to increase the number of Chinese tourists?

Nepal is rich in tourism resources. Lots of foreign tourists come to Nepal for sightseeing. Last year, the Chinese tourists in Nepal exceeded 100,000, 140% more than that of the previous year. Although China and Nepal have operated four direct flights, two highways which pass through the Himalaya, it still can't meet the demand of the rapid growth of the visiting Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, it's also a big challenge for Nepal's tourism infrastructure including hotels and Chinese tour guides. We hope Nepal's relevant departments could strengthen coordination and cooperation to speed up its tourism development.

How can Nepal benefit from growing infrastructure in Tibetan Autonomous Region bordering Nepal?

China always attaches great importance to the infrastructure interconnection projects with Nepal. The road linked Rasuwa-Jilong was opened at the end of last year, the two sides have begun to discuss how to bring it into full play. With the extension of Beijing-Tibet railway to Shigatse, people also have expectation on extending the railway to Nepal. The Tibet Autonomous Region pays great attention to its friendly cooperation with Nepal and has been actively promoting the development of relevant infrastructure. I believe that the infrastructure construction and interconnection projects in border areas will help to promote the stable development of the two sides. It will also create better conditions for the cooperation between China, Nepal and other south Asian countries.

A few years back, Nepal even used roads in Tibetan Autonomous Region to supply essential commodities to Nepal's remote northern parts. Is Nepal still using the roads?

The transportation in the northern parts of Nepal is not convenient. China has always been providing necessary facilities to Nepal in this regard according to the bilateral agreements. ■



YOUTHS FROM FINLAND

## Trip For A Cause

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

Three young men from Finland have shown if people want to do something good, distances don't matter and neither does age. The three youths in their early 20's embarked on a cross country road trip to raise funds for schools in Nepal. They not only made the trip successful but also managed to raise some NRs 10 million seed money for the school project.

Juho Leppanen 23, Mikael Hautala 22, and Rico Pirklen 22 travelled all the way from Tampere, Finland to Kathmandu in a 10 year old delivery van. They started the journey on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2012 as they travelled some 8,500 kilometers on road before arriving in Kathmandu on 26<sup>th</sup> August.

"I was in Nepal some 2 years back where I saw bad condition of children in schools. Then, it became my dream to help children of Nepal. I felt that I need to do something for my dream, after that we decided for the journey and my friends also joined hands," said Juho Leppanen. "After the journey, we believe we can bring a little change in the world," he added.

The cross country journey spanned through eight countries. According to Juho, they braved through various

challenges, especially in the Karakorum highway where they had to carry their van in a small boat for some 27 kilometers due to floods.

They travelled through eight countries — Helsinki in Finland, St Petersburg, Moscow and Kazan in Russia, Astana in Kazakhstan, Bishkek in Kirgizstan, Kashgar in China and Gilgit in Pakistan.

The school project will be carried out under Fida International, one of 23 Finnish NGOs supporting development projects in Nepal. They collected funds mainly by providing advertising spaces in their delivery vans to the sponsors.

The youths also expect to raise some more funds while driving back to Finland. Among three, Mikael Hautala will be flying back home and Misa Jokisalo who arrived on Kathmandu by air will join the other two in their road trip back to their home.

Ncell has also extended support to this innovative initiative. According to Autollanepaliin Facebook page, Ncell along with supporting this initiative will also start selecting schools through FIDA for 2013.

The Nepal-Finland cooperation amounts this year to NRs 2.2 billion. ■

# CIVIL SERVICE

# A Total Mess

**With seven trade unions affiliated to various political parties actively intervening in the day-to-day affairs of the civil service, a chaotic situation prevails in the service delivery mechanism. As policy makers have a little space to exercise their authority in transfer, promotion, reward and punishment, the chain of command is broken at best. Never in the last six decades, Nepal's civil service has been so politicized and trade unionized as it is now. Trade unions resist almost all decisions taken by the government and every decision lands in a controversy. As Nepali civil servants are celebrating the Civil Service Day, the time has come to think about how to make it a professional, impartial and competent institution**

By **KESHAB POUDEL**

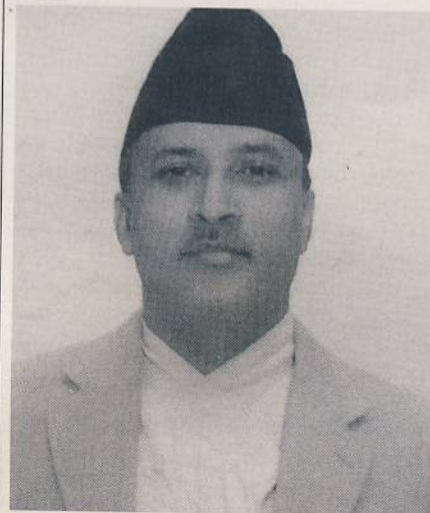
When he took the position of the government's chief secretary, Leelamani Paudyal, a courageous and dynamic bureaucrat, declared he would initiate reforms in the civil service, injecting some hope in a stagnating institution. Paudyal directed civil servants to work as servants of the people and make service delivery effective and timely. He also stressed the need to maintain dignity and decorum of civil service while in the office.

However, less than a week after chief secretary Paudyal's statement, a group of civil servants affiliated to the various political parties went to the Ministry of General Administration and vandalized the rooms of senior officials, expressing anger over the transfer of civil servants.

This was a reaction against the government's August 17 decision to transfer 550 civil servants. Disgruntled trade unions affiliated to the ruling UCPN (Maoist) and the Rastriya Karmachari Sangthan traded verbal barbs with officials at the Ministry of General Administration and tried to manhandle them. Another union, Nijamati Karmachari Union, supported by the Nepali Congress, picketed the office of the chief secretary.

A tug of war has been brewing between the government and the trade unions after the MoGA shuffled some 550 civil servants, some 400 non-gazetted and 150 gazetted staff in all the categories. The reshuffle has resulted in some old faces serving in 'attractive'

offices for many years, replaced by new ones.



Chief Secretary Leelamani Paudyal

# Civil Servants Need Not Act Like Masters

BEGENDRA RAJ SHARMA PAUDYAL

As Nepal is celebrating the Civil Service Day amidst growing confusions, Begendra Raj Sharma Paudyal, Joint Secretary and spokesperson of the Ministry of General Administration, spoke to *New Spotlight* on various issues regarding the state of civil servants in Nepal.

**What is the importance of celebrating the Civil Service Day?**

Although it is a ritual, we are working now to make it different from the past. Of course, the civil servants will hold rallies and formal programs, such as to award best civil servants. The Prime Minister will attend the program. There will be sports and other competitions.

**Don't you think the time has come for the ministry to celebrate it with really differently?**

Yes. The time has come now. As civil servants, we need to show the people that we are the servants of the people and we are there to help and deliver things.

**What is the number of civil servants now?**

There are a total of 95,599 civil servants. There are altogether 79,763 permanent civil servants currently working in the country and this number also includes 15,702 from Health services. Of the civil servants, 5,841 are females. There are 13,440 gazetted officers, including 946 females. The gazetted class include 52 special classes, 492 first class, 3,021 second class and 9,875 third class. There are two female special classes, and 12 first class, 107 second class and 825 third class female members.

**What is the number of non-gazetted officials?**

Out of 29,143 total non-gazette staff, 3,356 are female. There are 13,850 non-gazetted first class, 12,753 second class, 2,092 third class, 434 fourth class and 14 fifth class officials. Out of 21,344 class, 1,539 are females. Out of the total employees, there are 15,702 in the health sector with 5,972 females. Likewise, there are 129, including 2 women, in the judiciary.

**What is the number of temporary, contract and daily wages staff?**

Although the government has stopped recruiting the permanent position at class level as the current Civil Service Act bars such recruitment, the government is now hiring office helpers, including drivers and peons in contract.

**Where is the highest number of civil servants?**

There are 19,451 civil servants in Kathmandu valley and 60,129 outside the valley. Kathmandu District has the highest concentration of civil servants, with 15,261 and Manang district has the lowest, with 288 civil servants.

**How do you see the present state of civil service?**

Nepal's civil service has gone through various stages to reach the present state. In more than seven decades of history, several high level administrative committees were set up to streamline the civil service. Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, Bedananda Jha to Girija Prasad Koirala and, the last time, Pampha Bhushal headed high level committees which recommended ways to reform the civil service. Our ministry is concerned how to implement the suggestions and recommendations given by all these committees.

**Do you think the government of Nepal has ever implemented the reform agenda?**

We have constituted various high level commissions and committees. However, their recommendations are now locked in the boxes. People are raising fingers at us due to the failure to deliver prompt services to the people. There is an accusation that politicians and civil servants are standing side by side to exploit the people. In this context, it is the responsibility of all the concerned parties, including Nepal Government, Cabinet Secretariat and Ministry of General Administration to initiate reforms to address the issues raised by the people.

**Trade unions are reportedly destroying the norms in civil service. How do you look at this?**

The Ministry is seriously looking at the issues of trade unions in civil service and the reasons behind the failure of the government's delivery system and reform initiatives. Political leadership must decide what kind of reforms it wants. We have the technical capability to initiate the reforms. We must reform the civil service by keeping in mind that civil service should work to provide effective service to the common people.

**Civil servants are criticizing the Ministry of General Administration**

Nepal Civil Servants Employees Union, Nepali Congress, Nepal Civil Servants Association (NC splinter), Nepal



**for being inefficient and incapable. How do you look at this?**

You cannot change things by criticizing and condemning the Ministry of General Administration. Civil servants should raise fingers against the bad precedents and practices of the Ministry. Civil servants working in the Ministry cannot undertake big reforms. What is required is the political commitment and political guidance to take any initiative. Political commitment and determination of high level civil servants can make real changes possible. One of the bitter realities is that no political leader considers the Ministry of General Administration as the best Ministry. Instead, it is always receiving the least priority for them.

**How can we make the Ministry of General Administration more effective now?**

As long as this ministry remains a jumping pad, nothing will change in the Ministry and civil service. This is a very important Ministry and it needs the support of the prime minister, chief secretary, secretaries, trade unions and civil servants as well. If there is anything wrong in this ministry, it will have implications in all levels. We are first public servants, and then we are the civil servants, and only after that we are the members of particular trade union. In practice, the opposite exists. First, a civil servant considers himself as a member of particular political party, then the member of particular trade union and only after that they consider themselves the civil servants. It is that a member of particular trade union does not have to work.

