



VIEWPOINT:
Dr. Tilak Rawal



INTERVIEW:
Aditya Baral



FACE TO FACE:
Dr. Ayodhi Prasad Yadav
Netra Bikram Chand

New SPOTLIGHT

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FORTNIGHTLY



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From The Editor

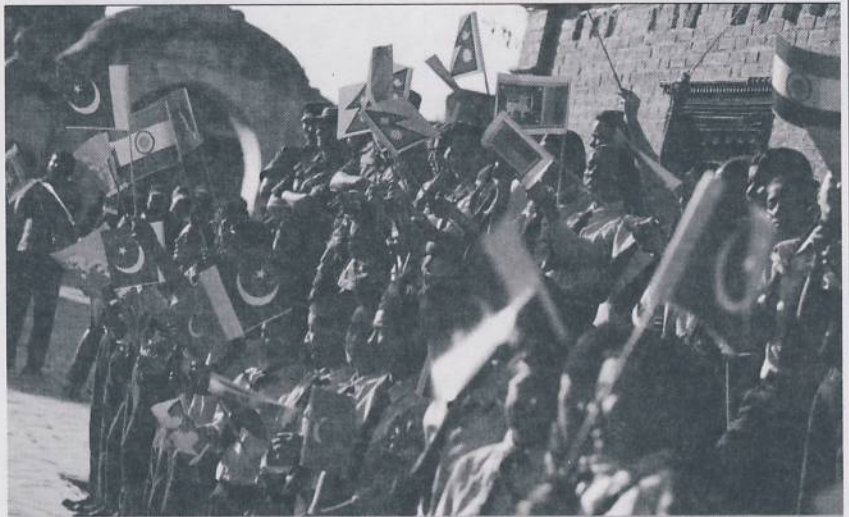
Amidst uncertainty, political wrangling and speculation, the country's major political parties are already deeply involved in the second Constituent Assembly election process. As the Election Commission has almost completed its official preparations, national and international election observers are now monitoring electoral activities leading to the November 19 election. Although there are sporadic incidents of disturbance here and there, including hindrances by Maoist affiliated 33 political allies, and the assassination of a CPN-UML candidate, the election campaign is more or less peaceful. In this context, we have decided to cover the upcoming elections as our lead story. We look at the political and security pros and cons of the forthcoming election. At a time when the country is in the final stage of holding the CA elections on November 19, Nepal is playing host to the fifth South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN). The South Asian region has achieved a tremendous success in the area of drinking water and sanitation, yet the overall coverage of sanitation is still poor. Nepal has made a lot of progress in the last few years, but achieving universal coverage in sanitation remains the country's major challenge. Given Nepal's important development challenges, we have also looked at various aspects of the sanitation situation in Nepal as another of our leading stories. Along with these, there are interviews and columns. As Nepal is celebrating the Deepawali festival, the festival of lights, we wish all of our readers, patrons and well wishers a happy Deepawali.

Keshab Poudel

Keshab Poudel
Editor

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Japan hands over election related materials to the Election Commission

Shuichi SAKAKIBARA, Charge d'Affaires a.i., of the Embassy of Japan, handed over materials related to the election to Secretary Narendra Dahal, of the Election Commission of Nepal. The Handing over Ceremony was held in the Election Commission Nepal (ECN), Kathmandu, in presence of Honorable Commissioners and other officials of Election Commission and the Government of Nepal, as well as the media.

On July 24, 2013, the Government of Japan committed to provide a grant of about one hundred and forty-nine million Japanese yen (approximately NRs.142,146,000) for the execution of the Project for Assistance to the Constituent Assembly Election, upon a request made by the Government of Nepal to Japan. By utilizing the grant, the election materials such as 20,000 larger sized ballot boxes for the proportional electoral process, 106,250 ballot box stickers, 831,250 security seals and 43,750 fences at polling centers



were procured for the CA Election to be held on November 19, 2013.

According to a press release of Japanese Embassy, During the handing over ceremony, Sakakibara expressed that the Election Commission Nepal, responsible for administering the electoral process, will successfully manage the CA Election with the election materials, support and logistics made available by Japan. Moreover, the support extended also signifies the ever-existing and growing friendship and ties between the governments of Japan and Nepal, as well as the strong people-to-people's relations between both countries.

training on October 26th will commence with the arrival of a C-130 aircraft between October 24th and 25th. The Nepal Army and U.S. Army will conduct training to access areas difficult to reach by road in the event of a major disaster.

Nepalese Farmers Leaving For Israel

After sending first group of students to Israel, another group of students from small farmer's families of Nepal is leaving soon for Israel. According to the press release of Embassy of Israel, they will receive training at the Kinneret College in Israel.

The training consists of one full day of theoretical study and five full days' research in a week-oriented practical work, for which they will be paid salary according to Israeli standards.

KOICA Supports Radio Station In Mustang

A radio broadcasting station opened in Jomsom area in the presence of the representatives from the Korean Embassy, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Munhwa Broadcasting Cooperation (MBC) and local people.

Launched in June 2012, the project was implemented by MBC, a Korean broadcasting station, which is supported by KOICA. According to a press release of KOICA, MBC and KOICA jointly funded an amount of US\$1 million for this project, Investment In Nutrition

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) marked World Food Day on 16 October by highlighting the power of nutrition to transform individuals, societies and economies, and the need to make it central to all development efforts.

"In Nepal, WFP's nutrition interventions aim at supporting the Government of Nepal in improving the health and nutritional status of mothers and young children. This year alone 110,000 expecting and nursing mothers and their children are being provided with take-home food rations through health posts where they also access essential pre- and post-natal care," said Nicole Menage, WFP Representative in Nepal.

According to a press release of WFP-Nepal office, WFP in Nepal supports the Government in tackling food insecurity by providing vital food assistance to nearly 500,000 vulnerable people on a monthly basis focusing on social safety nets in the areas of nutrition, education and rural livelihoods support. ■

Climate Resilience For Vulnerable People

Nepal ranks as the 4th most climate-vulnerable country in the world and is highly exposed to a range of water related hazards such as floods, droughts and landslides. Current projections predict increased climate variability and increased frequency and higher intensity of extreme events.

The Government of Nepal has officially started implementation of the Building Resilience to Climate Related Hazards (BRCH) Project for a value of US\$31 million. Dr. Som Lal Subedi, Secretary Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (MoSTE), officially initiated the BRCH project at a function in Kathmandu. Representatives from various Government of Nepal Offices, development partners and civil society attended the program.

According to the World Bank's Press Release, the BRCH project, signed on April 30, 2013 between the Government of Nepal and the World Bank, aims to transition Nepal's hydro-meteorological services into a modern service-oriented system that will build resilience today as well as adaptive capacity for the future. It intends to enhance government capacity to mitigate climate related

hazards by improving the accuracy and timeliness of weather and flood forecasts and warnings for climate-vulnerable communities.

Nepal, US Armies Launch Joint Exercise

The Nepal Army (NA) hosted the U.S. Army for a combined exercise focusing on disaster response training beginning in mid October. The exercise commenced on October 18th with the arrival of the two U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft, with U.S. Army personnel and equipment necessary to conduct training. The aircraft is known for its light cargo capacity and minimal runway requirements.

The exercise was approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Its main objective is to develop the Nepal Army's role in directing international assistance during a disaster-related crisis. The exercise will consist of combined Nepal Army and U.S. Army parachute training to simulate a disaster response, light search and rescue training with helicopter support, and a humanitarian aid and disaster relief expert exchange planned and executed by the Mahabir Rangers.

According to a press release issued by Public Affairs Section of Embassy of the United States, the combined parachute

Nepal Can Be Prosperous: Dr. Gurucharan Das

India's renowned scholar Dr. Gurucharan Das has said that Nepal has the potential to prosper in the future. During a talk program titled the Need for a strong Liberal State, Dr. Das said Nepal had many advantages in trade and business sectors since it was between the world's two growing economies.

At the function organized by the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in association with the Embassy of India, a renowned author, commentator, intellectual and former CEO of Procter and Gamble India, Dr. Das said that India had a lot of potential to grow, too. Despite a temporary slowdown, the Indian economy was still strong and resilient. He analyzed the strength of Indian and Chinese economies as well as state systems.



From left Chaudhary, Indian Ambassador Ray, Dr. Das and Basnyat

Addressing the program, Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Ray said that this kind of program would help increase the understanding between India and Nepal.

CNI president Emeritus and renowned industrialist Binod Kumar Chaudhary highlighted the importance of bilateral trade between Nepal and India.

He suggested the need to implement SAFTA for the benefit of the billion plus population of South Asian region. Chaudhary reminded all of Nepal's highest economic growth during the period of 1996 to 2001 due to the preferential treatment given by India to Nepal.

Welcoming the speaker, CNI president Narendra K Basnyat said that the modern state had many responsibilities and there were many things for which individuals or private sector—rather than the state—were responsible. One of the most difficult political questions in a society like ours, centered on determining an appropriate extent and limits of the state's role in contrast to the role of individuals and private sectors, he said.

Qatar Airways Makes Special Offer

Qatar Airways has launched its Companion Fares - buy one business class ticket and get the second one free scheme

— for its passengers in Nepal travelling to any of its 130 destinations worldwide via Doha.

The joy of flying Qatar Airways Business Class has just doubled. Passengers can fly between 10th October 2013 and 31st March 2014 and their companion can fly with them for free.

Also if passengers can book their ticket and receive an additional 25% bonus Qmiles! The sales period is from 7th October to 6th November 2013. To book the tickets or for more information, passengers can visit qatarairways.com/np, call 4440467 or contact their nearest travel agent

Qatar Airways operates 4 flights daily and 28 flights weekly from Kathmandu to Doha, connecting Nepal to over 130 destinations worldwide.

Minister Koirala Asks WB To Invest In Large Projects

Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala has requested the World Bank (WB) to increase its investment in large projects. The request has come at a time when the bank is devising a five-year country assistance strategy for Nepal.

At a meeting with WB Country Director Johannes Zutt, Koirala asked him to promote “qualitative investment” in Nepal, while praising the bank's support to the government's priority areas — infrastructure development, including hydropower sector.

On concerns over slow progress in the construction of the Khimti-Dhalkebar Transmission Line (KDTL) project in which the World Bank has pledged financial aid, Koirala assured he would initiate talks with stakeholders to speed up the work.

Nepal-UK Trade Needs To Expand: President Basnyat

British Ambassador to Nepal Andrew James Sparkes and president of Confederation of Nepali Industries (CNI) Narendra Kumar Basnyat have recently discussed how to increase the bilateral trade and business between the two countries.

According to a press release issued by CNI, while welcoming British Ambassador Sparkes in CNI's office, president Basnyat expressed the hope that the bilateral trade between Nepal and United Kingdom will be improved during the tenure of ambassador Sparke.

“The time has now come to focus the two centuries old relations between Nepal and England on business and trade sector,” said Basnyat.

British ambassador Sparkes said that Nepal's economic development and improvement of business environment is the priority of his government.

During the meeting with the British ambassador, other office bearers of CNI were also present.

Nation Towards Ca Polls

By DR. TILAK RAWAL



With less than a month left for CA polls, the nation seems to be gradually and steadily heading towards it, despite confusion and fear emanating from lack of adequate and timely action of line agencies related to security and electoral preparations. It may be mentioned that a UML candidate contesting election was shot dead in Bara district, some party workers have been fired upon and people are still not sure whether the Election Commission will provide voter's ID cards with photo or voters will have to satisfy themselves with identity cards without photos on them. The photo issue is not going to create major problems as long as people get a chance to vote in a fearless environment. Further, with EC recently deciding to solicit private

validity of the election held to frame the new constitution of Nepal could be logically questioned in days ahead.

After selecting candidate for the polls, parties have concentrated their attention on preparation of party manifesto and its publicity, which has clearly revealed that these parties are even today as diverse on major issues as they were before the sad demise of the erstwhile CA. UCPN, Maoist is still in favour of a directly elected president, while UML wants a directly elected prime minister and Nepali Congress is likely to stick to West ministerial kind of governance with parliament-elected ceremonial president and prime minister as chief executive. RPP, Nepal wants rehabilitation of constitutional monarchy and people are giving a

parties appearing poles apart on the issues that could not be resolved by earlier CA, it would be very difficult to give the nation a new constitution within one year as desired by UML. May be some issues will have to be put to referendum without waiting too long to seek the mandate, which would prevent further deepening of the prevailing political crisis. People also want proper attention to be paid to the so far ignored economy, whose growth has remained below 4 percent in most years in the past decade, while high level of inflation has been continuously inflicting injury on the life of low income Nepalese. Let us hope the political parties do not confine themselves to peps talk as far as curing economic ailment is concerned. UCPN-M and NC (reportedly) have projected per capita income of \$1400 and \$1000, respectively, to be achieved in five years. Hope Prachanda, Baburam succeed in doing away with load shedding in three years, generating 1900 mw of power as promised in their commitment paper. Party leaders may kindly note that poor Nepalese in dire need of employment opportunities, drinking water and electricity do not want to hear party's projection beyond 10 years. Anything we are not sure of delivering should not be promised, let us not forget. Likewise, attention may kindly be paid to see that the projected growth rates are adequate to actualize the wished per capita income over time.