Up in arms are civil servants unions, including CPN-UML aligned Nepal Civil Servants Employees Association,

National Civil Servants Employees Association (UCPN-Maoist), Nepal Madhesi Civil Service Association,

## “Trade Unions Want Friendly Environment”

BHOLANATH POKHAREL

chairman of Nepal Government Employees' Organization

### How do you view the trade unions?

It is sad that ministers and secretaries are trying to project trade unions as unfriendly. This is completely wrong. We are always against politics and violation of the norms in the civil service. We always encourage civil servants to be disciplined, punctual and friendly to the people. Blaming each other benefits nobody.

### How do you look at the Civil Service Day celebrations?

This is a great occasion for the civil servants as the day reminds us of the need to end discrimination among the civil servants. The message of the day is that all civil servants from the chief secretary to junior employees are equal. However, it is unfortunate that Nepal government is yet to understand the problems faced by civil servants. As per the commitment expressed by prime minister a year ago, we are waiting to see the amendment in the Civil Service Act to end discrimination. I don't agree that this day is meant to organize fanfare, but the day should help us look at whether we are able to work for the people or not.

### It is said that trade unions are politicized. How do you respond to this?

It is a false charge of the high government officials and ministers that trade unions indulge in politics. Unions are not against reforms, we always take reforms in a positive way. We have often reiterated that we are ready to correct if there are mistakes. However, it is the

secretaries and ministers who want to protect their own henchmen. Whenever we raise such issues, they accuse us as partisan.

### Don't you think there is the need of elections to legitimize trade unions?

Our organizations have been demanding free and fair elections for legitimate trade unions. However, it is the government which always avoids elections. They are encouraging multiple trade unions so that they can play one against the other. Trade unions are protecting the interest of civil servants and working hard to improve the delivery to the people.

### Why is there always a dispute in transfers?

We have been demanding certain criteria for transfers. However, nobody has shown sincerity to develop criteria. They know that once the criteria for transfers are put in place, they will lose their power to take discriminatory transfers. In last April, the Ministry of General Administration announced transfers by choosing persons close to the prime minister and secretary in lucrative places.

### What is the role of trade unions?

Trade unions are proposing to make civil service transparent, competitive and trade union friendly. But, the persons with traditional mindset oppose this move. Our aim is also to protect interests of civil servants and end politicization and nepotism.

Each organization needs 5,000 signatures to register it at the Labor Department and get the recognition as a trade union.

As soon as the transfer is announced, the Ministry of General Administration comes under fire from trade unions. Last April, trade unions shut down the doors of senior officials, including those of the secretaries, joint secretaries and under secretaries for months. According to Nepal Civil Service Act, the transfer of the civil service is made twice a year, in April and August. The dispute surfaces if employees associated with trade unions are not posted to lucrative

ministries.

### Classification

As disputes in transfer grow in the midst of rampant charge of 'systemic corruption,' the government has classified ministries, departments and offices into four categories. However, trade unions have denounced the move to categorize the government offices into 'Ka, Kha, Ga and Gha' (A, B, C and D) classes as an attempt to breed corruption.

Sources claimed that PM Baburam Bhattarai in his capacity as the Minister for General Administration (MoGA), Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal, MoGA Secretary Durga Nidhi Sharma and seven trade unions on August 14 decided on the classification.

Government officials said the move was an attempt to 'end systemic corruption' in public offices that are considered 'attractive.' They added that the move was also an honest effort to bring about sanity and deliver effective services to the people.

'Attractive' ministries and offices like the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management, Foreign Employment Department, the Department of Transport, Ministry of Physical Planning and Works and its departments, Ministry of Land Reforms, Land Revenues Department, Revenue Offices, Immigration Offices and some district administration offices, including Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, fall under the A category.

The B category includes Ministries like Industry and its departments, the Company Registrar's Office, Department of Commerce and some district administrative offices, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Soil and Conservation, Ministry of Irrigation, its departments and office of auditors.

The C category of Ministries includes Agriculture, Tourism and their offices, Education, Health and Population and their offices. Under D category, there are post offices, District Development Offices, Office of the Regional Administration and offices of constitutional bodies and the Ministry of Children and Women.

"The same unions are now protesting the move," Shovakhar Regmi, the chairman of the Nepali Nijamati Karmachari Sangh, another Congress-affiliated trade union, told the Kantipur daily, recently.

National Independent Civil Service Union (Drivers and class less employees) and Nepal National Employees Forum. All Nepal Government, Temporary, Daily Wages and Contract Employees Association adds to the strength.

As the civil service is badly divided, every employee needs the backing of certain group to register his or her voice. "If I cannot join one or the other group, nobody will come to support me at the time of transfers and promotions," said an employee.

Due to the growing insecurity, civil servants are joining unions for their protection.

# Why Civil Service Reforms Fail?

By DR. RABINDRA SHAKYA



Despite more than five decades of experiment with democratic practice, the behavior and mind-set of politicians and bureaucrats have not changed to allow for far reaching civil service reforms based on results orientation. The success of any civil service reform hinges on the political as well as bureaucratic will and commitment, and the utilization of reforms in the context is crucial for its success.

Nepal provides a unique case where efforts for administrative reforms are moving amidst radical political changes and episodes of instability. It also provides another illustration where all the leaders, politicians and members of the civil society speak unequivocally about the need to introduce far reaching administrative reforms. Yet their contribution for carrying the reforms process forward has always been far less than what was expected of them.

The Nepalese civil service is suffering from some major deficiencies. These deficiencies affect the overall functioning of the civil service. The past reforms initiatives have brought about a new set of problems, co-existing with the past ones. Taken together, these, with the passage of time, have become more intense, deep rooted and pervasive.

Civil servants suffer from uncertain prospects for career development. Merit

and quality aspects are often compromised at the cost of efficiency, honesty, and hard labor. Insufficient linkages of merit to promotion in the career drives the staff to a point of total desperation, depriving them of whatever little courage, innovation and vigor they possess.

The frequent amendment of substantive provisions of the Acts and Regulations, in itself, is a source of instability in the overall civil service. Anti-corruption mechanism has remained the weakest, despite the fact that institutions such as the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority have been given a constitutional status. This is reflected in the massive corruption reported to have prevailed in the Nepalese civil service.

Bureaucrats are found to react negatively towards attempts to implement reforms unless such reforms include the possibility of increasing their personal benefits. Bureaucrats are more conservative and resistive to change than their political masters, ministers, politicians, or people at large. One of the reasons is that, at the end of the day, it is the civil servant who has to take on the responsibility to implement new measures, which means new and additional responsibilities, additional risks, departure from the existing system

where they are accustomed to working with, and involves changes in the functions and responsibilities they consider as being not commensurate with existing perks and privileges or that they see less possibility for an increase in their perks and privileges.

In recent years, bureaucracy has become too much politicized. Chances of being appointed to the position of the secretary or other similar positions, Departmental Head, and the chief of the public enterprises has become a zero-sum game to those who do not enjoy any proximity or sympathy with one or another political party.

The biggest source of political influence is in-built in the present Civil Service Act, which is amended to reflect that in the positions equivalent to Special Class/Secretary, the Promotion Committee has to recommend candidates three times in number of the vacant positions and the government can appoint anybody from the list. This has motivated the civil servants to develop relationship with the politicians to exert his/her influence for promotion. In fact, the provision of the Act encourages political parties to derive benefits through such appointments.

*(Dr. Shakya is a former senior civil servant. Currently, he serves as an independent consultant on issues of administration and development. Excerpts of his research paper "Why Civil Service Reforms fail? - A Case of Nepal" published in Administration and Management Review Volume 21, No. 2, August, 2009)*

Since Nepal drafted the first Civil Service Act in 1957, it underwent 29 revisions before being replaced by Nepal Civil Service Act 1993, which was amended in 2007 to make it inclusive. Several structural reforms, such as the setting up of computer-based personnel information systems, the passage of legislation for rightsizing the government, and the Civil Service Act of 2007, are important achievements.

In order to make the civil service inclusive, Section 7 (7) of the Civil Service Act, 1992 (Second Amendment 2007) section 14 has made some important provisions on reservation and recruitment policy and process. Forty five percent of the posts to be filled through open competition are to be set aside and filled up through separate competition, exclusively between the candidates from women, indigenous/nationalities,

Madhesi, Dalit, disabled and backward areas, which share 33, 27, 22, 9, 5 and 4 percent, respectively.

A total of 79,763 permanent civil servants are currently working in the country (this number also includes 15702 from Health services). Out of 63,927 civil servants, 5,841 are females. There are 13,440 gazetted officers, with 946 of them females. The gazetted category includes 52 special classes, 492 first class, 3,021 second class and 9,875 third class. There are two females in special class, 12 in first class, 107 in second class and 825 in third class.

Out of 29,143 total non gazetted staff, 3,356 are females. There are 13,850 non-gazetted first class, 12,753 second class, 2092 third class, 434 fourth class and 14 fifth class staff. Out of 21,344 class less employees, 1,539 are females. Out of total employees, there are 15,702 in the



health sector with 5,972 females there. Likewise, there are 129 people, including 2 women, in the judiciary.

Although Nepal's civil service has been transformed from an isolated tower to a more inclusive institution, the challenges remain before it to make it a public oriented and effective instrument to deliver services to the people. ■





# Minimum Consensus Agenda

By KRISHNA HARI BASKOTA

In the previous year all our economic indicators were positive. If we compare the last year's indicators with data for the year before it, all economic indicators were moving in the positive direction. Not only economic indicators, there were improvements in even the realty sector. The capital market also grew on an average as the Nepse index reached around 390. In the previous fiscal year, we were able to make the overall economic indicators positive. We were on the verge of taking economic pick-up but we were not able to bring full budget to kick-start the growth. At a time when the economy was heading in the right way and when the economy had already taken a certain positive direction, it is sad that there were obstacles in the economic growth, that also due to political reasons. We are trying to separate economy from politics and find consensus on minimum economic agenda from all political parties, if not all, at least major political parties should agree on the minimum agenda for economic prosperity.

If political parties ask me as the finance secretary to make the common agenda for minimum consensus then I would like suggest the following list and put it up for consensus.

First, I would like to suggest giving continuation to the liberalized market economy, which we have been implementing from the 90's and all political parties should continue on this free market track. Then, we should not nationalize any private investment. We became a member of WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2004, likewise, we are also the member of SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area), we have also agreed on all harmonized codes of WCO (World Customs Organization), and we have also adopted 40+9 recommendations of FATF (Financial Action Task Force). All the agreements made with these economic international agencies should be followed as agreed on and all political parties should agree on these issues.

The private sector is asking for making tax rates predictable. So we should not raise the current tax rates at least for the next ten years and also

should agree on not bringing any new taxes and only increase the tax boundary if necessary. We have 37 public enterprises; there are various obstacles in privatizing these institutions. So we should start decreasing and removing the government's liabilities in these institutions gradually.

Another is the price of petroleum products; we have to import petroleum products as they are not the products of our nation. There are always troubles in setting the prices of petroleum products. So all parties should decide on fixing the prices of petroleum products according to the market and that should be automated. Prices of petroleum products move according to the international market and there is no point in burning tires in Nepal after any hike in prices of these products. If a nation is economically strong, then, yes, the government should give subsidy in these

Some Economic Indicators For Comparison		
	Last fiscal year	Year before last
GDP growth	4.6 percent	3.8 percent
Inflation	8.3 percent	9.6 percent
Export growth	16 percent	5 percent
Remittance growth	40 percent	10.5 percent
Revenue growth	22.2 percent	11 percent
BOP surplus	113 billion	3 billion
Foreign currency reserves	450 billion	272 billion

*(Some are rounded figures. Figures are either in NRs or in percentages)*

products. In our nation it is difficult for the government to even give NRs 500 as old age pension. The government has not succeeded in even providing basic fertilizers to farmers. The government has not been able to give basic educational facilities to the people of the rural areas. So there should be no argument on providing subsidy to only 26 percent people who use petroleum products. As we are searching for investment, if any country wants to sign BIPPA or DTAA or any other investment protection act, then we should sign these treaties to attract investors of those nations. We should not debate on issues like in the present context. It is not debate that we are seeking, we are seeking investment.

We have to increase export from NRs. 75 billion of last fiscal year to NRs. 100 billion. The government should give various subsidies to small and medium enterprises, especially to agro-based industries. They should be provided with various subsidies directly from the

government. There is also the need of a flexible labor law. This doesn't mean that laborers will be provided no rights. Laborers should be provided facilities according to ILO 102. They should receive nine social security facilities according to ILO provision. But labors should not be allowed to close the industries or make insurmountable demands with the investors. Everybody should remain within the bounds of discipline.

All the land acquisitions that the government does, or the other environmental protection activities and resettlement works for development should not be politicized. Everyone should become a development lover. For instance, in the case of Melamchi water project, it is not necessary to stop the project by bringing forward various unnecessary environmental issues

Also there is the need of consensus among political parties in all the projects of national pride. Kathmandu-Terai fast track, Terai rail road or mild-hill highway, and other national pride projects should not be hindered by the change in government and all political parties should form a common agreement on this. Furthermore, the date for the promulgation of the national budget should be fixed and the full budget should be allowed to be brought that day irrespective of the nature of the government or the type of the government.

Every nation searches prosperity. Prosperity basically means economic prosperity. Prosperity can be achieved by various other means like raising awareness, or through women empowerment, and also by the development of cultures and languages, among others. But if people are aware and empowered but have no money for their bread and butter, then that empowerment is near futile. Only if people are economically prosperous, other prosperities will work. And for economic prosperity, there is the need of common consensus on minimum economic agenda. Various adjustments can be made on other agenda but this is the better way forward for the nation.

*(Baskota is finance secretary. As told to Debesh Adhikari)*

## FOREIGN AID

## Under Scrutiny

*Although the government led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai is a caretaker in nature, its dealing with Nepal's development partners is otherwise*

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

Since being elected as the prime minister to lead a coalition government with Madheshi Front, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has taken many decisions which even an elected single party government may not dare do.

For instance, it paved the way for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, integrated the Maoist combatants, signed the BIPPA with India and even dismantled the houses built along the roads of Kathmandu, increased the power cut to eight hours a day even in the rainy days. Yet, there is a rare voice of opposition against Bhattarai.

From delaying the execution of couple of projects signed with Nepal's northern neighbor China to resisting with western countries and United Nations over setting development priority and foreign aid, Jawaharlal Nehru University scholar prime minister Bhattarai took risk to resist with all powers.

Although it is just a caretaker government without any legitimacy in power and president is reportedly unhappy with the performance, prime minister Bhattarai and his ministers are taking harsh decisions likely to push Nepal into isolation. Recently, the National Planning Commission even asked UN to rewrite UN Development Assistance Frame Work with modification of words which pertained to Maoist period of insurgency. Government also objected to a World Bank-DfID report on social inclusion.

The government's reported objections to a World Bank-DFID report on social inclusion and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) document have been indicative of Bhattarai's new assertiveness about aid.

After signing the comprehensive

peace process and till the survival of Constituent Assembly, the government and National Planning Commission usually endorsed country assistance strategy without objection. However, it is creating more hurdles now on programs which are even written in Nepal's Interim constitution.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) has asked UN teams to modify some of the words like exclusion, discrimination and inclusion. Even the Foreign Ministry led by Naryankazi



Shrestha, who differs with prime minister on several issue, now wants his ministry's role in foreign aid and monitoring INGOs.

Although Social Welfare Council Act gives all authority to Social Welfare Council to register, monitor and supervise International non-governmental organization and cabinet rules gives Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare the role to facilitate INGOs and NGOs, the sudden demands of foreign ministry have raised many an eyebrow. Foreign ministry and Finance ministry have been demanding more hardware development programs from donors rather than software programs in the areas like governance, human rights and social justice.

Along with Nepal's civil society,

support given by Nepal's development partners helped for exposure trips of Nepal's bureaucrats allowing them to participate international conferences and gain experiences. However, it seems to have forgotten when they propose for reduction of software programs.

"Foreign Ministry and the National Planning Commission objected the words exclusion, discrimination, inclusion from the documents," said a UN official on condition of anonymity. "There is nothing objectionable as we have prepared the document as per the spirit of Nepal's Constitution and law."

Government officials who took part in the UNDAF meeting in June reportedly resisted with the terminology statelessness. "Nepal is not a pariah state and Nepal has its own citizenship law and regulations to distribute the citizenship certificates," said a senior government official on condition of anonymity

One of the main objections of NPC in UNDAF document is the word statelessness. The word statelessness described to refer to the people having no citizenship certificate. NPC argues that statelessness and citizenship are two different issues. One cannot say a person without citizenship certificate is stateless. Citizenship certificate is merely a document for official purpose.

"We don't have any disputes on UNDAF. Of course, we requested UNDP to correct or clarify some words which are against the spirit of the government's policy. As a party of the UNDAF, the report must be prepared as per the spirit of the government," said NPC vice chair Dipendra Bahadur Chhetri. "Since Nepal is a secular, inclusive democratic federal republic, NPC cannot go against them. We want support of Nepal's development partners, but they must be as per our priority."

As Nepal's overwhelming development budget comes from bilateral and multilateral agencies, it will create more problems for Nepal if it resists with Nepal's development partners who are generously supporting Nepal's development process with no security interest. ■



## The History of Absorbing Patriotism

By BIPINADHIKARI

Father Giuseppe de Rovato's "An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal" was the first article written by any European on King Prithvi Narayan Shah – the founder of modern Nepal. It was written in 1786. The article was translated and published in English by Sir John Shore. It was published in the second volume of the Asiatic Researches (Calcutta) in 1790. It dealt with the consolidation of power by King Prithvi Narayan within the Kathmandu Valley during 1767-77.

A number of books were written on Nepal and its rulers after this publication. Perceval Landon's book *Nepal* has come into existence after almost 138 years. Landon (1868-1927) was an English writer. He was also a journalist, now best remembered for his classic and much reprinted Ghost Story "Thurnley Abbey." But for the people of Nepal, Landon is remembered for his two volume work on Nepal with several illustrations and maps.

Vol I of Landon treats the inward and outward politics of Nepal from the time it grew into a national entity. Much of the history that he has dealt with till the advent of Jung Bahadur and his visit to England is dealt by others as well. He examines Nepal in the political, religious and historical context *vis-a-vis* the reality of the twentieth century. In Landon's point of view, this country is full of antiquities and relics of the past – is unique because it has never suffered the repercussions of the Christian or the Moslem expansion. This is a great compliment of course. But the second volume goes beyond.

In second volume, Perceval Landon has remarkably explained Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher and his efforts in nation building. There are details about his early life, his personality, the Lhasa Mission of 1904, his visit to England, and his role in concluding the Treaty of 1923 with British India following the World War I. Landon has applauded Chandra's judicial and social reforms and his commitment for the Nepalese Army, public works, roads and bridges, and land reform. "The work of the Prime Minister in gradually introducing reforms into Nepal has been hard indeed; but it has been carried out with resolution, steadiness and tact." Here, Landon also concentrates on the people

and politics of the land. The towns, rulers, races and architecture of Nepal also find space here. He also examines the role of Buddhism in Nepal. According to the author, "Buddhism and Hinduism have carried on relations partly of hostility and partly of sympathy which are almost unparalleled in the history of comparative religion." This is his distinctive finding.

Landon has dealt with races of Nepal as well. He describes the Newars as the most important of the quasi-aboriginal races in the country. At first sight, Landon writes, "it would seem certain that Thakuris and Khas are in fact due to an emigration from India caused by the ravages of Mohammedan conquerors. It is only right, however, to notice that the existence in Nepal of a pure Hindu race called Khas is mentioned in ancient chronicles as early as the Year AD 1000." It is possible that the Gurungs and Magars came to Nepal during one or more of the historical Mongolian migrations to the west in search of food, peace, and what is called nowadays a place in the sun. Landon finds that the Magars, another important community of Nepal, originally occupied the Tarai and lower mountain districts near Butwal and Palpa. In the east of Nepal by far the most important group is that of the Kirantis. As to the Limbus, Landon says they are among the oldest recorded populations of the country and their features indicate that they are descendants of early Tibetan settlers in Nepal. Of other tribes, he also mentions Sunwars and Murmis. There is a brief note that respect for caste regulations is everywhere on the increase rather than the decline in Nepal.

The Appendices in Volume I and II are no less significant. Volume I includes armorial bearings and flags, regalia, anthems and titles, role of succession to hereditary prime ministership of Nepal, the law of royal descent, decorations, weights and measures, census returns, the arsenal museum, pillar inscriptions in Nepal, and some of the more important books and articles on Nepal (in order of date). Appendices in Volume II include notes on Buddhism in Nepal, Nepalese races, and the records of the invasion of Nepal by the Chinese in 1792, and Treaty of Peace between Nepal and Tibet in 1856.