Timely budget in the current fiscal year seems to have contributed towards increasing capital expenditure and eased liquidity crunch, which financial institutions were experiencing in the recent past. Revenue collection is likely to increase satisfactorily and let us hope that election related huge expenditures do not push inflation to an intolerable level. We have to learn to face

Crackers will burst all over Nepal to celebrate Tihar, a great festival of Hindus, and continuity of explosions, varying in sound and intensity, till the November 15 should suffice to keep the voters not much away from their dwellings from where not even Nepal Army soldiers can drag them to the polling booth. Let us hope the polls remain different, in terms of turn out, from the polls organized for local bodies before the Movement that did away with monarchy.

sector's help in supply of printing paper etc, uncertainty about the availability of right kind of cards has receded. Although nothing can be predicted with certainty, actions and observations of Maoists led by Kiran suggest that they will dissuade people from exercising their franchise without taking resort to force/ firepower. They must have clearly understood that any decision by them to take resort to violence will invite matching intervention of some 62000 soldiers of Nepal Army deployed for election purpose. The Maoists also know that nobody can stop them from resorting to persuasive methods to keep voters away. It seems Kiran and his followers will be happy to see a very thin turnout so that acceptability/

patient hearing to its chairman Kamal Thapa's observations that abolition of monarchy has done no good to the country and its economy. Even Madhes-based parties have failed to come up with a unified voice on the number of provinces in Madhes and the system of governance. While many of them are likely to be happy with two provinces in the narrow strip of fertile land north of India, Forum led by Upendra Yadav wants one province with full autonomy for the region. Major political parties also differ on the number and kind of provinces. NC and UML have been against Maoist proposal of creating and naming provinces along ethnic lines, NC wants 7 to 13 and UML wants 7 multiple identity-based provinces. With major

problems bravely and intelligently like others do. The recent problems in the US over budget/debt ceiling inflicted serious injury on the economy when federal staff remained unemployed for 16 days. Had the cross-party proposal to increase debt limit not been accepted, the shut-down would also harm other economies because the number one economy(US) is still the major global engine of growth buying goods and services from all over the world. It also is a huge borrower of capital. China holds its assets amounting to trillions of dollars in US treasury bonds. During the crisis, China criticized the US government as dysfunctional and signaled that it was contemplating diversifying its dollar assets. Talks also began to surface about replacement of US dollar as the international reserve currency. Hard work by senators belonging to both parties averted the crisis temporarily, if not permanently, which also ended speculation about the US economy and its currency. Politicians there will have to work hard with greater sense of responsibility to avoid the likely recurrence of the situation in the near future. Our leaders have to learn to find political solution to economic problems as is done elsewhere. Constitution framing has to receive paramount importance but people do not want economic issues to be ignored on the pretext of political impasse as has been the case thus far. Not many people are certain the new CA polls would pave way for political stability because a powerful political force is hell bent on disrupting the polls and major political parties, back on mudslinging business, are nowhere near consensus on contentious issues. Crackers will burst all over Nepal to celebrate Tihar, a great festival of Hindus, and continuity of explosions, varying in sound and intensity, till the November 15 should suffice to keep the voters not much away from their dwellings from where not even Nepal Army soldiers can drag them to the polling booth. Let us hope the polls remain different, in terms of turn out, from the polls organized for local bodies before the Movement that did away with monarchy. The difference between the two polls is that while political forces then had joined hands with the Maoists to disrupt the polls and isolate the monarch, in the present scenario only a part of the rebels (Maoist) is determined to foil the polls and all other forces, national and international, are determined to have polls on the stipulated day of November. One should not be surprised if the turn out this time is better than the earlier one held during the King's period. Let us wish ourselves good luck.

Dr. Rawal is a former governor of NRB



German Unity Day

The Joy & Gratitude

By FRANK MEYKE

We Germans remember with joy and gratitude the regaining of our national unity 23 years ago after decades of national division. We are, in particular, celebrating the courageous stand for freedom that hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took in East Germany in the autumn of 1989, at great personal risk, knocking down the Berlin Wall and, in a peaceful revolution, liberating themselves from an oppressive one-party dictatorship.

The national anthems of Nepal and Germany we just have been singing and listening to are both calling on us to strive for unity, justice and freedom in our countries. These are core values of Nepalis and Germans alike. They are the foundation of democracy, prosperity and happiness and they are the foundation for the further strengthening of our very good bilateral relations.

Democratic elections are the prerequisite for freedom, justice and unity. On 22 September, we had parliamentary elections in Germany and on 19 November, weeks from now, the people of Nepal will have their Constituent Assembly elections. We congratulate the Government of Nepal and the Election Commission on successfully preparing the national elections. A newly elected Constituent Assembly creating a democratic constitution without delay and local elections taking place as soon as possible will be decisive positive political signals for Germany, the whole European Union and for foreign investors, signals that Nepal is progressing on its way to a stable democratic and prosperous country. Germany will continue to support all efforts in Nepal strengthening democracy and human rights.

I am happy and honored to be living and working as German ambassador in Nepal. Together with our whole embassy team I will spare no efforts helping to maintain and strengthen the very good relations between our two countries. Tonight my wife and I are particularly grateful to the members of our brass band from Germany who are playing German and Nepal tunes for us. They belong to brass bands of the Protestant Churches in Germany. Thank you for so competently contributing to our enjoyment of the celebration of the Day of German Unity.

(From the excerpt of the statement delivered on the occasion of German National Day, on 3rd of October.)

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SCOND CA POLLS

Troubled Leaders

Despite a continuing threat by CPN-Maoist led alliance, the campaign for November 19 CA polls is picking up pace. But the top leaders of major political parties will be in trouble visiting constituencies and convincing the masses

By KESHAB POUDEL

At a time when the CPN-Maoist led 33 parties continue to issue threats to obstruct the November 19 Constituent Assembly elections, the top leaders of major political parties are facing a hard time going canvassing in their own constituencies. In some instances, they are meeting the new rebels. As many top leaders are confined to their own constituencies, a nationwide election campaign is yet to gain a momentum. The recent decision of the Elections Commission to restrict the use of helicopter bars the leaders from travelling to various districts.

In the last elections, Nepali Congress leader late Girija Prasad Koirala attended election campaigns in all the constituencies. UCPN-Maoist leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai followed Koirala.

Although it is still too early to say anything about the election results, Nepali Congress leader Sushil Koirala, Ram Chandra Poudel, UCPN-Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and CPN-UML leader Jhahnath Khanal are facing tough challenges in their own home constituencies.

Among the top politicians, Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba is only one who is reportedly contesting on safe constituencies in two districts of far west. Similarly, UCPN-Maoist leader Narayan Kazi Shrestha is said to have a comfortable

position. Similarly, CPN-UML leader and former speaker of Constituent Assembly Subhas Chandra Nembang and Madhav Kumar Nepal have comfortable positions. Leader of Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party Mahanta Thakur is also facing tough challenges and so many other top leaders are in a similar state.

For the 240 first-past-the-post seats, Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist are clearly in the fray. Even though divided, the Madhesh-based parties will fight back with three national parties in the southern plains. However, parties like RPP, RPP-Nepal and other smaller parties are concentrating more on proportional representatives.

Elections Campaign

With the mobilization of Nepal Army and armed police in almost all constituencies, candidates are now gearing up their campaigns. Nepal Army has already started flag march in all 240 constituencies. Although Nepal Army always plays a crucial role in providing a backup security, this is the first time Nepal Army is directly involved in booth security.

The nationwide election campaign is now in full swing. As all the major political parties have published their own party manifestoes, leaders of political parties are now campaigning for the elections through house to house visits.

With the mobilization of Nepal



Ballot Boxes



From left Prachanda, Nepal, Deuba, Khanal, Koirala, Poudel, Nembang, Mahato, Thakur and Thapa

Army under integrated elections security plan, the law and order situation is said to be improved. Home Ministry has already decided to provide personal security officers to those candidates who seek police protection for their campaign. Home Minister Madhav Prasad Ghimire told this scribe that the law and order situation has improved and there is no security threat for polls.

With the mobilization of national and international monitoring teams throughout the country, the election monitoring has already begun. The international monitors from the European Commission and the Carter Center have already deployed their monitors. Similarly, national election observer groups are also monitoring the elections.

Given the present political scenario, UCPN-Maoist has a very difficult time ahead. Along with harping on the slogan of boycotting elections on November 19, CPN-Maoist leaders have already directed their cadres to vote against UCPN-Maoist candidates. This is likely to benefit Nepali Congress and CPN-UML.

Maoist Threat

The agitating Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) disrupted a mass meet organized by Kamal Thapale Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-N) in Panchthar on 19 October. FLSC cadres barred RPP-N Co-chairman Padma Sundar Lawati from

entering the district. Likewise, FLSC cadres also disrupted a mass meet organized by the Nepali Congress (NC) in the district.

Similarly, the shutdown called by the CPN-Maoist has hit hard normal life in various seven districts of Seti and Mahakali zone since 20 October. The CPN-Maoist-led 33 party alliance organized the strike as a part of their scheduled protests against coming CA election and not to allow the entrance of senior leaders of major four parties in the constituencies.

Although CPN-Maoist led alliance said their agitation will be peaceful, given their recent activities, their ten days' long general strike, from November 10-19, is likely to be bloody. Nepal Police estimates that CPN-Maoist does not have a nationwide reach to disrupt the election process. CPN-Maoist leader Pampha Bhushal said that her party will launch peaceful agitation against the elections. She confided that their cadres will retaliate against any attempt of suppression.

Election Preparations

The Election Commission is ready to go for polls after making almost all final preparations. Following the opposition from the major political parties, the Election Commission has decided to distribute the voter identity cards before the elections. The Commission has started the printing of voter ID cards on its own.

The Commission published the election symbols allocated to FPTP

candidates at the offices of all 240 returning officers across the country. With the withdrawal of the 205, the total number of FPTP candidates now stands at 6,138. Of the 6,343 candidates, 672 were women and one a third gender. Similarly, out of the 1,219 independent candidates, 69 are women

However, it is yet to be clear how the over 10 million voter identity cards will be delivered to the voters given Nepal's present lethargic government machinery. Chief Election Commissioner Neel Kantha Uprety confided to this scribe that the Election Commission has completed all its programs.

"We will stop the mockery in the name of elections," said Pampha Bhushal. "I am sure that people will oppose it and boycott it."

Security challenges

After the incident of assassination in Bara the demand of security from poll candidates has sharply gone up. Nepal Police Spokesperson Nawa Raj Silwal told this scribe that the number of poll candidates demanding personnel security officers (PSOs) has increased, especially in Tarai and eastern hill districts.

Nepal Police has provided at least one PSO to a candidate keeping in view the security threats he or she faces. Apprehensive of the anti-poll activities in the aftermath of the fatal attack, the government has also decided to increase security vigilance.

EC Will Hold Free, Fair Poll

DR. AYODHI PRASAD YADAV
Elections Commissioner



What is the state of election preparations?

The Election Commission is now ready to hold the elections. We have almost completed all the work related to the elections.

What about the voter identity cards row?

The commission has decided to print the ID cards and distribute them during the elections. There were some technical difficulties earlier.

How do you view the security arrangements?

The commission is satisfied with the present security arrangement. This will ensure free and fair polls.

How will the Commission manage the national and international elections observers?

Unlike in the last elections, observers are likely to work impartially and maintaining neutrality. We have clearly set the terms and conditions. We will monitor the election observers. If anyone violates the observer code of conduct, we will act immediately.

How do you look at the international election observers?

European Union and Carter Center have already deployed their observers. They have already started election monitoring.

How do you view the Maoist threat?

Nobody can disrupt the CA elections now. The elections will be held on November 19. The Election Commission is confident now.

Home ministry officials directed the security agencies to keep a close watch on candidates from Parsa to Saptari in the south, which is considered the most security sensitive area, and provide them with PSOs while reviewing their security threats. Restive eastern hill districts are equally vulnerable.

Security officials attending the regional security seminars stressed the need to ensure effective coordination among all security agencies, including the army for the polls. Dissenting former Maoist combatants who want to disrupt the election and the open and porous border with India pose huge challenges.

"The government plans to deploy more than 61,000 NA personnel in 240 constituencies as per the integrated security plan. Though most of the mountainous districts have fewer

constituencies and are less sensitive in terms of security, we need to deploy sufficient number of NA personnel. Though both Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF) have also been deployed, the deployment of NA will depend on the level of security threat during and after the CA polls," said NA Spokesperson Brigadier General Jagadish Chandra Pokharel.

Security experts, however, expressed dissatisfaction over the mobilization of army in civilian elections. "It seems that the election is going to be held in a military rule. Nepal Army's active involvement in the election will tarnish its neutral image," said security expert Indrajit Rai.

Others disagree. "Nepal Army has always played a crucial role in elections security. This is not an exception. There is no harm to mobilize the army under civilian control," said Nepali



Poll Boycott Will Be Complete

NETRA BIKRAM CHAND
CPN-Maoist leader

Whatever the threat you have issued, the November 19 election is inevitable now.

How do you look at it?

(Laughs) Don't underestimate us. We will show you what we have said. This is the festive season, so we have relaxed our protests. You will see the mood after November 10.

As the government has already decided to mobilize the army to prevent disruptions, will your party cadres retaliate with the army?

I don't think Nepal Army will side with these anti-nationals who want to Sikkimise Nepal through the elections. We have already made it clear that our protest will be peaceful. In case force is used against us, it is natural to resist such acts.

At a time when all the political parties in the country have decided to contest the elections, do you think there is any meaning of boycott by CPN-Maoist lead alliance?