Landon has given an interesting list of Europeans who visited Nepal during 1881-1925. It shows that in the course of forty-four years about 153 persons visited Nepal. Out of this, 55 Europeans were the guests of the Prime Minister. This figure excluded British diplomatic corps based in Kathmandu.

Hinting on the relationship between England and Nepal, Landon notes: "There was no treaty obligation, no contract, not even an understanding between the two peoples, but the Gurkhas came down in their thousands to stand once more beside the Indians [read British] in a day of trial. Nothing could better express the relations between Nepal and India [read Britain] than the answer of a high authority in Simla to me when I asked what the policy of the Indian [read British] government towards Nepal was. 'We have no policy. We have only friendship.' It is a great phrase, and it deserves to be remembered in Whitehall as well as in Simla and Kathmandu."

"[T]he great days of Nepal are before her, not behind her. I have no wish to celebrate the international significance of this keen and united state of mountain soldiers, wholly independent of Indian [read British] political life; free from the disintegrating and troublesome rivalries of the India [read Britain] upon which she looks down from her hill fastnesses; in a military sense more highly trained than any other race in Asia; rich with traditions gilded by great and recent glory; and dowered also with an ambition which knows few limits."

The book also focuses on the Chinese invasion of Nepal and the tussle between the two regarding Tibet. The keynote of the book, however, is the emphasis of Perceval Landon on the absorbing patriotism of the Nepalese rulers to secure their beautiful kingdom from foreign threat whatsoever. ■



**Perceval Landon,  
Nepal Vol. I & II  
(New Delhi: Rupa &  
Co, 2007)  
(Originally  
published in 1928)**

# Periodic Plans Urgent Now

By DINESH CHANDRA DEVKOTA PH.D



Nepal cannot go without a long term planning. The whole process of its development will be paralysed in case the National Planning Commission fails to bring periodic plans in four months from now. Given the current preparations, I don't think the NPC can produce any document. Periodic plans play an important role in preparing the annual budget. Nepal's development budgets are allocated on the basis of the priority given by planning documents. Along with this, various districts and ministries get Nepal's development budget on the basis of these documents. Similarly, Nepal's development partners offer their financial support on the basis of the documents. Despite such a huge importance of planning, the National Planning Commission, which is authorized to prepare, and plan documents, leaves much to be desired. I think this will create a major vacuum in the country which will ultimately disturb Nepal's whole development process.

Nepal is passing through a very crucial period in the history of planned development as the three year interim period is going to end the next year. If Nepal fails to produce another periodic plan, there will be a major gap in the implementation of projects and planning in the country. One can understand what will be the development scenario without another periodic plan. This is the reason there must be another periodic plan after the termination of the current interim plan. Looking at the future political scenario of the country, the National Planning Commission has prepared a concept paper with a vision for twenty years in a document named Nepal Development Vision 2030. After a series of discussions, there was political consensus for this document. When I was the vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission, it was considering drafting a three or five years' planning within the frame work of the vision document. Given Nepal's unstable

political scenario, Nepal needs a long term economic vision document to address the country's development issue. Even Nepal's development partners who have been supporting all round development projects had proposed this kind of vision document. For instance, the United System in Nepal is preparing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, analyzing resources required for Nepal till 2015. Nepal needs the 20 years' vision to tie up with UN. Nepal's development partners



come to Nepal with development programs and planning looking for 5 to 10 years. However, it is unfortunate that Nepal does not have even a conceptual plan for ten years and twenty years. During prime minister Jhala Nath Khanal's period, the government announced a long term development vision for Nepal. It was also approved by then Legislature Parliament. Actually, the concept paper is the property of the country. It is the duty of NPC now to carry on with it and the current team of NPC should have a role to play. As there is already a concept paper for Nepal Development Vision 2030, the need of the time is to start discussions on it.

Nepal's current three years interim plan is going to expire from the coming fiscal year and there will be a big vacuum in case Nepal failed to prepare another periodic plan. The country is in the process of political and socio-economic transformation. Political leaders and planners of Nepal need to properly internalize and respond duly with a

change in the mindset to meet the rising aspirations of the people brought about by the Popular Movement of 2006. These aspirations and expectations need to be translated into a long term vision document so that they translate into concrete program and thereby meet people's development needs. Along with politics, Nepal's development planning is also facing a very tough time. Nepal has already wasted the last one year without making any preparations for the long periodic plan. It is well known that

a development vision is an articulation of aspirations of the people which the nation attempts to achieve through a plausible course of action. Nepal has made vision statement in the Ninth Plan, the three year interim plan and three year plan. It is unfortunate that these statements were made in the course of preparation of periodic plans and lacked exhaustive exercise to outline a longer term vision. With the ushering in of the interim

constitution, Nepal is in the process of state restructuring, and the role of central government will be to coordinate in streamlining the development process. In this context, a long term national development vision is essential to support provincial governments to prioritise their investments and to direct development assistance to nationally recognized key sectors.

As time is running out, National Planning Commission needs to start the preparations for another plan on the basis of the concept paper of the Nepal Development Vision 2030. If the present scenario continues, Nepal will not have any document to prepare even the new budget. We have four months' time now to prepare five years or three years plans so that we can prepare projects and programs which will be accommodated in the coming fiscal year's budget.

*(Devkota is a former vice chairman of National Planning Commission. As told to New Spotlight)*



## MALAYSIAN AIRLINES

# A New Venture

*After Air Asia, a Malaysian Budget Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, has started a direct Kathmandu-Kuala Lumpur flight, increasing the number of air seats to Kathmandu*

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

Malaysia can be another gateway to come to Nepal. As Nepal's tourism season begins, good news for tourism entrepreneurs is that Malaysian Airlines has started direct flights between Kathmandu and Kuala Lumpur from September 1, 2012. Malaysian Airlines is the second Malaysian company after Air Asia to start flights in the Kathmandu-Kuala Lumpur route, which was previously monopolized by Nepal Airlines.

"This is a timely addition to our network where Malaysia and Nepal can mutually benefit from various commercial relations including trade, investment and tourism promotions. We see great potential in Kathmandu, especially during the forthcoming year-end holiday season and have fast-tracked this aspect of our operations to commence services to Kathmandu this year," Malaysia Airlines Regional Sales Vice President Malaysia & ASEAN Region, Encik Muzammil Mohamad said in the Airlines official website.

"Kathmandu is a hub for independent travelers as well as a growing vacation spot catering to all budgets. Surrounded by serene mountains, it is a perfect place for those

who yearn for a relaxing year-end holiday or even a challenging mountain climbing adventure. We also foresee and welcome the labor market traffic from Nepal to Malaysia to use this direct connection."

A two-class configured Boeing 737-800 aircraft with 144 economy class seats and 16 business seats is being operated for the Kathmandu-Kuala Lumpur route. As per the schedules, the flights will be on operation on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, offering 960 seats in both directions each week.

The airlines company has also offered all-in return economy class promotional fare starting from Rs. 45,619 to travel to Malaysia from Kathmandu. Yajna Prasad Gautam, secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, said many international airlines were attracted towards Nepal after it adopted an open air policy.

According to RSS, the number of international airlines operating in Nepal has now reached 31.

Despite the increase in the number of flights, however, tourist arrivals in August witnessed a mere 2.5 per cent increase by air as compared to the same month of last year, according to

Immigration Office, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA).

August is considered as one the low-seasons in Nepalese tourism sector. But, the growth rate was still very low while compared with the previous months, according to tourism entrepreneurs. According to Immigration Office, some 44,571 tourists visited Nepal this August by air.

South Asian tourist arrivals recorded an overall growth of 4.2 percent. However, Indian and Chinese arrivals recorded a negative growth. Visitor arrivals from Bangladesh have gone up to 72.3 percent and from Pakistan 17 percent. Arrivals from India recorded a negative growth of 1.2 percent with 14,307 visitors and Sri Lanka 15.7 percent compared to the same months last year.

In the first eight months of 2012, total tourist arrivals reached 377,043, which is 16.3 percent higher compared to the same period last year.

Arrivals from Asia (other than the South Asia region) also saw a growth of 0.6 percent. Arrivals from Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand recorded positive growth of 10.1 percent, 15.5 percent, 18.3 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively. However, the number of visitors from Singapore dropped by 5 percent.

An overall positive growth of 6.1 percent has been observed from the European markets. Tourist arrivals from Australia have increased by 2.7 percent while tourists from New Zealand, USA and Canada decreased by 9.8 percent, 1.9 percent, and 13 percent respectively. **Nepal-Malaysia Travel Mart**

As the two Malaysian Airlines started their regular flights, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and Tourism Malaysia jointly organized Nepal-Malaysia Travel Mart 2012. Director General of Tourism Malaysia Dato Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, officiating CEO of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) Subash Niraula and commercial director of Malaysia Airlines Dr Hugh Noel Dunleavy jointly inaugurated the Nepal-Malaysia Travel Mart.

According to NTB, the main objective of the mart is to provide an opportunity for travel and tour operators of the two countries to come together and to highlight the tourism potential of both countries. Nepal received 8,286 visitors from Malaysia while more than 30,000 Nepali tourists visited Malaysia last year, according to media reports. ■

# Nepal's TV Journalism: All Work, No Pay

By ABHUSHAN GAUTAM

Television journalism in Nepal does not go far back in time. TV came to Nepal with the establishment of the first government-owned Nepal Television in January 1985. Within a matter of just two decades, TV channels sprouted like wild mushrooms airing news and entertainment programs all over the country, thanks to the growing viewership and the availability of TV sets in many households - both rich and poor. Following the country's transition to democracy in 2006, the visual media embarked on a slow but steady transition to independence. Currently, there are 14 privately-owned television channels and two government-owned channels registered inside Kathmandu. Five Nepali language television channels offer their services outside. As new TV channels steadily rise, a fierce competition has begun among television channels to occupy the Nepali market.

## Charm Vs Reality

Television has comparatively more charm than other forms of media because of its ability to connect to its audiences audio-visually. In Nepal, television has played a significant role in shaping the socio-political sphere in the last decade, especially during the People's Movement of 2006. Apart from this, the television channels have also assumed a more recent role of monitoring issues like food quality and hygiene, for example, breaking the New Road Corner Gud Paak Scam, in which the distributors were caught red-handed using adulterated and inedible items while preparing the widely-sold and all-popular traditional sweet item, *Gud Paak* or highlighting corruption cases and illegal trade dealings such as that of the red sandalwood across the Nepal-China border. Such initiatives taken by TV channels have all but kick-started a new movement of ensuring law and order in the society.