It is not a question about who is taking part in the elections and who is not. The question is the motives behind taking part in the elections. We don't want to sell the country on the disguise of elections.

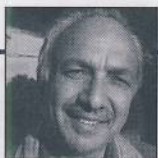
As the international communities, including India, China and UN, have been supporting elections, don't you think it makes no sense to call for a boycott?

We don't know what the international community wants. Our concern is the Nepali people. At a time when an overwhelming number of Nepali people are opposing the elections, there is no sense in participating in the election.

Congress leader Arjun Narshing K.C. Coming Scenario

Security remains a major challenge in the country. There will be a certain level of confrontation during the election period. Given the experience of the last two months, it is unlikely to see Maoists disrupting the election throughout the country. If a large number of top leaders lose the elections, that will naturally pave the way for young leaders to emerge. At a time when an overwhelming number of voters are young, one cannot rule out the possibility of a new scenario emerging.

As the Army and Police are tightening their presence, the CPN-Maoist is now coming up with a violent mood of retaliation. Given the current political trend, nothing is likely for the CA-II election on November 19. ■



Taking Mahatma Gandhi Head-on

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

G P Koirala will be remembered for his firmness, but adherence to clean public life was almost an alien factor of his politics and practice of power. His being vested with absolute power in the post 2006, in a phase that was highly intoxicated by mass euphoria and compromises on values—all in the name of democracy—seems to have inspired all other parties to practice absolute power, absolute corruption and absolute compromises on issues of vital importance to the nation and the society. It almost became an example of 'Badale Jo Gare Kaama, hunchha tyo sarba sammata' (anything that a big man does gets readily acceptable to all).

Rajya Lakshmi Golchha publically revealed that she was asked a huge amount for a seat in the Constituent Assembly by the top leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal—Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and apparently she declined it. Business and Industrial Houses supporting a political party on the basis of adherence to the principle and ideology of that Party should be considered a healthy practice, but a deal or even an offer over parliamentary berth is out and out a corrupt politics, and corrupt electoral practice. It is entirely a different and sad

issue that neither the Election Commission will go into it, nor does anyone in the current circumstances expect that the Highly politicized judiciary and the apex court that functions under the shadow of the Executive Head will show enough courage to treat the issue fairly even if a case challenging such trend came up before this.

For various reasons, Business Houses do have to take pro-establishment lines. Let us examine the prominent media, mainly print of February 1, 2005. All the big business Houses put out ads—jointly or separately—hailing the takeover by King Gyanendra. They had the option of maintaining silence in disapproval or indifference. But they chose to take a pro-active line supporting what the King did. But three years down the line, they supported and joined hands with the forces who decried the Royal action. Not only that, Business Houses invaded various or almost all the parties—big or small—and represented different Political parties in the House. They, as member of the political parties, were as responsible as any top leaders and big political parties for CA's failure to deliver the constitution. Corruption became most rampant during the period that followed 2006 political change. The nexus between the Business and the Political community pursued the wrong culture that will continue to hound the countries in many years to come. That nexus is clearly casting its shadow on the current politics more visibly when the CA election is round the corner.



Girija Prasad Koirala

UML as a party may have got exposed in the Rajya Lakshmi Golchha case. It is just the other face of the coin that compromises other top parties including the Nepali Congress, Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists, and various Madhes based parties. Bijaya Gachhedar apparently called two business people from Biratnagar, and promised a seat to one of them in the House, depending on the amount of money they 'donated' to his party for the election. Most of these parties have 'Rich' contractors and business people in their PR list submitted to the Election Commission and the current speculations about the price of a Berth in CA is apparently more than 15 million. The rate goes higher depending on which Party has accommodated them. How much such 'non-transparent' money collected by top leaders of the parties actually be spent on election, and how much will be deposited in the personal bank account, in Nepal or abroad?

In 1974, Allahabad High Court (Uttar Pradesh) had held then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty of corrupt electoral practices leading to her disqualification as member of the House. Bihar's former Chief Minister Lalu Yadav is the latest case to lose his House membership on the ground of being corrupt. India is not the best example of democratic practices in the world, but independence of judiciary has helped to bring big and powerful to justice when they go against the norms and rules of public life. That has helped people to retain their faith in the state and democracy a lot. Unfortunately, in Nepal while political parties and the Business Houses are establishing unethical relationship, the organs of the state like the Election Commission and the Judiciary are watching all that helplessly. Politics and business without purpose, without larger virtue, and without public service as objective become only money minting business.

G P Koirala once never used to get tired of acknowledging how king Birendra gave him a 'gift' with Mahatma Gandhi's suggestions about what constituted ethics or absence of it. Wealth without work, Pleasure without Conscience, Knowledge without Character, Commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice and Politics without Principle, he felt were the biggest anti-thesis of ethics. Gandhi's 144th birth anniversary were celebrated on October 2 all over India, and as well as in Nepal. Incidentally, his seven principles of ethics first appeared in Young India, the magazine he used to edit, on October 22, 1925. Nepal's big Political parties have chosen to take Gandhi head on: 'We believe in politics without principle. We practice politics that gives us money and comfort' ■

MERGER OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

No Panacea

The merger of banks has sped up recently but it is still not clear how the partners will work together

By DEBESH ADHIKARY

Nepal's financial sector has gone through a very strange situation. With just a dozen of commercial banks and dozens of development and financial institutions, there are now over 200 financial institutions which, one or the other way, have been facing financial problems.

After successful merger of NIC AND Bank of Asia Bank and recently merged Mankaman Development Bank Yeti Finance and Valley finance, Civil Bank, Axis Bank and Civil Merchant Bank have announced the process of merger.

Civil Bank Limited, Axis Development Bank Limited and Civil Merchant Finance Company Limited have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for merger. According to a press statement, Ichcha Raj Tamang, chairperson of Civil Bank, Bidur Dhamala, chairperson of Axis Development Bank and Arun Raj Shrestha, director of Civil Merchant Finance Company signed the agreement.

They agreed that the name of the bank will remain Civil Bank Limited after the merger. According to the statement, the paid-up capital of Civil Bank is Rs 2 billion, that of Axis Development Bank and Civil Merchant Finance Company are Rs 718.1 million and Rs 166.5 million, respectively.

In the name of liberalization, a number of financial institutions opened in Nepal. In many cases, the same family owns the bank as well as the industry. Civil Bank Limited, which is the main promoter of Civil Home, has made a lot of investment in the housing sector. The Axis

Development Bank and Civil Merchant have also no different stories.

Following a severe cash crunch, Vibor Development Bank merged with Bhajuranta Finance a year ago and Vibor Development Bank and Kist Bank is in the final process of merger.

At a time when Nepali financial sector has been passing through a crucial period, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund is taking Financial Sector Assessment Program, undertaken by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, between November 2013 and February 2014.

NRB Governor Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada has been consistently saying that merger is not a panacea. In the last 15 to 18 years, Nepal has got bitter experiences of how instability in the financial sector can impose huge costs on the real economy. The World Bank and IMF team will look at the financial sector of every country. They have developed a pretty robust set of tools to conduct stress tests, assess banks, test internal control system to



Tamang



Governor Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada

assess capital adequacy, and their capacity to handle and identify risks. It will be helpful as it will point out any issue that exists in the financial system including underlying asset quality.

"The financial sector is apparently weak in Nepal. The level of non-performing assets is actually higher than what is being reported. There is ever greening of loans — borrowers are taking loans to pay for loans taken earlier. The regulator has to strongly supervise the banking sector to prevent any failure. If there is a lack of trust in the banking sector, people will withdraw their savings and there will be no money to lend to businesses. Moreover, it is unusual to have so many deposit taking institutions — 200 licensed financial institutions cooperatives and more. NRB has a huge task to supervise and regulate all these institutions which is difficult."

Consolidation and mergers are good but you have to merge financial institutions that are good matches like ones with different sets of assets and skills and when you put them together a stronger institution is created. On the other hand, if you are merging a bad one with an okay one you might end up with one bigger insolvent bank. Make sure that the resulting one is stronger because banks going under are very bad with people losing their savings, they advise. ■



Why We Should Vote On Nov 19

By ABHISHEKH ADHIKARI

The elections are around the corner despite a reigning uncertainty amongst the masses about whether they will happen or not. A hard line faction of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist is adamant not to participate in the elections. Its leaders and cadres are trying to dissuade the people from voting. Some other parties, like the Federal Socialist Party, are also threatening to spoil the election environment.

The fundamental question before us all is to guarantee democracy will be institutionalized. The need, therefore, is to elect a party which believes in democratic values to the government. A party that defends the people's right to cast their vote should be elected to power. Development of the country is an issue, yes, but institutionalization of democratic values is even more important. Development is a

necessary consequence of proper functioning of democratic government. There are chances Nepal will fall into unknown abyss if there are no periodic elections.

We are still struggling to have our basic rights guaranteed and institutionalized. This election is being held after a repeat breaking of several promises to hold elections.

The previous Constituent Assembly (CA) had extended its tenure by two years against all the hue and cry from the civil society and intelligentsia. It caused quite a stir in the international community as well. The original timeframe stipulated by the Interim Constitution of Nepal

within which it was supposed to draft the constitution was two years. But no constitution was written even in the span of the CA's four years existence.

Despite the fact that Dr. Baburam Bhattarai led caretaker government announced the election date as and when the CA died, for various reasons, it did not happen. After a lapse of months, the second CA election date was announced. The Chief Justice (CJ) led Interim Election Government was formed against all the principles of independence of judiciary and the practice of principles of separation of powers. It has been one of the most unfortunate moves by the political elites and judiciary in the history of the nation.

Now finally as the election date of November 19 was announced by the CJ led government, the challenge before us is to hold the election and elect candidates which have democratic ideals.

We would be happy to have a political party at the government who will respect our voting rights in the elections to come. In the absence of our "born leaders" we will search for the leaders to run the government as long as our voting rights are not curtailed. We might have missed in the previous elections to elect the right candidates at the helm who have vision to solve our problems, but we are not tired yet. We are patiently waiting to elect our next leaders. We shall participate in the elections to send our representatives to the government.

Our expectations from our leaders have been ambitious. Not that I am

justifying their ethics measured against vices of corruption, lethargy, and inefficiency, lack of effectiveness and adeptness at work, but these people come from our own society. We are very aware that we trusted them and they failed. It's our inability to choose the right candidates. We should take the blame ourselves. We should not be disheartened by our failure. "Failure is the pillar of success" as some wise man rightly said and we cannot deny its relevancy in our case.

The election time has come again and this is the time when we can mend our past errors. It is also necessary to mention that there has not been an election of the local bodies in Nepal for the past sixteen years. Local bodies ensure the leadership at the grassroots level and ultimately they break the status quo of leadership at the national level. Not holding local bodies' elections has made the very foundation of our democracy questionable.

We have debated rightly amidst our circles that there are no leaders who can help realize our dreams through their deeds. But now knowing that we don't stand a chance of them we have to reflect what can be expected from them.

Leaders are not born overnight like Rome wasn't built in a day. It needs environment, training, inspiration, aspiration, capacity and opportunity. Elections create environment, they inspire and aspire young minds, they develop capacity and our own representatives our own brothers and sisters get the opportunities. Through elections leaders are born.

It's time we fought for our rights and cast votes upholding principles of democratic values and ideals. If not for anything else, we should vote to ensure that our voting rights, participatory and decision making rights are not curtailed and interfered with by some forces lurking around the corner within Nepal.

(Adhikari is an advocate)





LIKHU-4 HYDORPOWER Stuck Over Wheeling Charge

Due to the delay in signing the agreement on the wheeling charge, a 1.6 billion rupees investment made in Likhu-4 Hydro has been trapped sending the wrong message to the investors

By A CORESSPONDENT

As the country has been passing through a severe power crisis due to lack of investment in hydropower sector, some 1.6 billion rupees of foreign investment in Likhu-4 hydropower project is getting uncertainty in dividend because of the failure of the government to decide on the policy regarding the wheeling charge.

Situated in Ramechhap district, 120 MW Likhu-4 hydropower projects has Fall Back PPA with Nepal Electricity Authority. Although it is an export-based project aiming to supply energy to India, it will continue to supply energy to Nepal till the resumption of export of power to India.

Promoter India's Bhilwara Energy Limited has already applied for wheeling charge fixation to NEA two

years ago. However, the application is yet to proceed ahead. "We have already completed the process. As soon as the wheeling charge is settled, we will go for construction immediately," said Bipin Arora, vice president of the company.

According to Arora, the project is feasible in case of wheeling charge of 48 NPR. The DPR prepared in 2009 has clearly spelled out this. "Even if the wheeling charge fixes for Rs. 1.00, the project is unviable for investment," said Arora. If the wheeling charge is accepted as our proposal, we will start the construction as soon as possible. Although we have applied twice, NEC is yet to take a decision," complained Arora.

According to Arora, the construction of the 45 kilometer road to reach the dam site has already been

completed. The company has also completed the process of land acquisition in the project site. "We don't have any financial problems. Once we fix the wheeling charge, the project will kick off," said Arora. "Since we have all the infrastructure, we don't have to worry about the project."

Nepal-India Cross Border Transmission line is going to be complete by 2015. The company has already signed fall back agreement with NEA to sell 52.4 MW of power to NEA. According to PPA signed in 2011, NEA will buy the electricity of the project in 5.99 US Cents till the completion of construction of Nepal-India Cross Border transmission line.

According to company, IDBI Bank Ltd is the lead banks with other Oriental Banks of Commerce, Punjab and Sind Bank, Exim Bank, PIC Financial Services and Everest Bank are the members of the consortium.

Nepal and India have separately established transmission companies to construct 140 kilometer Cross Border Transmission line between Dhalkebar (Nepal) and Muzafarapur (India). Nepal Electricity Authority has 50 percent share holding in Power Transmission Company Nepal. Exim Bank of India has already agreed to provide 13.2 million dollar to the project. "Our electricity will go for export to India through this line. The project is now uncertain due to the failure in signing the wheeling agreement," said Arora. So far as the Indian side is concerned, we have already arranged for using of the transmission line to export power. There is no doubt over the completion of the project. The main problem with us is decision on wheeling charge."

According to Energy Secretary and member of Board Member of Nepal Electricity Authority Bishow Prakash Pandit, the ministry has already issued policy guidance to NEA on the issue of wheeling charge. The ministry is determined to settle this issue. "The process has already started," said Pandit. ■



Mountain Partnership: Governance & Strategy

By PURUSHOTAM GHIMIRE

The Fourth Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership (MP) took place in Erzurum, Turkey, on 17-20 September 2013. During the meeting, the assembly addressed: the new Mountain Partnership Strategy and Governance; mountains in the PostRio+20 and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the Mountain Forum knowledge platform for sustainable mountain development; regional coordination mechanisms; and the selection of the MP Steering Committee. Thematic working groups considered how to put the Mountain Partnership into practice. Parallel regional meetings, Partnership Fairs and side events also took place.

The meeting brought together more than 100 participants representing, inter alia, governments, academia, research institutions, intergovernmental organizations and civil society. The new MP Strategy and Governance were discussed and approved and the members of the MP Steering Committee were selected. Participants also agreed on the Erzurum Conclusions.

Background of Mountain Partnership

In 1992, the heads of state or government of most of the world's nations at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or 'Rio Earth Summit') signed a plan for action, 'Agenda 21'. Its Chapter 13 is entitled 'Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development'. Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) was not defined in Chapter 13; however, a widely-used definition is that it is "a regionally-specific process of sustainable development that concerns both mountain regions and populations living downstream or otherwise dependent on these regions in various ways" (Price and Kim, 1999).

Following the inclusion of Chapter 13 in 'Agenda 21', awareness and understanding of these key issues increased, particularly through a series of important global and regional meetings among scientists, development agencies and other key stakeholders. A specific outcome was the declaration of the UN General Assembly, in 1998, that 2002 would be the International Year of Mountains. In that year, many activities

recognizing the diverse values of mountains and the importance of SMD took place worldwide. In addition, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg, the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions was established, with essential support from the governments of Italy and Switzerland, UNEP, and FAO, the UN Lead Agency for mountains. This partnership, now known as the "Mountain Partnership" (MP), is a "Type II" Partnership, i.e., a voluntary trans-national umbrella alliance of mountain actors



(governments, inter-governmental organizations, civil society and private organizations) who are committed to collaborating to advance mountain-specific goals. Like other "Type II" Partnerships, the MP is not a legal entity. FAO was tasked with hosting and implementing a Secretariat to support the MP.

Governance and Strategy

The basic elements of the current governance of the MP are defined in the document entitled

"Mountain Partnership - Organization, Membership and Governance". This document was drafted through a consultative process, finalized in July 2004 and officially endorsed by the MP members during the second Global Meeting in September 2004 in Cuzco. The main principles expressed in the Governance chapter refer to "participation of all members, accountability, responsiveness, consensus, transparency and flexibility". The MPS had a specific governance system - advisory committee - which included representatives of the donors and of other key stakeholders such as the United Nations Environment

Program (UNEP), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Eco-region (CONDESAN) and Mountain Forum. Regular meetings of the MPS advisory committee took place until 2009, when the Mountain Partnership Consortium was established by merging the advisory mechanisms of both the MPS and the Mountain Forum in an attempt to better coordinate the work that the main organizations were doing in the context of the MP. Because of a decentralization process of the MPS that had happened in 2008, representatives of the host institutions were also included in the Consortium jointly with other key organizations.

Present Scenario of Mountain Partnership

In February 2012 the Consortium decided to modify the governance structure of the MP and MPS. Over the past decade, the number of members of the MP has grown to 212 (as of May 2013), including 50 national governments, 16 inter-governmental organizations, and over 146 other organizations of great diversity in every respect. Many actions in support of SMD have been accomplished at all levels from the global - including three paragraphs in the Outcome Document of the 2012 'Rio+20' UN Conference on Sustainable Development - to the local.

Nepal and ICIMOD was elected from the Asia-pacific to the steering committee for four year. ICIMOD focuses its activities to the eight member countries within Hindu Kush Region. Nepal being a mountainous country has to play a critical role at the regional and international level on the issue of Sustainable Mountain Development. In Nepal many talk about the issues of mountain but in a diverted or scattered way within the country and not a single authority has been responsible to take these up seriously.

(Ghimire is a Joint Secretary in the NPCS and focal person of UNDESA and elected representative to the Mountain Partnership from Asia-pacific.)

Tourism Is Showing Continued Growth

ADITYA BARAL

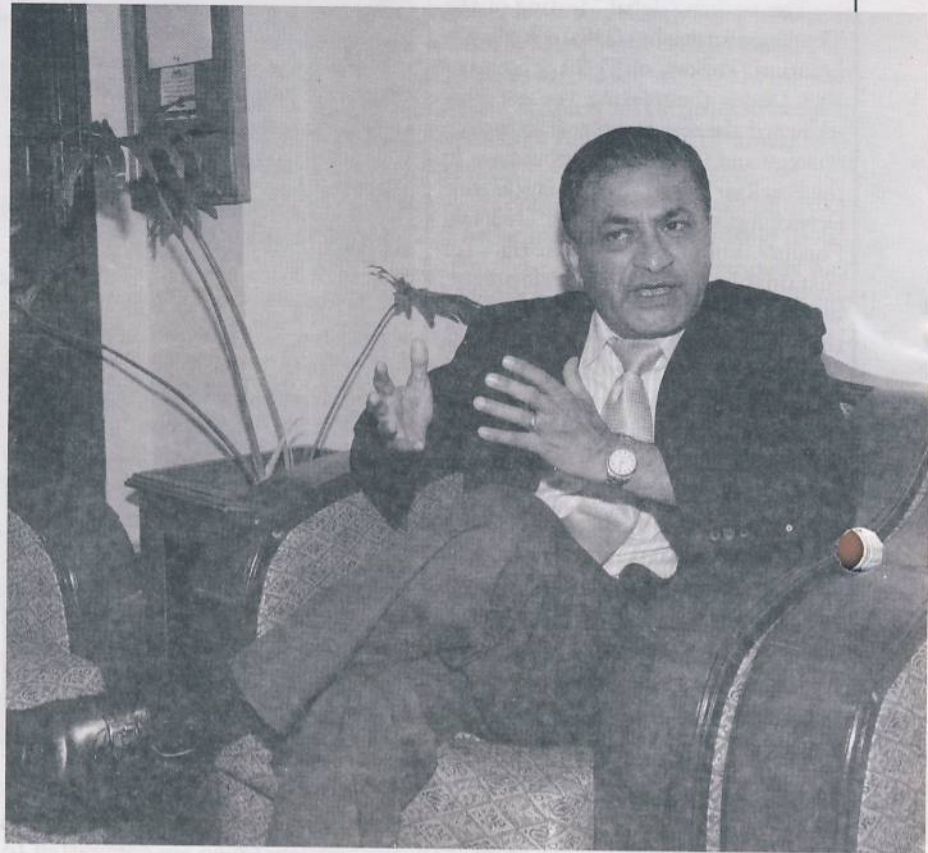
Having worked in the tourism sector for a long time, ADITYA BARAL, director of Public Relations and Publicity and spokesperson at the Nepal Tourism Board, has many insights to share about the country's tourism prospects. Baral spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues of the sector in Nepal.

In the context of economic diplomacy, how do you place Nepal's tourism sector?

Well, after the slowdown apparent in the many productive sectors of our exportable economy like Carpet, Pashmina, handicrafts etc., Tourism, by virtue of its resilience, is showing continued growth and unleashing many prospects for the players involved in it. With the astounding topography, rich culture, heritage and people's sustainable hospitality towards treating the guests, tourism has remained a synonym for Nepal's image abroad. As a major forex earner, high employment awarding smokeless industry, with very high trickle down benefits to the deprived sectors, this industry is of paramount importance for the healthy growth of the nation. The industry has grown in leaps and bounds by the policy intervention of the government and heavy investment from the private sector. Thus, tourism is acknowledged as an integral part of our economy and must be promoted through all the means whether as part of an economic diplomacy or ritual diplomacy.

Have we been doing enough through our diplomatic missions abroad for the promotion of tourism?

I guess the word "enough" has, many of the times, proven non-pragmatic in an underdeveloped economy like ours, as well at this juncture. Resources are always scarce and it becomes scarcer at times of allocation. Moreover, the definition of "Tourism" is turning vague and scope-



less. So, priorities differ, so are the resources. Anyway, tourism is becoming a common trade of all, our embassies abroad are doing one or the other event and program to promote tourism, but I can only say at this juncture that due to the dearth of synchronization in streamlining our efforts, the results are going haywire.

At a time when tourist arrivals are declining recently, how do you look at this trend?

Let me correct it by saying rather fluctuating, not declining. Fluctuating will be the appropriate term to interpret the statistics. Travel is a variable term. Tourism is dissimilar to ferrying commodities hence, humans view destinations from their own in built (psychological) perspective. In this course of evaluation, humans pay attention to internal and external dynamics like, season, war, elections, festivals, timing etc. So, all these

factors should be conducive to reach to the conclusions prior to selecting imminent travel destinations. Still, with all these images on the side, people have acknowledged Nepal's pristine beauty and natural endowments as alluring elements, thus though the numbers have slightly declined from some markets, they are going to recoup with our concerted efforts in the upcoming months or years in totality.

What are the new policies of Nepal Tourism Board for the coming years?

The Nepal Tourism Board has closely viewed all imminent intervening elements prior to planning this year's activity, hence decided to continue at regional and traditional markets in collaboration with the private and government stakeholders. I must mention here that we do not have specific national campaigns (like

Nepal Tourism year 2011) as such. However, we will run our campaigns under the aegis of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Mt. Everest. We are also endeavoring to open up our new offices in India and China within this year, if resources and policy allow. Besides running up with our rituals are perennial phenomena that NTB does.

How do you look at the decline in the number of Indian tourists in Nepal?

In order to sustain the number of Indian visitors, we are opening up our own office in appropriate city (after market feasibility study) with massive air connectivity. And, we will leave no stone unturned to collaborate with big houses—both private and public—to intensify our efforts. However, the bottom-line would be to maximize B2B forums for transformation of our earlier doctrine—from promotion to SALES now.

What efforts is NTB making now to stop the further decline?

NTB is a promotional body, so concentrating on its regular promotional initiatives is an ongoing effort, on automatic form. However, focusing specifically on certain markets or events depends upon the programs it receives through industry players/stakeholders in view of generating traffic and value. We don't do business but we wish business to happen through the platforms that we have created. So collaboration efforts with airlines, corporate houses and creating forums for generating business are the avenues that NTB puts its thrust on.

How do you see the state airlines in Nepal? As Turkish Airlines has started its flight to Nepal, what impact will it have in the overall tourist arrivals?

The state's national carrier is trying to recoup its image with supplementary fleets which might take some time, so other country's airlines are taking the opportunities accruing in our sky. In this connection, the Turkish airlines will bridge the gap existing now to connect Europe and

America. Its wide network would provide ample leeway to the prospective travelers and thus, help increase traffic to and from Nepal. Turkey's geographical location, as a gateway to Europe would be a boon, subject to its competitiveness in service and offers.

As this is going to be the elections year, don't you think it will have an impact on the tourist arrivals?

Tourism is a trade which prefers to thrive during tranquility. Therefore, there would be certain calmness in travel but Nepal has undergone many turbulences and elections in the past so, irrespective of all these situations, the people of Nepal and businessmen here have exemplified their maturity in imparting confidence and proved their credibility during the times of crisis so, die hard or repeat travelers wishing to visit here will again visit anticipating these things keep on happening here. And, please note that repeat visitor's stake in total tourism

is almost 40% and most of them are influenced by the promotion by word of mouth.

Nepal has been traditionally relying on same products. Don't you think that the time has come to go with new products in international market?

I do agree but whose job is it to create new products or services? The government only intervenes through policy changes and private sectors do or create a business. So, creation or innovation should come from private business players. That does not mean that Government has no role but it should provide security, energy, exemptions, building necessary supporting infrastructure etc. And private sector should apply its discretion, astuteness and acumen by repackaging or reinventing the products. Because, they make profit government only expects welfare through taxes raised. So, there is a need of collaboration to create a win-win situation from all sectors including NTB.

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PRISM

Work Is Never Waste

The Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management Sector (PRISM) has shown a way to enhance the prestige of waste workers by ending the centuries old practice of hatred and discrimination

By A CORESSPONDENT

Although they do the most important, but dangerous, work of cleaning the city while collecting and managing the solid waste, the informal waste workers are the most hated people in the valley. Let alone other people, even the stray dogs don't like them for doing what they do daily.