Behind all this charm and hype, television journalism in Nepal is gradually transforming into a market-hungry and tyrannical business. Recently, many television channels have fallen into a financial crunch and are becoming unviable as businesses. There has been a sharp decline in advertising revenues, production costs have soared, and there is a cut-throat competition for audiences and advertising money. As a result, several TV journalists haven't been paid for months and the channel owners face monstrous debts. Yellow journalism

is prevalent everywhere and the security of TV journalists is at stake. Amid all these problems, TV channels are scrambling to survive in the market with politically-influenced and self-manufactured programs to draw investors and advertisers alike, and keep their office and disgruntled staff working.

## All Work, No Pay

Today, the repute of every TV channel is at stake. Also at stake are the TV journalists themselves, who are crying out loud for better pay and working conditions.

Despite the law's clear mandate in favor of decent wages and working conditions for journalists, numerous media houses in Nepal (with very few exceptions) have been conspicuous in their default on these requirements.



Hundreds of TV journalists across the country are denied their appointment letters and regular salaries by their offices. The book *Shramajeevi Patrakar Media Adhyayan Pratibedan 2067* includes a study of past and present situation of the working journalists in the country and several issues regarding the minimum wages, revealing that 45 per cent of journalists have not received any official appointment letter and 37 per cent of them are not getting the minimum wage also. Another breakdown: The average salary of a television reporter in Nepal is estimated to be around Rs. 7,000, while that of a news anchor is Rs. 9,000. Compare that to an average salary of a security guard in government office which is around Rs. 10,000 (including benefits). While the owners and high rank holders of such media houses tour the cities on their posh "Land Rovers" and "Prados", many journalists barely even make up enough money to afford their daily commute to work.

Most of the staff in such TV stations are not only underpaid but also not paid on time. On an average, you will find that

the salaries of workers in most of the media houses are kept on hold for at least two or three months before they are cleared. This continues throughout the year - which means that if a journalist decides to opt out of his job after a year of work, he will still have a due salary worth at least three or four months.

The scenes inside the office are equally dismal. A television station that flaunts having five different studios has barely the same number of toilets for its numerous employees. There is hardly any back-up for the huge amount of data-networking and electricity that goes into running programs and bulletins. Printers and video-recording devices are ill-maintained to the extent that even news-making process is put at stake. News reporters and visual editors are made to work for long hours citing lack of manpower. The list goes on.

## Security Concerns

In a country, where even chief justices are shot in a broad daylight, one cannot expect much in terms of security of journalists. Call it an irony that journalists who are supposed to cover the news are now becoming news themselves.

News of reporters being threatened, attacked or even murdered, TV stations being vandalized or delivery vans being torched have been making headlines all over. TV journalists are often threatened for not attending press conferences, reporting on corruption and irregularities, naming those involved in crime, or not highlighting speeches or rallies of a particular political party. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), there have been around a dozen of unsolved cases on forced disappearance and murder of journalists in just six years following the civil war. Just five months back, Yadav Poudel, a local correspondent for the Kathmandu-based Avenues TV was found mysteriously murdered outside a hotel in Jhapa. A month later, brutal attacks were carried out on numerous TV journalists nation-wide by various indigenous groups for, allegedly, not covering enough stories on the indigenous movement and their nation-wide shutdown. These are just some of the many examples of how TV journalists are being openly bullied by a few political groups with partisan interests.

With such blatant political meddling and criminal threats looming every now and then, TV journalists are inadvertently getting caught in the



## In Uulta Pradesh

By ABIJIT SHARMA

crossfire between politicized criminal groups and criminalized political factions. They often have to think twice about wearing their press IDs and green vests before heading out to cover stories. The media houses, meanwhile, are showing hardly any interest in ensuring the safety of their employees.

### Where Are The Stakeholders?

Amid all the turmoil, TV stations are desperately trying to stay afloat with their tainted practices, even if they mean transgressing media ethics and denying basic rights to their employees. With a growing but limited market, and increasing revenues, they are cashing in on more political programs that bring in advertising money and entertainment programs that attract younger audience and increase their viewership. Development issues are hardly a priority, stories arriving from outer districts lack quality and there is no diversity in the matter being presented on screen. There is a stiff competition between channels to present flash or breaking news first, but little concern to verify or investigate the sources from where they are coming. The TV giants are simply running a rat race where the goal to capture most of the market is achieved by breaching the laws and exploiting the workforce.

### Nowhere To Go

Despite the miserable working conditions and a constant threat to their lives, TV journalists choose to continue with their jobs as they simply don't have anywhere else to go. And even if they do, the working conditions for them are almost similar everywhere. Those who are lucky enough to escape, join a different stream, start their own business or migrate to another media house for a better pay and position. The void created by the leaving staff draws in new exposure-seeking and less experienced faces into TV stations, thus, compromising the overall quality of the programs being broadcast. In a way, TV stations have almost become training grounds for aspiring journalists who do not expect much but the 'journalism experience' itself.

At a time when the country is stuck between a constitutional and a political crisis, such behavior displayed by Nepali television channels has not only undermined journalistic integrity and editorial freedom but questioned the role of the very institution that is supposed to help ensure justice in the society.

### Traveler at Heart

Whenever I have a long weekend break, I do manage to skip off to some places outside Delhi. Travelling has become my new hobby since I arrived in the Indian capital two years ago. Last weekend was no different. Taking a break from the monotonous Delhi life, I decided to head to Meerut, an ancient city and now a major financial hub of Uttar Pradesh (UP). With the prospect of seeing a new place, which never fails to excite me, I started my two hour journey with a college friend as a company and also as a local guide.

### Feeling Home

I have mentioned this couple of times before in these columns but I never seem to stop making comparison between

places in Nepal and the new places that I visit in India. This déjà vu feeling hit me once again. The city of Meerut looks like any major city of our Terai region. Think of Nepalgunj or Bhairawaha or Biratnagar. The ambience, the lifestyles, the people everything seemed identical. You could hear a shrieking rickshaw horn from one side and from the other side the mooing of an ox pulling a bullock cart. Clad in dhotis and sweat-soaked shirts, people made their way in the streets amidst all the hustle and bustle of vehicles nothing different from our cities. Erratic traffic, loud horns, the piles of rubble and wastes weren't new to me. And spotting a *Mithai Pasa* along the streets made my sweet tooth reminiscence the famous Bhairahawa *Peda* and the incredibly delicious sweets from the Unique Sweets of Biratnagar. In other words, I was home!

### History Revisited

Meerut, undoubtedly, has one of the richest histories among the Indian cities. It is said to be one of the places where settlement of Indus valley civilization has

been found. It has also been found to be a constituent of the ancient city of Hastinapur, the capital of Pandavas from Hindu epic Mahabharat. Ruled by a string of leaders starting from Muslim Kings to Jats and Marathas later on, the city still gains popularity as the place from where the first anti-British movement started, in 1857, through an army mutiny. The city made headlines later in 1987 for the Hindu-Muslim clashes. With 35-40% of Muslims, it is one of the heavily Muslim populated cities of India. Meerut is distinctly divided into two parts, the old Meerut area and the new one. The old side of the city shares much of its similarities with Old Delhi. Quite interestingly, one of the old houses in this area is believed to be

that of Mandodari, the wife of Raavan. Tales of such kind is held by many of the buildings/monuments in the area. The newly planned



area, on the other hand, consists of housing colonies, new markets, designer stores etc. Although belonging to one of the most corrupt and unruliest states of India, Uttar Pradesh, the city boasts of infrastructures such as flyovers, train stations and some major industries. It also houses the second largest army cant area in the whole of India. Cruising through these cant areas in the cool evening breeze couldn't have been more refreshing.

### Uulta Pradesh

The two hour journey back to Delhi took me almost four hours, thanks to the completely chaotic traffic. No one seemed to pay heed to the traffic rules and bikes. Cars wheezed pass us with utter rashness. When I talked to the driver at the end of the journey he told me, "Sir, how can you expect things to run perfectly in our state? Everything runs the opposite way. After all the name itself says UP - *Uulta* (Opposite) *Pradesh!*"



## POOR PEOPLE ENERGY OUTLOOK

# Energy For Poor

*At a time when more than 70 percent of Nepalese are living in the dark, Practical Action's Poor People Energy Outlook 2012 shows there is some light at the end*

By A CORRESPONDENT

The life of Balkumari Sinjali, a resident of Nawalparasi district, has drastically changed following the installation of electricity generated by a windmill in her residence.

"The power supplied by the windmill has transformed our village in Kawasati," said Sinjali.

Jus Bahadur Ale also has a similar experience. Untouched by the central grid, the electricity supplied from windmill in the nearby village in Nawalparasi has made a lot of difference. From education to health and livelihood, the electricity has made everything different in the village.

A recent study by Practical Action indicates that about 61 per cent households in Nepal do not have access to minimum energy required for lighting. Addressing Nepal's energy problems requires an increase in access to modern form of energy. Practical Action's experiences have shown that energy is one of the key areas for transformation of livelihood.

Similarly, the life of Devi, a mother of three children, has also changed. She saved time and money after the installation of a wind turbine to produce clean energy. "I used to spend a lot of money monthly to buy kerosene and candle. Now I don't need to worry about it," she said.

Recently, Practical Action installed a 400 watt vertical axis wind turbine (VAWT) in her village of six households. All six households now have access to clean energy. "My life is so much better now that we have clean energy for lighting in our homes. We could barely afford the trip to buy kerosene," Devi said.

The newly installed wind turbine supplies energy equivalent to 2 light bulbs for each 6 households in Devi's village. She is happy with the change and says, "We can also charge our mobile phones and watch TV."

These are some glimpses shown during the launching of Poor People's Energy Outlook 2012: Energy For Earning and Living (PPEO 2012) in capital recently. With the support from United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and GiZ, the report was published by Practical Action.

Launched by Minister of Environment, Science and Technology Keshav Man Shakya, PPEO 2012 highlights the overall scenario of energy consumption and ways to provide cheaper renewable energy to the poor people living around the world.

"PPEO 2012 can be advantageous to anyone seeking to better understand the various factors of energy access and its role in social and economic development.

It is more significant in the context of Nepal where access to energy for poor people is a great challenge. The report can provide remarkable insight to the International Energy sector and also can be valuable to National program planner in Nepal and at the local level," said Achyut Luitel, country director, Practical Action Nepal Office. "The report gives a spotlight on energy access and its impact on the ability of the world's poorest people to earn a decent living."