For centuries, these waste workers have been treated as untouchables despite their role in cleaning the garbage, which is regarded as the worst form of work. Despite change in the legal and other provisions, people are yet to accept it and respect these workers. Along with social and cultural stigma attached to the waste workers, the level of poverty is also responsible for this. With the introduction of a new system, the formal waste workers have got better options.

The situation of informal waste workers has remained bleak. This is where the intervention of Practical Action matters. Thanks to the implementation of PRISM Project (Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management Sector) by Practical Action, the state of these people has begun to change for the better.

At a time when the government is talking about the need to make the Kathmandu valley healthy and clean,

informal waste workers, the main pillars of keeping the city clean, have just found some respite through the program launched under PRISM project.

State of Informal waste workers

"People often shout at us when we collect their waste, which is very humiliating," said Sakhiya Khatun. "After the implementation of the PRISM project, the situation has changed."

It is estimated that there are between 10,000 and 15,000 waste pickers in the valley. They lead a life of humiliation and oppression in the absence of any social protection measures that would make their work more dignified.

After the implementation of the project, the income of waste workers has increased and the negative stigma attached to the profession decreased, improving their working conditions and helping them benefit from social protection schemes.

The Practical Action has been implementing the project with its local partner, the Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD). Project associates are Solid Waste Management and Resource Management Centre (SWMRMC), UN-Habitat Water for Asian Cities Program Nepal, and Nepal Re-use and

Recyclable Goods Entrepreneurs Association (NRRGEA).

In one instance, these people collected garbage and dumped it somewhere with a view to recycle it later, causing pollution at the neighborhood. The growing pollution forced the locals to help the rag pickers launch a One Day Cleaning Campaign.

"Nobody wants us because of our job. We bring in the recyclable waste matters here. As this provides our livelihood, how could we leave this profession?" questioned Ranjita Devi Poddar, an informal waste worker living at Boudha Fulbari settlement.

Project manager for the PRISM, Srijana Devkota, said "Waste picking should be equally recognized as honorable job in the society and PRISM will be working to help rag pickers to achieve the necessary respect for what they have been doing."

Urban waste pickers are among the poorest people in Kathmandu valley. Most live in squatter settlements along the riverbanks. They are exposed to many health risks through unprotected handling of waste materials, and due to their poor living conditions. The waste picking profession is despised by the rest of the society, despite its contribution to removing and recycling large quantities of waste. Waste workers are often exploited socially and economically. They find it hard to fight this exploitation due to a range of factors, including their lack of bargaining power, illiteracy, lack of market information, and lack of skill and technology which could help them add value to the materials they collect and recycle.

Working in 5 municipalities of Kathmandu valley, the project has the overall objective of improving the living conditions of informal workers in the solid waste management sector. It will also improve waste services for residents and protect workers' interests. The specific objective is to enhance the social protection of informal sector waste workers and vulnerable groups dependent on waste for their livelihoods. ■

SACOSAN-V

Call For Action

Although the South Asian countries have made a lot of progress in many areas, the coverage of sanitation is yet to be universal. At a time when these countries have been making efforts to increase sanitation coverage, the fifth South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN-V) (22-24 October) has concluded with a call on the concerned governments to act and increase sanitation coverage

By KESHAB POUDEL

When I visited the Bhaktapur city in the mid-1980s, it was the dirtiest of cities in valley. It was difficult to walk because of the dirt, human waste and other garbage lying here and there. That's how a post reads on a social network.

Fast forward 30 years: Not only the city, Bhaktapur area as a whole has been declared Open Defecation Free by president Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, writes Ashutosh Tiwari on his Facebook wall.

This is the change Nepal has achieved in the sanitation sector. Although Ashutosh wrote his impression comparing the state of sanitation of the district in the last 30 years, others too have similar impressions about Bhaktapur.

Although Nepal is yet to have one hundred percent coverage in sanitation, the progress made by Nepal is impressive. When President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav was inaugurating the fifth South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN-V) with the presence of national, regional and international experts and local people, there was a sense of satisfaction in the face of people living in Bhaktapur.

During the opening, Bhaktapur district was declared as the 10th Open Defecation Free (ODF) district. The opening was attended by government delegates, Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives, donor organizations and media groups from

eight South Asian Countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"I am proud to say that people of Bhaktapur glorified the nation. Of course, urban sanitation is a big challenge. Being a medical doctor, I know the importance of sanitation. Sanitation movement will help us to combat water borne diseases," said president Dr. Yadav. Addressing the inaugural program, president Dr. Yadav said: "Constitution of Nepal has guaranteed the right to live in a safer environment to its citizens and sanitation journey in Nepal is one of the steps to ensuring rights given by constitution. Sanitation programs in Nepal were going forward as a movement. Efforts done by Bhaktapur District declaring the District ODF is an example of glory for the nation. Investment on sanitation is an important step to save lives of children."

As the host to regional conference SACOSAN-V, Nepal has made a great stride in sanitation. "The national census of 2011 showed the sanitation coverage was 62 percent but we have reached approximately 75 percent coverage now," said minister for Urban Development Chhabi Raj Panta. "We have been receiving an all out support from Civil Society organizations and Nepal's development partners to achieve the goal to provide sanitation

to all."

Minister Pant said "Nepal has achieved remarkable success on improving sanitation."

Similarly, Biddhyadhar Mallik, Minister for Federal State and Local Development, Nepal said, "Local bodies in Nepal will continue to play a vital role to promote sanitation in Nepal, particularly on social mobilization part."

Nepal has made a lot of progress. According to Ministry of Urban Development, as of September 2013, 1030 VDCs out of the total 3915, along with 12 out of 58 Municipalities and nine of 75 districts have been declared as Open Defecation Free (ODF).

"As South Asian countries are facing similar challenges, SACOSAN conference will help to identify common problems and find the way to address it," said Kishor Thapa, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development. "With the support from Nepal's development partners and civil society organizations, Nepal has made many gains in sanitation in the last few years and we are proud to share our own achievements."

In the presence of a high level delegation from South Asia and civil society leaders and local people Abadh Kishore Mishra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, said that the government's plan is to declare Nepal as a country of open defecation free by 2020.

On behalf of Civil Society Organization Ms Lajana Manandhar said, "Celebration of ODF is a result of community's continuous effort that inspired people advocating for better sanitation."

SACOSAN-V

Although South Asian countries have made enormous progress in the sanitation, they are still lagging behind others. Over 40 percent population in the region still relies on open defecation. Government officials and civil society leaders accepted the fact that just achieving high economic growth does not necessarily help to increase sanitation coverage.

"Despite high level political commitments and growing investments, South Asia is in a huge sanitation crisis. Millions of children are dying due to diarrhoea and other water borne diseases. It is unfortunate that sanitation progress often does not benefit the poorest. Investment in sanitation is not commensurate with the results on grounds, particularly due to lack of accountability," said Ramisetty Murali, regional convener of the Fresh Water Action Network South Asia.

The three day conference discussed and debated various strategies, ways and policies formulated by all eight member states to increase the coverage of sanitation. Each country presented its country paper and development partners and civil society organizations got involved in the conference through various side events.

"SACOSAN-V is a big milestone and exciting because the eight countries cross learned, shared and tracked their progress," said Tanya Khan, National coordinator of the WSSCC Pakistan. "The venue of inauguration was important as the place has been declared ODF on the same day."

Raja Hasan Abbas, Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan said, "SACOSAN is a knowledge sharing platform. Collective effort is key to achieve complete success."

Side Events

As the fifth South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN V, 22-24 October 2013) kicked off in Kathmandu, Nepal, leading civil society groups called on their governments to recognize the urgency of the South Asian sanitation crisis and set robust plans to achieve



Participants at inaugural ceremony

universal access to improved sanitation toilets and ending open defecation by 2020.

Along with official programs, Practical Action South Asian Regional Office, WaterAid Nepal, IDE Bangladesh and UNICEF ROSA, Society for Public Health, WHO, WSSCC and SWA, Fresh Water Action Network South Asia also organize side events in various issues related to sanitation in South Asia. There was a high level participation also from WaterAid, WSSCC and Bill Gates Foundation. They expressed their commitment to actively support South Asian governments to intensify efforts for ending the sanitation crisis in the region.

Chris Williams, the Executive Director of the only United Nations organ specifically working on sanitation, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), using the CLTS approach, said the regions need to take more drastic steps to increase the coverage. The WSSCC's Global Sanitation Fund has helped nearly 1 million people in South Asia gain improved sanitation in the last several years. "We continue to work for the betterment of the region."

Four hundred delegates and speakers, including renowned experts and practitioners from the eight SAARC countries attended the ministerial

conference where civil society representatives and community leaders shared the views of thousands of people living with the reality of unsafe sanitation and calling governments to deliver on commitments made during SACOSAN IV in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2011.

They called for programs in line with the spirit of the UN General Assembly resolution and SACOSAN IV commitments, to recognize access to sanitation as a legally enforceable right.

They urged South Asian governments to establish robust plans with adequate public funding to achieve universal access to improved toilets facilities and end open defecation by 2020.

The civil society leaders stressed that these time bound plans must be accompanied by comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans; a sub-plan approach should be adopted by respective governments to ensure access to improved toilets for the poor and marginalized communities. The civil society leaders also called on service providers to ensure toilets are accessible to everyone including people living with disabilities.

All school infrastructure development plans and designs, budgets for operation and maintenance, reporting and monitoring systems should integrate uneven progress on previous SACOSAN commitments. Despite high level commitments made

during SACOSAN IV, there are still a billion people living without access to adequate toilets in South Asia.

Progress on sanitation is not reaching the poorest - Not only are current rates of progress on sanitation and hygiene too low in South Asia, much of the progress is not reaching the poorest. The current set of MDGs focus on average progress measured at country and global levels. These averages hide different inequalities, such as a rural - urban divide, exclusion of people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

Holistic plans are needed to tackle increasing urbanization - Each country is facing the challenge of increasing urbanization and must develop integrated plans that include the necessary policies, resourcing, technology and education. Here again, governments must ensure that these plans cater to the needs of the poorest and most marginalized. In addition, these plans must focus on sustainable management of human excreta and solid waste.

FAN South Asia Convener Ramisetty Murali said, "It is high time that the governments of South Asia make an honest effort to implement past SACOSAN commitments to save the lives of millions of children dying from sanitation and hygiene related diseases and to improve the quality of life and livelihoods of the poor and most marginalized."

According to SACOSAN-V Secretariat, eight nations from South Asia Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bangladesh took part in the conference.

Starting in Bangladesh in 2003, SACOSAN is held every two years on a rotational basis in one of the South Asian countries. As a common platform for participating nations to discuss problems and explore solutions to achieve complete sanitation status, this conference is expected to accelerate the momentum of sanitation in this region.

Joint Secretary and Spokesperson of the MoUD Suresh Prakash Acharya described the SACOSAN-V a grand success.

Participants concentrated their efforts to discuss sanitation issues and ways to materialize sanitation for all: all for sanitation. Gleaning from what they said, there is still a long way to go for all the people in the region to get a chance to live a clean and hygienic life with a slogan for sanitation for all. ■



Dealing With Predators At Airport

By LALA NARA DADCI

It is said that tourists come to Nepal for its mountains and that they come back for its people. If they come through the Tribhuvan International Airport, the saying may not hold true for all.

"It was so distressing when I arrived at the airport. Many people were there, offering to carry my suitcase or take me to their taxi. One eventually took my suitcase without my telling him to do so, and then ordered me to give him the money," Jeanne, a French volunteer, says.

When arriving at the Tribhuvan airport, you better have a big backpack than several suitcases and handbags to drag, or you will be the first prey to be hunted. People will gather all around you. You will be gazed, observed, continuously asked. Not close enough to your luggage? Predators will take it without asking. Not confident enough about who comes to pick you up? They will let you believe they are part of your reception committee. Predators are clever when they try to get their prey. They can lure you without you noticing it, waiting with and following the person who welcomes you.

Foreigners are harassed. Fine. At least they merely need to have the confidence to say no, or to give whatever small foreign coin or Nepalese banknote they got. But this person who truly waits for you, this Nepalese among Nepalese, he will certainly have to fight if he makes any comment by trying to calm down predators.

"A foreigner is a guest in Nepal. When you commit an act of aggression against a foreigner, it cannot be but properly punished. Between Nepalese we are able to argue and resolve a dispute. A foreign tourist is not," Dipesh



Tribhuvan International Airport

explains.

Then, the trip will go on with its excitement and adventures, amazing meetings and surprises. You will enjoy every moment of your stay, the unexpected even more than the long-term scheduled ones.

Unfortunately there it is. The upcoming departure is getting closer in time. You pack your bag, and feel the poignant nostalgia involved by any departure, anywhere, at any time of life. This is over, but you keep in mind the entire journey as a precious treasure.

You arrive at the airport again. Yet, it is different this time. Only one or two people ask you for carrying your luggage. You are about to proceed into the "International departures" area when you lift the head to glance at Nepal a last time. You look on the right, and see a crowd ready to jump on new tourists from far away. This time, you are almost jealous to have so little attention.

(Lala is an intern from France.)

NRN CONFERENCE

For Dual Citizenship

International Conference of Non-Resident Nepali Association Concludes

By A CORRESPONDENT

The sixth world conference of Non-Resident Nepalese Association (NRNA) has just concluded in Kathmandu.

President Ram Baran Yadav, who inaugurated the conference on October 21, urged the non-resident Nepalese assembled at the Birendra International Convention Centre (BICC) to attend to their motherland by mobilising their economic, commercial, and intellectual capital for the nation's development.

This time again, the NRN community pressed hard the government and public institutions to listen to their demands for dual citizenship. Shesh Ghale, who is the newly elected head of the organization, and one of the richest Nepali-born Australians with a personal fortune of \$265 million, has taken up the issue with the President of Nepal and the members of the government immediately upon his election to the coveted position.

The Constitution and Nepalese laws do not permit anybody dual or multiple citizenships; no one can be a citizen of another country and still be recognized as Nepalese citizen. Because of this, there are many disadvantages non-resident community face in the country they work. But the government in Nepal does not seem to be very sympathetic to this demand.

Ganesh Dutta Bhatta, a law professor at Tribhuvan University, described it as "a very sensitive issue" for a country, which has been surrounded by very populated, huge neighbouring countries.

"The open border with India, and the rate in which Nepal's demography is being changed due to new arrivals from there, is already alarming. They all end up being Nepalese citizens. It has overcrowded our country. The ethnic and social composition of the country has been affected. The business sector of the country had gone into the hand of people who have Nepalese citizenships, but little Nepalese heart. They have been decisive in the political process as well. A dual citizenship entitlement in Nepal could be yet another ploy to weaken our vital national interests," said Bhatta.

Constitutional expert, Dr Bipin Adhikari, pointed out, "The issue of dual citizenship is a very complicated issue. At

times, persons may have dual citizenship by automatic operation of different laws rather than by choice. For example, a child born in a foreign country to Nepalese parents may be both a Nepalese citizen and a citizen of the country of birth. But the child must make a choice as soon as s/he attains the age of majority. However, as a rule of the Constitution, Nepal does

not recognize the concept of dual citizenship."

Many countries and regions in the world admit and respect dual citizenship, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia. Most countries do not think that citizens should lose the citizenships of their homeland if they succeed in gaining another country's nationality.

However, like Nepal, dual citizenships are not allowed in Denmark, Indonesia, Poland, Japan, Singapore, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Romania, Thailand, and many other countries. Even the U.S. Government recognizes that dual citizenship exists in some form but does not encourage it as a matter of policy because of the problems it may cause.

I Will Bring Investment Plan

SHESH GHALE

Shesh Ghale, an Australia-based Non-Resident Nepali, was elected the third president of Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA). Ghale defeated his nearest rival Tenzi Sherpa and spoke to the media people after his victory.

There is a growing rumor that you received the backing of political parties in your election, how do you look at the results?

First of all, I want to make it clear that I have not been branded as being with a particular political party. As a president of NRNA, I will need the support from all political parties. I want to make you clear that the election results have nothing to do with politics.

What is reason behind your victory then?

I travelled 24-25 countries and met non-resident Nepalis there. I tried to understand their problems and difficulties. After meeting many NRNs, my level of confidence had gone up. I want to give the victory of my credit to the NRNs who voted me.

What will be your priority after the election?

My first priority will be preparing an action plan based on my commitments in my election manifesto. The plan will have short-term, mid-term and long-term plans to bring investment in Nepal in potential areas. An individual can hardly make any difference. I cannot do anything without a team. I am considering visiting many countries to seek the advice.

Do you have any plan to open office in Nepal?

After formal registration in Nepal, we now need our office here. As a legal entity, it will be easier for us now to have our own building and our own office. As NRNA is now formally registered, it will help us to enhance financial activities.

How about the possibility to bring more investment in Nepal?

As NRN has already invested Rs 30 billion in Nepal in the last 10 years, we want to make more investment in the coming days. Along with the capital investment, NRN can also help Nepal through the knowledge and skill transfer.

It is accused that NRNs spent their time just talking and talking. What plan do you have to change the prevailing attitude in Nepal?

To attract foreign investment from any side, what is needed is investment-friendly policies and environment. It is unfortunate that there are still many hurdles in Nepal for investors. If Nepal needs foreign investment, it needs to make all the acts, policies and regulations investment friendly. Once again my efforts will be to persuade the concerned authorities to change the present legal and policy hurdles.



Adhikari added, "Nepal's both neighbours, India and China, do not recognize dual citizenship. The China nationality law holds that the country will not admit the dual nationality of a Chinese citizen. It declares that as soon as Chinese take foreign citizenships, they will automatically lose their Chinese citizenship. It has introduced Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) and Person of Indian Origin (PIO) programs, which offer card holders some travel and residency privileges. But it is not the same thing as dual citizenship."

In his opinion, even for those countries which allow dual citizenships, there are strings attached to the offer. Australia and Egypt do not allow dual citizens to contest parliamentary elections. The naturalized citizens in the US cannot run for the offices of President or Vice President. Pakistan allows dual citizenship, but only with 16 specified countries. Countries like Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Spain either restrict or forbid dual citizenship.

Advocate Sombhojen Limbu made another point: "The 2010 constitution of Kenya has recognized dual citizenship, as a recognition of non-resident Kenyans' role in many aspects of national importance, including contributing to economic development, transmitting remittances, invaluable skills, and more."

"This is also the time for the NRNs to show that they care about the country and have, therefore, invested profusely in key sectors of Nepal's economy, like agriculture, hydro-power development and tourism," added Limbu. Bishweshwar Prasad Bhandari, another senior lawyer, said, "There is no need to reach any hasty conclusions. There are some good reasons why the concept of dual nationality is being used by many countries. Similarly, there are equally good reasons why this is not being accepted."

"In each case, most of the issues involved are social, economical, political, and security related. Nepal must think twice and make appropriate decision. After all, what we are talking about is the protection of our vital national interests. The protection to be offered to our 'non-residents' comes next. It is not an easy decision," remarked Bhandari.

A couple of political parties, including the terai-based Sadbhawana Party of Nepal, have already sought dual citizenship for NRNs in its election manifesto released recently. But the government has not studied these intricate issues yet. ■

THIRD NCELL LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Reading Revival

The Bookworm Foundation has announced the third edition of the Ncell Nepal Literature Festival, 2013

By A CORRESPONDENT

Ncell is not just the largest telecom company of Nepal. Under its corporate social responsibility, it is proving to be a major promoter of Nepali literature.

With support from Ncell, The Bookworm Foundation is organizing the third edition of the Ncell Nepal Literature Festival 2013 between 25 and 28 October, 2013 (that is, 8 Kartik-II Kartik, 2070) in the premises of the Nepal Academy at Kamaladi, Kathmandu.

As the sole sponsor of the Festival, Ncell has reaffirmed its commitment to the slogan 'Here for Nepal' by continuing its financial support towards the promotion of Nepali literature.

Director of Corporate Communications of Ncell Sanju Koirala says, "We believe in the saying that without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of change, windows on the world and lighthouses in the sea of time. They are companions, teachers, magicians and bankers of the treasures of the mind. Books are humanity in print. Therefore we, at Ncell, have continued our support to the Festival from its start."

The organizer of the Festival, The Bookworm Foundation is a collective of people with passion for books and writing. The collective has been conducting readings, talk programs and writing workshops. The Foundation hopes that by bringing writers and readers together in one forum for literary conversations, the Festival will help broaden the scope and quality of Nepali literature.

The Festival will bring together 8

international writers such as Shobhna De, Ravinder Singh, Prajwal Parajuly, Prakash Iyer, Anni Zaidi and Abhay K. from India, Ned Beaman from UK and Farah Ghuznavi from Bangladesh and over 90 Nepali writers and professionals.

These include Abhi Subedi, Akhilesh Upadhyay, Sudheer Sharma, Sharada Sharma, Vijay K. Panday, Anil Shah, Anil Chitrakar, Ramesh Kharel, Nayan Raj Pandey, Hari

Bansha Acharya, Madan Krishna Shrestha, Rajesh Hamal, Yubaraj Ghimire and Sarshwoti Pratikshya, and Shakuntala Joshi, to name a few.

The inaugural edition of the Festival in 2011 was well-received by the audience and writers with an attendance of over 5,000 strong audience. International writers like Mark Tully, Indra Bahadur Rai and Ira Trivedi graced the occasion, in addition to over 60 eminent Nepali writers including Sarubhakta, Sharada Sharma, Narayan wagle, Usha Sherchan, Abhi Subedi, Dhruva Chandra Gautam and Jagadish Ghimire. The inaugural edition spread over 25 sessions. The second edition of the festival in 2012 turned out to be bigger and better with over 15000 people and more than 90 writers participating in it for 4 days.

The President of the Foundation Ajit Baral, says, "The Ncell Nepal Literature Festival is helping expand the already expanding Nepali book market by generating heightened interest in reading and writing. The Festival will be at the vanguard of a renaissance in Nepali literature." ■





Misleading Publicity Surrounding Kosi Treaty (II)

-By DR. AB THAPA

In course of first official visit of our then Prime-minister G.P. Koirala to India an agreement was signed to conduct jointly detailed feasibility study of the Kosi High Dam Project. This type of isolated study of the Kosi dam project could be detrimental to the interest of our country since Sun-kosi and Kosi navigation projects are extremely important projects directly tied up with the Kosi Dam Project. I raised this issue within the Ministry of Water Resources displeasing many of my colleagues, who regarded that an agreement already signed between two prime-ministers should not be questioned. But I did not give in.

I prepared based on my own personal experience a new plan for the Kosi river development that could be put to the Indo-Nepal joint meeting.

Thus flood control would be the most important benefit to accrue from large storage projects to be built in the Kosi basin.

The proposed plan has been presented in two reports (Ref-1, Ref-2). Those reports had been circulated to various concerned agencies. Similarly important findings of those reports have been published in several local newspapers and magazines. The conclusions of the reports can be roughly presented under four headings.

Flood Control

At present Kosi river channel bed is well above the surrounding grounds due to continued siltation. The embankment have already outlived their useful life. We have already witnessed enormous loss of life and property in 2008 breach of Kosi embankment when the flood discharge was only about 1 ½ lack cusecs, where-as flood discharge of almost nine lacks cusecs have already been measured twice within the last fifty years. Thus flood control would be the most important benefit to accrue from large storage projects to be built in the Kosi basin. However, until the 1997 Indo- Nepal joint meeting Indian Government had been maintaining the view communicated to our government through official correspondence that Kosi flood problems have already been

solved forever after the completion of the construction of the Kosi embankments. It is absolutely necessary to implement large storage dam projects within the Kosi basin to save the life and property of millions living particularly in North Bihar and also in some parts of the Sunsari district of Nepal.

Sun-Kosi High Dam First

Simple Sun-Kosi diversion project (without high dam) and the proposed Kosi dam project are mutually exclusive of one another. Similarly, the Sun-Kosi high dam project and the Kosi high dam project would also be mutually exclusive of one another if the Kosi dam is built first. Thus the Sun-Kosi dam project would have to be implemented FIRST.

Optimum height of the Kosi dam would be over 335 m. It would be the highest dam in the world. India has proposed a dam height of 269 m. In either case the site of the Sun-Kosi dam would be submerged if the Kosi dam is built first. Thus the detailed study of the Sun-Kosi project should also be immediately started to complete the construction of the Sun-Kosi dam project before starting the construction of the Kosi dam.

Sun-Kosi Dam Site

The site of the Sun-Kosi storage dam to be built for diverting this river onto Terai plain had been identified based on several past studies. It is located just downstream of the confluence of the Sun-Kosi and Dudh-Kosi rivers. The place is called KURULE.

Kosi Canal Navigation

The concept of Kosi navigation canal linking Nepal with the seaport is entirely mine. Nepal as well as Bihar could greatly benefit from the proposed navigation canal.

Conclusion of 1997 Indo-Nepal Joint Meeting

As head of Nepal team I was easily able to convince the Indian delegates our view points on Kosi development. The Indo-Nepal joint meeting completely endorsed our proposal as described in my two reports. However, nobody was expecting that Indo-Nepal joint meeting could so easily reach an agreement about the thorny Kosi river

issue. People had good reason to suspect that Nepal's interest might have been compromised. Some political parties even denounced the agreement. Kosi agreement was front-page news. Some papers even blamed me that I had wrongly signed the Kosi study agreement.

Gradually people started to realize that the Kosi study agreement was in conformity to our country's long term development plan. I was helped by MITRAKUNJ to organize a meeting in Russian Cultural Centre attended by relevant experts, politicians, media persons distinguished in the field of water resources. I explained in the meeting the Kosi problems. Those attending the meeting realized the significance of the Kosi study agreement. The following day all papers covered positively Kosi news.

Shocking New Developments

It is quite shocking that our own government is now trying to reduce significantly the flow of the Sun-Kosi river presently available at Kurule site for irrigation in Terai by diverting the Dudh-Kosi river further downstream away from the Sun-Kosi diversion intake. In such case our Terai people would be experiencing shortage of water supply for irrigation even after the completion of the Sun-Kosi project particularly in later years because the limited storage volume of the Sun-Kosi reservoir could be expected to be filled up relatively quickly.

It is also rumoured that our government is going to abandon the Kurule site in order to build a diversion dam further upstream at a new site perhaps out of the reach of Kosi reservoir submergence area even though such change would result to significant reduction of dry season flow available for irrigation in Terai. The sole purpose of such change would be to limit the availability of Sun-Kosi water in our Terai and also to pave the way to implement first the Kosi High Dam Project that would indefinitely delay the construction of the Sun-Kosi project.