Launching the report Minister for Environment and Science and Technology Keshav Man Shakya stressed the need to increase the access to the renewable energy to the rural poor. "Energy poverty remains a main issue in Nepal. There is the need to increase the access to energy in rural Nepal to eradicate poverty."

Reviewing the report and its appropriateness in the context of Nepal, Executive Director of Alternative Energy Promotion Center Govind Pokharel said the report is the first of its kind which helps to see the state of energy availability and use of renewable energy.

Practical Action has included energy as one of the important sectors to work during the strategic period of 2012-2017. Practical Action believes that energy is a vital sector to escape poverty, as energy can help people earn a living and find their way out of poverty. But poverty itself remains the main barrier to access for the people who currently lack energy services and supplies. In the present situation, one third of the world's population does not have access to modern energy services and the situation in Nepal is more worrisome.

Practical Action brings forward Poor People's Energy Outlook 2012 as a catalyst for the movement for change on energy access and source of information to support it. This movement for change has its focus on the United Nation's Goal for universal energy access by 2030.

Poor People's Energy Outlook examines the linkages between energy access and better opportunities for earning a living, while recognizing that there are many barriers which must be overcome on the path from improved energy access to increased incomes. The second report in the PPEO series revisits the definition of energy access reintroducing the concept of Total Energy Access as a progressive framework to measure how people use energy in a healthy and productive way.





# Reminiscences And Reflections

By HIMALAYA SHUMSHER RANA

I would like to begin my introductory remarks quoting two romantic lines penned by poet Wordsworth on the eve of the French Revolution:

*Bliss it was to be born at this age;*

*But to be young was very heavenly.*

I, too, have been an excited witness to three revolutions in Nepal.

First, as a Rana, listed in the roll of succession to Prime Minister, I was a witness to the halcyon days of the Rana regime and its abrupt downfall due to the political revolution in 1950. Committed to democracy, I rebelled against the Rana regime in 1949 and was thrilled when King Tribhuvan announced in February 1951, that democratic governance will be ushered in the country.

I had the unique privilege of serving the country as the first Finance Secretary and then as the first Governor of the Central Bank i.e. Nepal Rastra Bank in the decade 1951-1960.

Following a coup d'état by King Mahendra in 1960, my tenure as Governor was terminated in purge of the top civil servants regarded as pro-democracy. Finding out that I was under surveillance and could be trapped as a saboteur, I decided to go abroad and applied for a job to the United Nations Secretariat.

My innings with the UN and United Nations Development Program which began in 1962 spanned twenty-four years. I returned to Nepal in 1986.

In 1990, I was a witness to the second revolution resulting in the dissolution of the party less Panchayat regime, restoration of democracy, and eventually the end of the license and permit regime. Bored with a retired life and buoyed by the liberal economic policy, I ventured into industry and private sector banking with notable success.

The Nepal Communist Party-Maoist launched the people's war in February 1996. Deeply disturbed by the massive loss of lives and property due to the armed strife, I took the initiative to publish on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002 a public appeal in the Kantipur daily signed by prominent members of Civil Society, calling for peace talks between the government and the Maoists. This was the beginning of my inning as a conflict resolution activist. Once the 12-point understanding between the leaders of the Seven-party Alliance and the Chairperson of the CPN-Maoist was

signed on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, I virtually closed my conflict resolution organization named "Nepal Citizen's Forum." I regard the 12-point understanding as the agreed route to peace and end of the transition, and am worried that it is being sidelined today.

Fortuitously, numerous assignments as a national civil servant, international civil servant, industrialist, private sector banker, and civil society activist, have come my way during my life time of eight decades. I wished to share my experiences with my compatriots and foreign friends. Hence this book.

In the first Chapter, I have briefly described my childhood as a Rana boy, the traumatic experience of the 1934 earthquake, and the festivals joyously enjoyed by the Kathmandu residents during the Rana period.

In the second chapter, captioned "Inquilab Jindabad" i.e. Long Live Revolution, I have tried to unfold how my years in Bombay as a student transformed me to a commoner and a revolutionary. I joined the Nepal Democratic Congress in Calcutta in 1949 which was then treason. My revolutionary activities are mentioned in this chapter.

The third chapter gives a rare picture of Nepal's political, administrative, economic and social situation during the Rana period.

The years 1951-1960 were an eventful decade for me. In the fourth chapter, I have given an account of my assignments. As the First Finance Secretary I set up the Ministry of Finance, prepared the first four budgets of the government, modernized the customs offices, established the Excise Department and the office of the Accountant General, and prepared for instituting income tax. Next, as the first Governor of the Nepal Rastra bank I succeed, among others, in arranging for the circulation of the Nepalese rupee as the legal tender in Terai region of Nepal, in stabilizing the exchange rate between the Nepalese and the Indian currencies, and making Nepal independent in foreign exchange transactions. Furthermore, my comments on the Koshi agreement and on the Trade and Transit treaty signed with India

bring to light some background to these treaties not known to many.

I had inklings of King Mahendra's coup d'état in 1960. In the fifth chapter I have given my version of why it was staged.

In chapters six and seven I have attempted to give an account of my UN assignments as development practitioner and administrator in New York, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Indonesia and Pakistan. Channeling and coordinating a variety of technical and pre-investment assistance from the numerous United Nations Agencies, to countries at various stages of development to trigger and accelerate their socio-economic progress posed challenges. It required a deep understanding of the development priorities of the country and thorough knowledge of the capacity of the UN agencies to deliver. Monitoring timely

implementation of projects and evaluating their impact were other challenges. Facilitating scores of UN personnel and experts, hailing from different countries, to perform satisfactorily in their assignments required wide administrative experience and personnel management skills. Vignettes of some features of each country where I served should be interest to the readers.

Chapters eight and nine deal with my activities after returning to Nepal in 1986 on retirement from the UN service. I took the lead in establishing the Gorkha Brewery as a joint venture with a Danish company which brewed and marketed the high quality lager beer, Tuborg. After handing over the company to my partner, I took the lead in establishing the fourth private sector commercial bank, Himalayan Bank Ltd. as a joint venture with Habib Bank Ltd. Pakistan. I became active in conflict resolution from July 2002 to November 2005, and in observation of the General Elections from the year 2008.

I have included an account of the Royal Massacre that I personally happened to know about.

The Nepal Citizen's Forum, which I led, has been an advocate since the year 2003, of a Constituent Assembly to draft and proclaim a new Constitution of Nepal. We are deeply saddened by the



inglorious dissolution of the CA due to the inability of the political leaders to agree on its features for as many as four years. I have realized the need of a critical mass of independent minded Civil Society members in the country to influence the political leaders, and I have starts reviving the Forum for this purpose.

In the last chapter, entitled "Reflections," I have expressed my views on some contemporary issues of Nepal. Noting its natural and ethnic diversity, I have chosen to call Nepal a rainbow country. Presently, the country is having through one of its most difficult phases. Politically, leaders have failed. And, I am concerned that Nepal will be a failed state. I have candidly commented on Nepalese politics, the Constituent Assembly, Nepal-India and Nepal-China Relations, Water Resources and Economic Policy.

As I have stated in the Seventh chapter I travelled to China from Myanmar in 1974 to observe living conditions in a communist state because I had concluded that eventually communism would dominate the politics of Nepal. Presently, Nepal is overwhelmingly leftist - democratic socialists and communists in different colors. Models of communism enforced by Stalin, Mao or Castro have been or are being shelved as they ignored the private sector market and ideologically forced people to work for the community. The majority of the Nepalese people are not in favor of political-social transformation by obstructive, destructive and confiscatory campaigns. The challenge to the leftist politicians is to craft a socio-economic policy that is tailored to the country's socio-economic condition and democratically acceptable to the majority of the people of Nepal. I have suggested a few basic considerations for economic policy.

I have recommended adoption of a regime in which there is partnership between the public and private sectors, creativity and entrepreneurship are encouraged and rewarded, the zeal of investors and executives are not dampened by ceilings, rent seekers and inheritors are heavily taxed, syndicates and cartels, artificially jacking up prices are controlled, basic goods needed for living are made available to the common man at cost price by an efficiently run public distribution system, and the poor and senior citizens are aided by the state as much as it can prudently afford.

*(Excerpts of the statement delivered at the launching ceremony of Rana's Book Reminiscences And Reflections)*

## Women In Times Of Disaster

By ADITI ARYAL



Some five years back, South Asia saw disasters of sorts. These disasters germinated starvation, epidemic, political instability, climate change and violence. Like always, women were heavily victimized.

For example, after the 2010 floods in Pakistan, it was estimated that about 85% of the overall displaced people were women and children. Sexual assault, exposure and water borne diseases increased. The situation got worse when most of these women, especially pregnant and lactating mothers, refrained from collecting help from male aid workers due to social taboos. A child complained on national news that the strong men would grab whatever food was available and the rest would be left starving. Records show that, in Pakistan, the rural women who suffered from chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, early and frequent pregnancy have increased the rate of maternal mortality after the disaster.

Similar was the case in Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr, 2007 and the 2004 floods. These calamities inundated several districts, devastated agricultural crops and livelihoods of millions of people. These annihilating occurrences destructed shelter, lives, livestock, savings, crops, other assets and various means of livelihood for the affected people. And again, the most affected out of them all were women including their children.

In Nepal, the 2008 floods in Koshi damaged lives of another million of people. While everybody suffered equally in terms of devastation, the psychological impact on women was much more. In Sunsari, when people were made to take shelter in classrooms, women were vulnerable to attacks from men, like in Pakistan. Some were without food for almost three days because they had been doing all they could to feed their family members.

### Her Role

A woman's role is distinct and very much different from a man's. A man may be a breadwinner and may perform instrumental roles, a woman's role is much more important as she turns the bread into food, that is something edible enough. Her role do not end with that, she has her chores to complete, taunts and complaints to hear, and in some cases office work to complete.

This could be a normal life of many women we see around us. However, talking about women after disasters, they have their work increased ten-fold. Starting from trying to

cope up with disasters with the heavy effects of tragic instances to continuing with their daily work doesn't look like a very happy life at all. Many women lose their husbands and bear the additional role of heading the family; both instrumental and expressive roles. Others still have to try and make the remains of the previous scenes into 'homes'.

Despite all this, a woman does not give up. She's not weak. Her responsibilities and duties along with your taunts and abuses have made her strong to start from scratch, and still not for once think twice about doing it or not. There have always been strong women at times of war and disaster. And there still are. Don't support her, and she'll show you what she can do. Encourage her, and it is going to be epic.

### An Example

In rural Bangladesh where floods are common occurrences, Saheema has learnt to preserve food, raise her house on stilts and use radio to receive flood warnings. She is glad to know how to live with floods now. She has managed to save her family, children, belongings and animals. Her children are lucky too for they have a mother who can teach them how to survive a disaster. She has also organized a committee of women to be prepared for floods. Efforts like these have saved numerous lives and empowered women.

This is just one reference. Evidences of women and girls from all walks of life who are making a difference continues to emerge. Women are leading efforts in many communities across the globe. Though seldom recognized, their work saves lives, communities and families. In 1998, residents of the town of La Masica in Honduras received gender-sensitive training on early warning systems. The community then decided that men and women should participate equally in disaster management activities. Women replaced men who had abandoned continuous monitoring of the town's early warning system. When Hurricane Mitch struck in the same year, the municipality was prepared and all residents were evacuated promptly, avoiding any deaths.

In the end, like Hillary Clinton mentioned in the third annual Women in the World Summit held in New York in March 2012, "What does it mean to be a woman in the world? ... It means never giving up ... It means getting up, working hard and putting a country or a community on your back."

## MOVIE REVIEW

## Joker



We have always been fascinated by the power of the unknown. Movie makers too appear smitten by its influence. Though Hollywood has portrayed [and continues to do so with brilliance] UFOs, aliens and ETs in several path-breaking movies, RakeshRoshan took the initiative of projecting an alien in a Hindi movie first. And did so very convincingly and triumphantly. Now ShirishKunder makes an attempt...

Yet, despite everything going in its favor, JOKER falls flat on its face!

While bits and pieces of the first half is tolerable, the film goes completely awry in its post-interval portions. Seriously, what was

Kunder thinking while penning and executing this one? Imagine an alien dancing to Indian songs and also doing pelvic thrusts!!! Yes, you read that right!

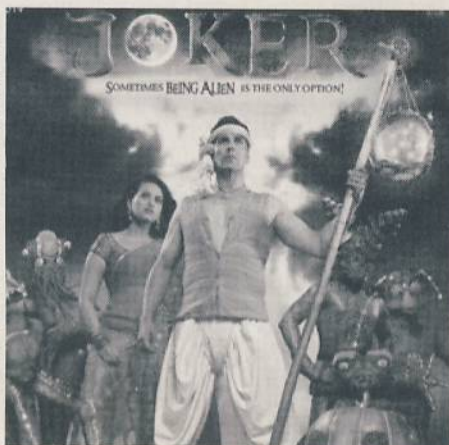
JAAN-E-MANN, Kunder's directorial debut, had style and substance both, but Kunder's intention of making an entertainer that hits the right notes fails this time. Choosing an unconventional story is great, but coming up with a gripping 2-hour film is nothing short of a challenge and that's where this film boomerangs [thankfully, the run time of the film is less than 2 hours!].

The soundtrack of JOKER is neither catchy nor melodious. 'Kafirana', filmed on Chitragda Singh at the very start, is the pick of the lot, while the remaining songs are of fast-forward variety. A listless score! The cinematography is of standard, while the effects are patchy.

Akshay is monotonous and repetitive. Sonakshi gets no scope at all. Also, the spark is missing. ShreyasTalpade is reduced to being Akshay's glorified sidekick. MinisshaLamba is hardly there. AryaBabbar, VinduDara Singh, Asrani, Sanjay Mishra, VrajeshHirjee, Pitobash, GurpreetGuggi, DarshanJariwala, AnjanSrivastava, Avtar Gill and BikramjeetKanwarpal are gap fillers. AlexxO'Nell is strictly okay.

On the whole, JOKER is a joke of a film. Disaster!

Courtesy: *BollywoodHungama*



## MOVIE PREVIEW

## Finding Nemo 3D

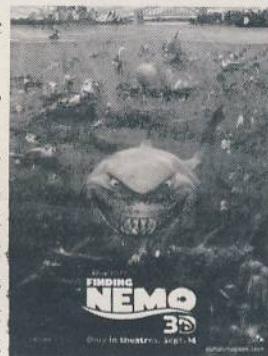
Genres: Adventure, Animation, Comedy, Family

Producer: Graham walters

Director: Andrew Stanton, Lee Unkrich

Cast: Albert Brooks, Ellen De Generes, Alexander Gould

A clown fish named Marlin lives in the Great Barrier Reef loses his son, Nemo. After he ventures into the open sea, despite his father's constant warnings about many of the ocean's dangers. Nemo is abducted by a boat and netted up and sent to a dentist's office in Sydney.



## Barfi

Genres: Comedy

Producer: Siddarth Roy, Ronnie Screwala

Director: Anurag basu

Cast: Ranbir Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra, Ileana DCruz, Akash Khurana

Set in the 1970's in a pretty corner of India, Barfi! is the story of three young people who learn that love can neither be defined nor contained by society's norms of normal and abnormal. Barfi, a hearing and speech impaired boy falls in love with Shruti. In spite of her deep affection for Barfi, Shruti gives into societal and parental pressure to marry a 'normal' man and lead a 'normal' life. Many years later their paths cross once again when Barfi, now in love with Jhilmil, is on the run from the police. Barfi is desperately seeking Jhilmil, who has gone missing. Shruti's realization that Jhilmil is mentally-challenged makes her recognize that true love is really blind. His bitter-sweet relationship with two beautiful young ladies, Shruti and Jhilmil sets in motion a chain of events that will turn his life upside down! ■



After Inauguration of Sushila Koirala Musical Foundation, Manisha Koirala (Right) and Artist Ragini

# Infrastructure Quality Is A Matter Of Concern

-BHUPENDRA BAHADUR BASNET

**BHUPENDRA BAHADUR BASNET**, director general of the Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agriculture Roads (DoLIDAR), has been working in the rural development sector for a long time. As the Department just celebrated fifteen years of its establishment, Basnet spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on various issues regarding the role of his department in the process of transformation of rural Nepal. Excerpts:

**What is the rationale behind the establishment of the Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agriculture Roads (DoLIDAR)?**

The establishment of DoLIDAR has brought about massive transformation in rural parts of Nepal through construction of roads, drinking water and irrigation facilities and suspension bridges. One of the aims of the department is to provide technical support to local bodies. According to the Local Self Governance Act and corresponding regulations, the responsibility to construct rural infrastructure lies with two units, the local bodies and our department. As per the act, the large proportions of infrastructure and development projects go under the responsibility of local bodies like DDCs and VDCs. They require technical assistance.

**What is the importance of the Department?**

DoLIDAR has been experiencing many ups and downs during the last fifteen years. In the initial stage of its establishment, the department gave priority to rural roads, which are still one of the priority sectors. However, now the department has to look at different infrastructure development sectors. They include local transport infrastructure, road, motorable bridge, suspension bridge, drinking water, sanitation, micro-hydro, alternative energy management, small irrigation, river training and social infrastructure, which include temples, and archeological sites.

**Which infrastructure has the high demand?**

There is a high demand of roads and

the department is also highly involved in rural road construction since the beginning of its existence. Our experiences have shown that the road is one of the important components of rural transformation. With support from the Asian Development Bank, we launched rural road projects in three districts initially. However, the department has done a miracle in the last fifteen years. The Agriculture Perspective Plan projected the need to construct over 6,200 kilometers of roads in the rural areas. However, it is estimated that 62,000 kilometers of rural roads are in the country now. More than 45,000 kilometers of rural road network has already been constructed with the government's own resources. Out of this, 25 percent is serviceable. By the end of this fiscal year, we will have the actual data of all the rural roads. We have now district level road master plan and the department has already updated it. The master plan of rural roads of all 75 districts is there.

**What about the irrigation and drinking water sectors?**

An important component is drinking water. Under support from Finland, we have been implementing drinking water projects in far west, mid-west and western districts. Along with this, the government of Nepal allocates budgets for all 75 districts. Nepal is an agro-based country which needs adequate facilities to increase farm production. For a country whose 80 percent population relies on agriculture, it is impossible to transform the economy without development of the agriculture sector. Modernization of agriculture is impossible without increasing access to roads. Irrigation is another major component for the development of the agriculture sector. Under support from the Asian Development Bank, we are now launching small irrigation projects in 12 districts of far western region. We are also implementing small irrigation project with annual government budgets.

**What is the aim of rural roads?**

Our rural roads are not only roads. Their overall aim is poverty reduction.

As there is a high demand of infrastructure, the government spends huge budgets in infrastructure. There is the need of infrastructure for service delivery. Roads are one of the important aspects of service delivery.

**What are the challenges before the department?**

Bringing the existing established road network into serviceable condition is a challenging task. For this, sufficient financial and qualified technical resources are required. We are now proposing the concerned stakeholders to opt for maintenance and construction of bridges in bringing the established road assets to serviceable condition. In the absence of elected local bodies for more than a decade, we are unable to update the information. As it is still uncertain when the election for local bodies are held, we have decided to update the master plan.

**How do you see the involvement of Nepal's development partners in all this?**

Almost all development partners who have been working in Nepal in the area of infrastructure development, are involved with DoLIDAR. They include India, Japan, Finland, SDC, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, SDC of Switzerland, DfID, and UNICEF.

**Where are Nepal's development partners working now?**

The World Bank is involved in rural development through its Rural Infrastructure Development Project, which was started as a pilot project. After its success and lessons learned, RAIDP has come up. We have been working in 30 districts through the Rural Area Infrastructure Development Project. The World Bank is involved in rural development through the RAIDP, which is now in another phase. RAIDP will continue till 2013 and we have already started negotiations to give continuity to this project. We are in the process of designing the new project. With support from ADB, DfID, SDC and OFID, Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project (RRRSDP) is working to rehabilitate the displaced people to

their homes via fast tracks covering 18 districts. Similarly, the ADB is a major contributor in the rural infrastructure development project. Under the Asian Development Bank's support, the Decentralized Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Project (DRIP) has also been supporting the construction of infrastructure in 18 districts of Nepal. In the rural drinking water project, Finland government is supporting Rural Village Water Resource Management Project (RVWRMP) in 10 districts of far west and mid-western region. This project helps the rural folks to manage water in various forms. Finland is also running RWSSP in nine districts of western region with a center in Pokhara. With support from DFID, it is implementing the Rural Access Program 2<sup>nd</sup> phase and the SDC is supporting the District Road Supporting Program. Similarly, Swiss Government, Japan government and DFID are supporting the Trail Bridge Sector Wide and Local Level Rural Road Bridge Program, UNICEF is supporting Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program, Japan is supporting Rural Road Bridge Program and ADB is supporting community irrigation project.