REFERENCE - (1) Planning Kosi High Dam Project, Thapa AB 1993; (2) Kosi Canal Waterway, Thapa AB 1993

BOOK

On Social Democracy

At a time when there is an upsurge of socialist parties in Nepal, the book discusses why Nepal needs a social democracy

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the growing economic disparity and rise of extreme poverty, the Nepali people are gradually tilting to socialist ideologies, looking at this as an alternative to the neo-liberal political thought. In the last two decades, Nepal has followed the liberal economic policy that tended to give almost everything to the private sector.

The government cut its funding in education, health and other social sectors. This increased the disparities among the people living in various parts of the country. Although the Nepali Congress preached a social democratic ideology, it tilted its policy towards neo-liberalism. Thus, the people moved to communist parties as an alternative.

At a time when the Nepali society is attracted towards a socialist or welfare concept, the book titled *Why Social Democracy in Nepal* assumes a greater significance. A compilation of papers written by Nepal's renowned scholars Chaitnya Mishra, Meena Acharya, Dev Raj Dahal, Chandra Dev Bhatta, Madhuri Singh and Meena Poudel, this is the first of its kind scholarly book discussing the current political trend.

Social democracy is more propitious than liberal or neo-liberal ones for gender justice, for a number of reasons. First, social democracy seeks social justice at ecological, social, gender and inter-generational level and supports reciprocity across various spaces, writes Dev Raj Dahal in his article *Social Security in Social Democracy: Gender Perspective*. "The welfare objectives such as

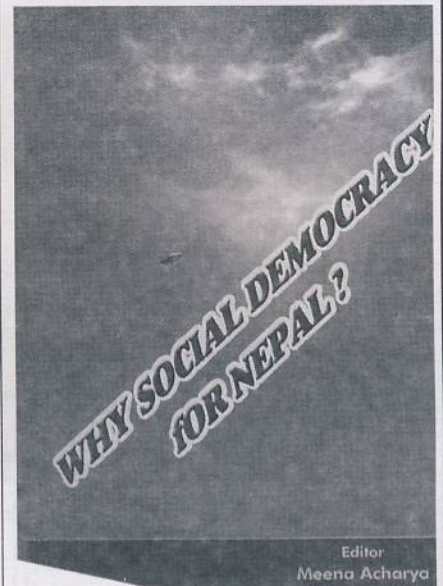
economic growth, full-employment and social development have become the responsibility of the elected government through it can engage the private sector, civil society and international community in achieving them."

Professor Chaitnya Mishra argues, "In the world-historical context that Nepal is currently located in, the programs of 'Socialism,' 'New Democracy', 'worker led capitalism' (which apparently implies state capitalism) etc are rhetorical devices and political programs which are based on an invalid and, therefore, dangerous miscomprehension of history. Nepal will not benefit from adopting a political-economic system which is radically different from that of its two neighbors."

Along with other authors, Dr. Meena Acharya discusses the issue of women under the political system. She analyzes the role of women in Nepali politics and political process. In his paper, Chandra Dev Bhatta looks at *Social Security Basis for the Welfare State: Challenges and Opportunities for Nepal*.

"There is a long history of existence of social security mechanisms in Nepal. Evidences clearly show that Hindu-Buddhist society used to have a state based on the welfare principles. There is a close nexus between welfare state and social security regime. When Nepal entered into the democratic phase in 1990, it adopted policies which in principle contradicted democratic values and principles. Liberalization of economy in 1990 pursued under the external advice harmed both the Nepali state and society massively, writes Bhatta.

Although there are many books on



Why Social Democracy For Nepal?

Editor Meena Acharya
Published by Tanka Prasad Acharya Memorial Foundation and Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung, Nepal
Pages: 126
Price: Undisclosed

neo-liberal democratic order and its significance in Nepal's context, this is the first book which discusses the alternative perspectives or relevance of social democracy for Nepal. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Weeping and Wailing



By HEMANG DIXIT

About forty years ago, a Bangladeshi diplomat, newly posted in Nepal said to me, 'Kathmandu is a city of walls'. My thoughts went immediately to Late Balakrishna Sama, who after the ushering in of Democracy in Nepal, perhaps wanted to bring about changes in this country of ours. To set about an example he reduced his 'Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana' to just 'Sama' and cut down the size of his compound wall by half

As I recollect these words, my thoughts go to the Great Wall of China, said to have been constructed to prevent invaders from ravaging the country. Later in time came the walls of Jericho, built with the guidance of God, by Joshua for the liberated Jews from Egypt to make their new homes there. Next come the European City states surrounded by well-fortified walls to protect the inhabitants within.

Prior to the development of gun powder it was usual to hurl big boulders at the enemy, either soldiers or brigands, and thus prevent them from climbing up the ramparts. We in Nepal, built our habitations mainly at the top of hills e.g. Nagarkot, Sarankot, Nuwakot so that when invaders tried to climb up the hill, the people at the top could tumble big boulders or even hot water or oil from the top to thwart the invaders.

to get into the USA this way were recently caught. A few years ago, India was considering putting up a well along its border with Bangladesh. It already has a fortified presence between Pakistan and itself as well as with China regarding the Askai Chin area.

We too have a natural Northern border with China. Movement, though not unrestricted is controlled. Many are advocating similar border stringency along the South too. Is it justified? Will it not be detrimental is the question we have to ask ourselves?

Another wall of world importance is of course the one surrounding the old city of Jerusalem, said to have been founded by King David. Four different communities viz. Armenians, Christians, Jews and Muslims live there in an atmosphere which varies in emotional intensity from time to time. It is here that the Jews, who did not recognise Christ as the Messiah the first time round are weeping and wailing, waiting for him to return.

We in Nepal are in a similar predicament. Democracy came our way in 1950 and we were promised a new constitution by King Tribhuvan. King Mahendra thought otherwise and the Panchayat constitution was brought in with the aid of the British Sir Ivor Jennings. Following Jana

Andolan I t h e constitution of 1990, said to be the best the world was promulgated, to be replaced by

the interim constitution of 2007.

Somehow the 601 stalwarts who we chose in 2007 did disappearing acts. The king is gone, the Hindu Rastra is gone and they themselves

have fallen by the wayside. The national election in November is becoming a reality. Are we going to elect these same old leaders or see many new, young and energetic leaders? There is no way the women are going to be one third of the set up. Another reason for lack of new faces is that we have not had local elections for eleven years i.e. not since 2002. Having a referendum on the many issues plaguing is not going to happen soon.

What I am now proposing is a gathering at what used to be the Sanu and Thulo Tundikhels of Kathmandu. Sanu is of course the sports venue of the Nepali people so we will forget that. The lion share of the Tundikhel of course belongs to the army – their club and cafeteria and their kabaz ground. The army, the new lords have not only taken this Tundikhel but many other green spots all over the country. What is left to the public of the original Tundikhel is a tiny sixth, which has become an open air market and the old Ratna Park. What I am proposing now is that a wall should be built running East to West across this piece of land. Those advocating for our Northern neighbours stand on the Northern side of the wall and those who are pushing for our Southern neighbour stand on the south of this wall. One side accuses the other in turns. Such an exercise in front of a public will expose the reality of our lives in Nepal. RAW and BJP can stand on the South side and Mandarins on the North. We won't need a Snowden to tell us what misdeeds our government has been doing.

Whilst we are gestulating and shouting about what is going on in this land of ours can we hope that a new Jung Bahadur will rise from amongst us to pull us out of the rut in which our present day leaders have landed us in? Or do we Nepalis have to weep at the walls surrounding Singha Durbar? ■

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The culture of putting up walls to prevent infiltrators getting in goes on. The state of Arizona in USA has built a huge wall to prevent Mexicans coming in. Even some Nepalis trying



Maheshwori Devi Bishwokarma Photo : ODI

MATERNAL HEALTH

Remarkable Progress

Nepal achieves remarkable progress in maternal health

By A CORESSPONDENT

Maheshwori Devi Bishwokarma, 19, is pregnant with her second child. Despite being three days past due, Maheshwori continues to herd goats, scratching out a living in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. Her husband, who lives and works in neighboring India, comes home once a year.

Till a decade ago, a large number of young mothers like Maheshwori used to die due to pregnancy complications. Nepal's maternal mortality was much higher among nations in Asia. For many women, pregnancy then meant death. However, the situation has changed now.

In less than two decades, Nepal has managed to halve the number of women dying during childbirth, a case of 'globally remarkable' progress, according to a leading global development think tank.

Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute have released a report that found a virtuous cycle of political commitment, financial resources and household changes has helped overcome significant challenges posed by Nepal's unique terrain. The number of deaths per 100,000 live births in Nepal dropped from 539 in 1996 to 229 in 2008 making it one of the very few countries on track to meet Millennium Development Goal 5 on

maternal health before 2015.

Approximately 350,000 women die globally each year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth, and maternal mortality remains the main contributor to excess female mortality in reproductive years. Millennium Development Goal 5, which includes a target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by 75% between 1990 and 2015, is considered one of the most off-track MDGs.

"The decline seen in maternal mortality in Nepal is striking. The reduction in maternal deaths represents a substantial improvement over a short period in a country that contains some of the most challenging terrains in the world for the delivery of essential health services. Much of the progress was achieved in the midst of a protracted insurgency and during a period when, for the majority, household incomes did not increase substantially," said the report published by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, a leading global development think tank.

The authors emphasize the role of high-level political commitment to maternal health, spurred on by a vocal advocacy community. This led to greatly increased government expenditure and international aid dedicated to health,

enabling widespread improvements in access to medical services, particularly in the more remote rural areas of the country. This in turn contributed to a higher percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel and access to essential medicines, such as antibiotics, which can help effectively treat infections that could otherwise prove fatal. Today, over 50% of expectant mothers seek the recommended four antenatal visits, a fivefold increase in the course of 15 years.

Perhaps even more significant have been profound changes at the household level, which have contributed to greater numbers of women seeking support during pregnancy and labour. Access to education has improved substantially: the percentage of women with at least some secondary or higher education has increased by 48% in the past five years, while women are now more likely to be in paid work or run their own business than they were a decade ago. Poverty (according to the national poverty line) has dropped from 68% of the population to 25% in 15 years. And longstanding efforts to facilitate family planning have led to a massive reduction in the fertility rate: Nepali women went from having six children in the early 1980s to an average of 2.6 in the most recent 2011 household survey.

Jonathan Glennie, Research Associate at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London said: "This is an astonishing example of social progress. What's most remarkable is that the reduction in maternal mortality has been achieved in such a short space of time. There's no doubt other countries could learn a lot from the Nepalese experience. The combination of political commitment and financial resources, along with on-going changes at the household level, means that thousands of lives are now being saved."

While significant challenges remain - including addressing inequalities, increasing community mobilization to improve accountability and maintaining the political and financial commitment to safer motherhood - Nepal's story of progress can provide important lessons for other countries struggling to address high levels of maternal mortality, especially within a context of difficult terrain, conflict and high poverty rates.

A Human-rights Perspective On The Bill For Amending The Nepal Health Service Act (1997)

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The access to the highest possible standard of physical and mental healthcare is a fundamental right, which has been entrenched in international human rights law. But this does not mean that the state is solely responsible for making sure that an individual is completely healthy at all times. The state cannot protect the individual from all kinds of illnesses, such as diseases that are hereditary and those caused by the individual's own vulnerabilities or unhealthy habits.

Nepal's Interim Constitution 2007 has made the following provision: "Every citizen shall have the right to basic health services free of cost from the State, as provided in law". In general, we find that many debates have been happening within and outside of the Constituent Assembly, attempting to correct and improve such provisions before presenting them in the new Constitution. Additionally, the Interim Constitution has constitutionalized commitments such as: no person shall be deprived of his or her personal liberty, save in accordance with law; no discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, color, sex, caste, tribe, origin, language or ideological conviction; no person shall be discriminated against as untouchable and subjected to racial discrimination in any form, on grounds of caste, race, community or occupation; an individual's right to privacy shall be inviolable; and no person shall be subjected to physical or mental torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Furthermore, the Supreme Court, by elaborating further on rights related to healthcare in various public interest cases, has also contributed to the discussion.

The following content and dimensions have been kept in mind while commenting on the Bill for amending the Health Service Act:

1. Equality and lack of discrimination in healthcare.
2. Inclusiveness and participation in healthcare-related decision-making process.
3. Accountability of state, concerned

bodies and officials.

4. Availability of healthcare facilities, appropriate to meet the demand.
5. Guarantee of physical (geographical) accessibility to healthcare for the entire population.
6. Economic affordability in healthcare.
7. Access to information regarding healthcare.
8. Acceptability of healthcare services from ethical and cultural standards.
9. Appropriate quality of healthcare based on current scientific and medical standards.
10. Legal and appropriate distribution of the instruments required for healthcare.

1. Competitive fulfillment of vacancy

Some positive amendments have been proposed to make the procedure for fulfillment of vacancy in health service more competitive. Currently, only 50 percent of the vacancy for level 5 positions is filled through open competition. The Bill proposes to raise this bar to 65 percent. For level 9 positions, the corresponding figure is currently 10 percent, and the proposed figure is 20 percent. But the Bill proposes a reduction for level 7 positions filled through open competition. Currently all level 7 positions are filled through open competition. The Bill proposes to push this down to 65 percent. Another 20 percent of seats would be filled through internal competitive examinations, and the remaining 15 percent through an evaluation of competency. Further clarification is needed on why this has been proposed.