**What approach are you following now?**

It is a Sector Wise approach (SWAP). We have already implemented the SWAP in transport sector and are now planning to apply this to six other sectors. From selection, to implementation of the program, there is only one institution involved to reduce the cost overrun and duplicity and lengthy procedures.

**What difference does SWAP make?**

Earlier there used to be different models of suspension bridge for different agencies. After the implementation of SWAP, there will be only one design and easy procedures for all now. This will help develop a holistic approach, which includes the budget, project design and project construction.

**How do you address the quality issue?**

The issue of quality needs to be addressed now as people have now misunderstood the issue of quality of rural roads and highways. The rural roads are constructed to run the vehicles with 10 tons. However, people want to run the

vehicles with more weights. The cost of rural road is much cheaper than that of the highways. The time has come to define quality. Quality of the project will be determined by our budget and expenditure in the project. It depends on the specifications. However, there is a misunderstanding about specifications. Our road is capable to carry 8 to 10 tons, unlike the Bhaktapur-Koteshwor road. I agree that we are also unable to maintain quality in some instances.

**What are the modalities in working?**

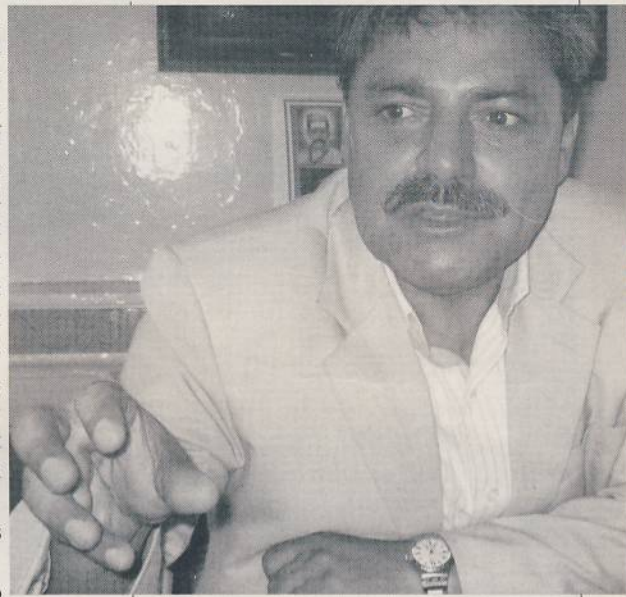
We have now two modalities to work at local level with consumer groups and local bodies. Most of the work is done by consumer groups. We need to create a momentum in the early stage. Here, we also emphasize the quality issue. In the early stage, we ignore the issue of quality to create the momentum and now we have to look at the issue of quality. If we make roads as per the specifications for other highways, the cost will go high. However, the rural roads have less budgets. I agree that we are unable to maintain quality.

**How do you see the process of transformation of the department?**

We are now working to change earthen roads into blacktopped ones and encouraging farmers to use pumps to supply water. We are acquiring water from pumping. We are now in the process of constructing the bridges on motorable roads with a span of up to 200 meters. We are now constructing 100 bridges. We constructed the longest suspension bridge in Dodhara Chandani in Kanchanpur. We have also constructed the highest suspension bridge in Parbat. Similarly, we have already constructed motorable suspension bridge in Parbat. We are now on the construction stage of a 100-meter long suspension motorable bridge. We are constructing more than 100 long bridges to link Bardia and Banke in Mahana river. From small scale, now we are moving to larger scales.

**Again, how do you control the quality?**

We are now working to maintain quality control as the time has come for quality assurance. We want to maintain



quality through day to day supervision and other tests. We are planning to establish a laboratory in each district to check quality. In 19 districts, there are water quality test labs for which we have provided some equipment. The aim is to maintain the quality of water supply. There is a mobile lab which can tell the level of elements in the water. Similarly, in the road sector, we are now working to establish labs in all 75 districts as RAIDP has quality labs in 30 districts. RRR has 20 districts. We have made agreements with the DDC so that it will appoint a technician. We are yet to establish labs in remaining 25 districts. In some areas, most of the labs are not functioning. The roads failed because of lack of compaction. Of course, low quality materials are responsible to some extent for the failure, but it is compaction which is responsible for the present situation.

**What other things does your department do?**

Along with the hardware part, we have also the software part which includes enhancing capacity of DDC employees and institutions. At a time when there is an increase of 10 folds in roads, the number of employees remains the same. DDCs have so many projects scattered in various regions. However, there are many projects where there is not even a technician. There is a need to increase the manpower at the local level and the central agencies need to play more role in this. Even the development partners are raising concerns on the massive malpractices at the local level. ■

# The Humble Checklist



By **BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD**

You could say that the world is mechanized and that everything has come down to checks and lists, that professions like medicine too are now managed like factories. In fact this mechanized trend is happening whether we like it or not. Rather than one important person running the show, now it is a team effort with the system being given prominence over one the individual. In many ways this makes a lot of sense. But there is little surprise that experienced people who have been used to doing things in certain ways are now objecting to checklists because they may feel that the romance and the individual touch will disappear. They may have a point. But it seems like the weight of evidence is shifting in favour of checklists whether we like it or not.

The lowly checklist seems to be the answer to avoiding medical mishaps. If you are seated in front in an aircraft and can see the pilots in the cockpit, have you noticed that they have a set of things to do which they then check off on a form before they fly the plane? It seems usage of a similar checklist will help doctors better treat their patients.

For the mundane tasks of washing hands to wearing gloves to prevention of bedsores in patients, there is a checklist that doctors and nurses now have to follow in many hospitals. Sometimes this is tiresome and boring for the health professional.

The person who highlighted the importance of the checklist in medicine is a Harvard surgeon and a writer, Dr Atul Gawande. His parents, also doctors, are Indian immigrants in the USA. Dr Gawande very cogently states that for generations after the first aviation checklist went into use, checklist finally now used in medicine catch mental flaws inherent in all of us -flaws of memory, thoroughness and attention. He thinks that the checklist provide a kind of a cognitive net. Now there are even studies to back him up in the usefulness of checklists.

For many people the humble

checklist runs counter to our thoughts about what heroes should do, certainly not just tick off things like, did the doctor wear a mask for that minor procedure? The truly great are supposed to be daring with no protocol to follow. Dr Gawande thinks that our ideas on heroism need updating, and he tells the story of the "miracle on the Hudson" to bolster the case for checklists.



On January 15, 2009, a US passenger airplane stuck a large flock of Canadian

geese over Manhattan, lost both engines and crash landed safely on the icy Hudson river. The journalists who covered the story were clearly disappointed because rather than talk about the amazing landing with romantic overtones, the captain of the plane emphasized the checklist that he followed that saved the lives of the passengers.

In the world of surgery, checklists can be especially very relevant. With his team Dr Gawande devised a ninety-second checklist that reduced deaths and complications by more than one-third in eight hospitals around the world, at essentially no extra cost and for almost any kind of operation. All of this seems too good to be true, and yet the facts speak for themselves. Checklists clearly are relevant for Nepal. ■

राष्ट्रिय विद्युत् समस्याको  
निराकरणका लागि सरकारी  
कार्यालयहरूले नै विद्युत खपतको  
लागि मितव्ययिता गर्ने कदमहरू  
चालु राखी सर्वसाधारणहरूलाई  
सुसूचित गराऔं ।

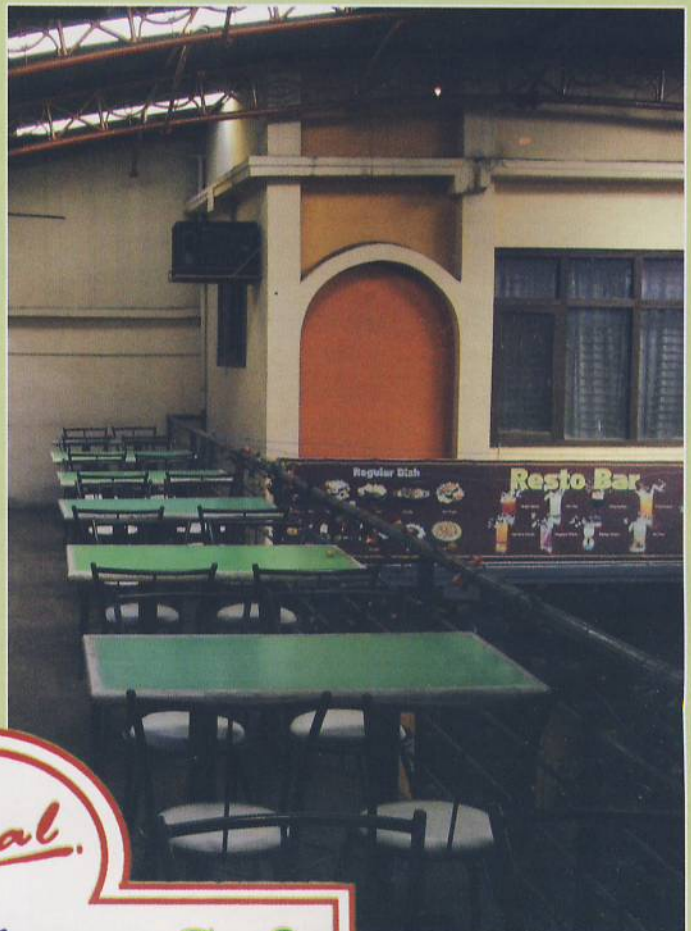


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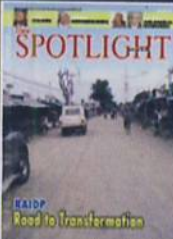
## Changing Lives

Mani Kumar Katuwal, 50, a farmer of Jhulke Village Development Committee of Udayapur District, 600 kilometers east of the capital, saw his annual family income rise by five times after the construction of an all-weather road linking the village with the highway. Katuwal now sells his agriculture produce and milk products to urban areas.

"Every day, the milk tankers come to collect the milk and the traders come to us to buy our agriculture products, including vegetables. I am getting much higher prices for my products now than I did five years ago," said Katuwal.

With...

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#### New Climate Projections to allow for better planning in Nepal

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TV journalism in Nepal does not date back too far in time. Television in Nepal started with the establishment of the first government-owned 'Nepal Television' in January 1985. Following the country's transition to democracy in 2006, the visual me...

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