2. Inclusiveness

It is necessary to create inclusiveness within healthcare in order to make it acceptable to people from various backgrounds – caste, gender, origin, religion, and cultural identity – and to increase the quality and reliability of the service by creating a feeling of ownership. Social diversity should be reflected even in the health service. The state has a legal obligation to create such an environment.

Keeping these things in mind, the Bill makes provisions on fulfillment of vacancy through open competition. Of 45 percent of the entire number of such available positions, the Bill proposes that there should be internal competition within the following groups for the

following percentages of seats: women (33 percent), indigenous people (27 percent), Madeshi (22 percent), Dalit (9 percent), differently abled (5 percent), and those from marginalised areas (4 percent). Furthermore, there is a provision that suggests that women, indigenous people, Madeshi, and Dalits should be understood as those from these groups that are socially and economically marginalised. But how economic and social marginalisation would be determined remains unclear. Another provision demands the reassessment of this last provision every ten years. In doing so, the demands for inclusiveness from numerous other smaller marginalised groups – not included in the above list – can be raised. It is necessary to dwell on this point.

3. The basis of increasing standard

In addition to the evaluation of competency and duration of service, the monitoring of whether healthcare officials have served in remote and extremely remote areas has been established as one of the foundations for increasing the quality of health service at all levels. This development is positive. The prevalence of hesitation in providing service in remote areas has meant that those living in those areas have been underserved. The proposed measure is likely to alleviate this problem to a certain extent. Additionally, if service performed in rural areas of districts not considered to be remote could be counted as serving in remote areas, it would discourage the tendency to serve only in urban areas.

4. Geographical exposure

Following the current provisions, the Bill proposes that healthcare officers transferred to extremely remote, remote, and non-remote areas in the duration of their service, so that they can gain experience in all types of geographical areas. It would be more appropriate to present this provision as being guided by the state's desire to increase its reach towards all of its citizens and to guarantee access to healthcare for all, rather than being directed at giving employees geographical exposure.

6. Operation of special programs

An important provision has been proposed to amend the Health Service Act in order to allow the ministry to operate special programs for the control of epidemics and infectious diseases. To

operate such programs, a provision has been made to appoint any specialist or healthcare officer to any district or area for up to one year. Such provisions are important to uphold and protect the citizens' right to healthcare. In order to make these provisions even more effective, it would be more appropriate to present them as legal obligations rather than matters of government jurisdiction. In expediting the control of infectious diseases and epidemics, the immediate implementation of a special program, the cooperation of all relevant officials, and the implementation of informative, promotional, and awareness-raising programs are necessary. The operation of special programs would be more effective if the provision could encompass the above-mentioned points.

6. Punishable acts

Provisions have been made to punish the act of keeping healthcare officials without assigning them any post-related responsibilities. Except for conditions like being on long holidays, suspension, or appointed for other official tasks, keeping healthcare officials in service for more than a month without delegating any post-related responsibilities will be unlawful, the Bill proposes, and the official who is responsible for not delegating any tasks can be subject to departmental investigation. This will allow for the most efficient utilisation of officers for securing and upholding the citizens' right to healthcare. An additional provision should also be added to allow departmental investigation against any officials responsible for delegating responsibilities that are different from post-related responsibilities.

7. Prohibited conduct

Additional provisions have been made to address the following, in accord with the Civil Service Act 1993:

- a. No employee shall subject any one to torture.
- b. No employee shall commit or authorise sexual abuse or domestic violence related activities.
- c. Employees shall treat stakeholders politely and decently.
- d. Employees must bear the responsibilities that may arise according to his/her post and perform work in an impartial, fair, efficient and prompt manner.
- e. Employees must not misuse government funds.
- f. No employee shall close or

authorise the shutdown of a healthcare institution.

g. No employee shall smoke or drink within the work premises and/or within working hours.

It would be appropriate to amend the proposed article 65 A (1) and (2) to prohibit even the aiding or encouraging of torture, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. Additionally, it would be more practical to define what exactly constitutes 'torture' under this provision.

Because of the peculiar sensitivity of healthcare, other important aspects not mentioned in the Civil Service Act should also be included. Keeping in mind the various forms of discrimination prevalent in the healthcare sector, for example, any discrimination – or the encouragement or protection of such behavior — based on gender, caste, religion, origin, age, and economic background should be prohibited in the Health Service Act. Discrimination is one of the main social problems in Nepal and the healthcare sector is vulnerable to this problem as well. Such a provision is necessary to make health service more inclusive and rights based.

It is also highly appropriate to develop and implement a separate code of conduct applicable to healthcare officials, which should elaborate on the protection of privacy of the stakeholder and prohibition of violation of human rights etc.

8. Trade unions

A new provision has been proposed to allow the formation of trade unions in healthcare services. The provision is appropriate and in line with the rights enshrined by the constitution and international human rights law. However, we must also take into consideration the fact that most trade unions have recently been mobilised for party politics and self-interest, rather than for social service and accountability. Therefore, keeping in mind the sensitive nature of healthcare, it would be appropriate to make provisions to ensure that trade unions do not misuse their rights. For example, to include the responsibility of conducting various programs to raise awareness about healthcare under trade unions' roles, responsibilities and rights would be appropriate.

The Bill proposes that any adjustment on Nepal Government's healthcare related laws be done in consultation with the appropriate trade union. In order to make

this even more effective and inclusive, it would be appropriate to modify the provision to require inclusion of other organisations involved in healthcare rights, in addition to trade unions, while creating healthcare policies and budgets.

9. Delegation of rights

The proposed Bill allows for the delegation of rights in various areas of healthcare. Twelve points, including the creation of positions in healthcare and the minimum qualification needed for open competition, will be determined 'as prescribed', it has been proposed. Why this is the case has not been clarified in the annotation on the provision. "It is appropriate to include this in the rules" has been stated without any further elaboration.

In the end, it is necessary to improve and amend the Health Service Act in accord with constitutional and international human rights legislation to uphold the right to healthcare. Healthcare is not simply the subject of social welfare but rather that of human rights. Therefore, any legislation related to healthcare should be prepared accordingly. In this context, the proposed Bill to amend the Health Service Act seems positive. There should not be hesitations in further improving any of the above discussions from a human rights perspective. These important exercises in improving the legislation should be foresighted from the beginning, and include stakeholders in moving forward. Additionally, the following revisions are appropriate:

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Organophosphate Poisoning: In Syria And Nepal

By **BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD**



As the war rages on in Syria, one of the important chemical agents said to be used there is Sarin which is basically an organophosphate compound. Organophosphates are extensively used as pesticides in South Asia including Nepal. What may not be known to readers is that organophosphate compound is the commonest agent used in our part of the world to commit self-harm (suicide). We read almost daily of people who took poison to end their lives. Statistically that poison will be an organophosphate. This pesticide sadly is freely available for everyone to buy from Nepali shops. There is no enforced regulation or controlled sale of organophosphate pesticide even though as with so many aspects of our life, the law may be on paper. The pesticide may be very helpful for farmers, but in the wrong hands this is a deadly poison. The perpetrators of violence in Syria are allegedly using this compound to wreak havoc there. But for decades the misuse of organophosphate has caused untold tragedy in our part of the world. Let us find out more about this substance and the harm it can do in Nepal.

In most major hospitals in Nepal, at any given time there are about half a dozen patients admitted with organophosphate poisoning. As the doctor takes the history and examines the patient with this affliction, a truly preventable human tragedy unfolds. On the average many patients are young women who have tried to inflict self harm because they had a quarrel with their husband or could not get along with their in laws.

The local names of these organophosphate compounds are nuvan, metacid, dalf, and suchlor. Medical students use a mnemonic, "SLUDGE" (salivation, lacrimation, urine incontinence, diarrhea, gastrointestinal cramps and emesis or vomiting) to help them remember the varied effects of this

pesticide in a patient. These pesticides inhibit the natural destruction of an enzyme called acetylcholine in the human body which then sets off a cascade of secretions summarized by the above mnemonic.

Organophosphate is now classified as a major chemical bioterrorism agent especially after the sarin gas attacks in the Tokyo suburbs in 1994 and 1995 when the victims complained that "their world went black" followed by all the symptoms of "SLUDGE" mentioned above. Sarin is a vapour form of organophosphate that first causes injury to the eyes leading to pupillary narrowing and partial blindness after exposure. These symptoms can potentially be fatal depending on the amount ingested or inhaled and just how promptly the treatment was started. The main cause of death is respiratory depression triggered by the undestroyed acetylcholine which is widely distributed in the brain.

The most essential drug used to treat organophosphate poisoning is derived from plants (datura, deadly nightshade, mandrake, among others) from the Solanaceae family and called atropine. Atropine effectively blocks the effects of acetylcholine. Ironically, the word atropine comes from Atropos, one of the three Fates in Greek mythology, who decides how someone should die. In the case of organophosphate poisoning, atropine is clearly a life-saving antidote. It is easy to imagine how atropine could be in short supply in war-torn Syria.

In South Asia the organophosphate poisoning tragedy can be prevented in large measure if there is political will. So long as a teenager that has fared badly in her SLC exams can go to a general store and easily buy organophosphate pesticides, we will continue to witness these preventable tragedies unfold here time after time. ■

International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC).

As it is the first document prepared through consultation of more than 2000 adolescents and 1000 adult stakeholders from all over the country, this is the first of its kind look at the state of adolescents.

An inter-ministerial task team under the leadership of the National Planning Commission also supported the process, along with organizations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, CWIN, Save the Children, Plan Nepal, ILO, Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Participation and others. Once implemented, the NPA will create an enabling policy environment, develop a sensitive and responsive system, and streamline coordinated efforts to address the harmful social norms, challenges, and development needs of adolescents.

Based on the global theme of "Innovating for Girls' Education" for this year's IDGC celebrations, a round table dialogue was organized between adolescents and policymakers about their dream learning environment and innovations in education for them. The round table dialogue was followed by the IDGC celebration which was graced by Vice-Chair of National Planning Commission, Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya. He reiterated that National Planning Commission is fully committed to provide its full support to coordinate and create a conducive environment to realize the aspirations set by the NPA for the holistic development of adolescents of Nepal. ■

NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

Aimed At Adolescence

At a time when an overwhelming number of adolescents, particularly the girls, have been facing various problems like early marriage, and lack of access to education, the recently released National Plan of Action is a significant step to address their concern.

With an adolescent population of 6.4 million, accounting for about a fourth (24.19%) of the total national population of 26.49 million, Nepal is a country of young population.

However, most of the development work does not have a clear strategy for the steps to address the comprehensive health, development and participation of the individuals in the second decade of their life. According to a study, the investment made in the first decade of life might be wasted if the second decade is not well addressed.

Acknowledging that adolescents (10-19 years) is a group that requires focused attention to meet their specific development needs, help them understand their rights, and engage them in addressing the existing challenges, the Government of Nepal has envisioned and prepared the multi-sectoral NPA for holistic adolescent development.

The National Plan of Action (NPA) on Holistic Development of Adolescents was launched by the National Planning Commission amidst a function to celebrate the second

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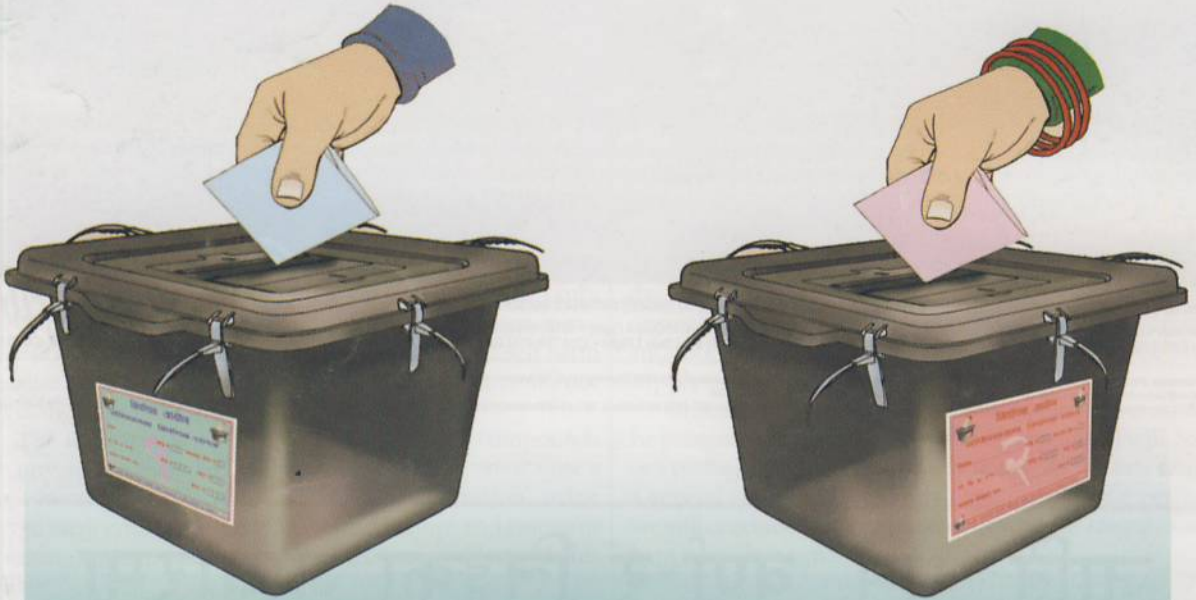


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