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**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**FORUM**  
Dr. Prabin Manandhar



**ARTICLE**  
Bimal Gurung

**NEW**

# SPOTLIGHT

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Oct 16, 2020

FORTNIGHTLY

**MADHAV BELBASE**

## Father Of TBM In Nepal

**INSIDE**



**SHANKER DAS BAIRAGI**  
Diplomat At Helm Of Civil Service



**UPPER TAMAKOSHI**  
Work In Progress



**BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL**  
Diplomat With Passion





# SALIENT FEATURES OF UPPER TRISHULI 3B HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

## GENERAL

**Location:** -Kispang Rural Municipality (Nuwakot), Uttargaya Rural Municipality(Rasuwa)  
**Type of Scheme:** - Run-of River (Cascade of Upper Trishuli3A Hydroelectric Project)  
**Gross Head:** -90m  
**Installed Capacity:** -37 MW  
**Average Annual Energy after Outage:** 292.58GWh/year  
**Dry Season:** - 134.88 GWh/ year  
**Wet Season :-** 157.70 GWh/year

## HYDROLOGY

**Catchment Area:** - 4577 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Design Discharge (at 70 % PoE):** - 51 m<sup>3</sup>/sec

## HEAD POND (Connected to UT3A Tailrace Pond)

**Size:** 29(L) x 5.2 to 11.0(B) x 7.35 to 14.8 (H)  
**Lowest Bed Level:** - 714.20m  
**Intake:** - Bell Mouth Type

## APPROACH PRESSURE CONDUIT

**Type:** - Box Culvert  
**Length:** -243.47 m + 40 m  
**Size:** - 5.1m x 5.1m Square and 5.1 m diameter

## HEADRACE TUNNEL

**Shape:** - Horseshoe  
**Length:** - 3805.48m  
**Diameter:** - 5.1m ~ 6.1 m

## ADIT TUNNEL

**Shape:** - Inverted D  
**Length of Adit 1:** - 463.3 m, **Diameter:** - 4.0m + 1.5 m  
**Length of Adit 2:** - 119.17m **Diameter:** - 5.95 m ~ 6.1 m

## SURGE TANK

**Type:** - Restricted Orifice  
**Diameter:** - 15.0 m  
**Height:** - 39.3 m

## PENSTOCK

**Length:** - 185.33m  
**Diameter:** - 4.2m  
**Thickness:** - 18 mm

## POWERHOUSE

**Type:** - Surface  
**Size (L X BXH):** - 40.4 m x 19.30m x 33.81 m

## TAILRACE CONDUIT

**Type:** - RCC  
**Length :-** 180m (5.323 m (B) x 3.6 m (H))  
**Turbine**  
**Type:** - Vertical Axis Francis  
**Capacity:** - 2X19.715MW

## GENERATOR

**Type:** - 3 Phase Synchronous  
**Capacity :-** 2 X 22.7045MVA

## TRANSFORMER

**Type:** - 3 Phase Oil Immersed Outdoor ONAN  
**Capacity:** - 2X123 MVA  
**Voltage Ratio:** - 11 kV / 132 kV

## TRANSMISSION LINE

**Voltage Level :-** 132 kV, Double Circuit (3km)  
**Construction Period:** - 1095 Days from Commencement Date  
**Commencement Date:** - 14 March, 2018



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## Notes From The Editor



Amid the spread of COVID-19 infection and its threat, Nepali people are celebrating the Dashain Festival, their biggest festival. In the wake of a growing threat of infection and serious sickness, the Dashain will be different this year than the previous years. One of the main parts of the festival is a family union and taking the blessings from the elders, the near and dear ones. However, COVID-19 spreads fast in big groups, and hence, people are requested to avoid gatherings and unions. The Ministry of Health and Population has urged the people to avoid contact with the people above 60 years as they are vulnerable to infections. Following the lifting of restrictions imposed by the government on air and road transportation, the mobility of the people has multiplied with the number of infections increasing. Within a month of opening up, Kathmandu Valley, which has the highest density of population, has witnessed huge growth of COVID-19. The valley has over 70 percent of infections now. As the festival is approaching, with COVID-19 infections spreading all over the country, that is a topic of continuing interest. But, coming out of it for a while, we have decided to cover the use of Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) and transformation the new technology has brought in the country as our main story. Taking all the risks five years ago, secretary at Ministry of Drinking Water Madhav Belbase, who is also regarded as the father of TBM in Nepal, used the TBM in Bheri-Babai Diversion Project. After TBM's success in Bheri-Babai, the government has already decided to use this technology in Sunkosi-Marini and now considering using it in the second phase of Melamchi Drinking water project. We look at how TBM technology is bringing change in tunnel construction in Nepal in this issue. As Nepalese are celebrating the Dashain, New Spotlight family wishes all its readers, customers and patrons Happy Dashain 2077.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

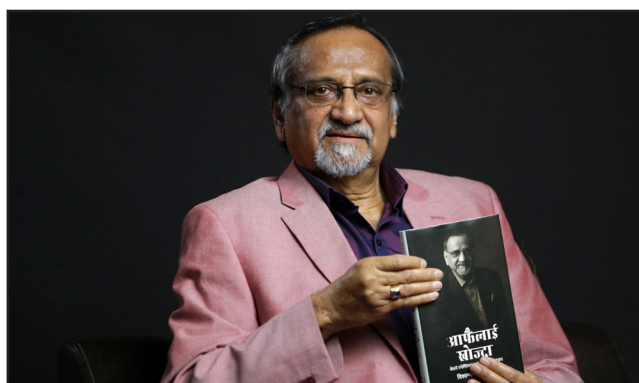
# CONTENT

<b>PM OLI</b>	
Poly Tricks	3
<b>NEWSNOTES</b>	4
<b>BUSINESS BRIEF</b>	6
<b>OPINION</b>	
Dipak Gyawali	8
<b>SHANKER DAS BAIRAGI</b>	
Diplomat At Helm Of Civil Service	10
<b>FORUM</b>	
Dr. Prabin Manandhar	11
<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>	
Dr. K. Uprety	12
<b>VIEWPOINT</b>	
Dr. Shivaram Pd. Koirala	13
<b>BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL</b>	
Diplomat With Passion	15
<b>COVID-19</b>	
Nepal In Crisis	16
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	
Batu Uprety	17
<b>UPPER TAMAKOSHI</b>	
Work In Progress	28
<b>ARITICLE</b>	
Bimal Gurung	32
<b>NEPAL-EU JOINT COMMISSION</b>	
Strengthening Partnership	33
<b>WORLD BANK</b>	
Dismal Growth	35
<b>ARITICLE</b>	
Hemang Dixit	36



**COVERSTORY:** MADHAV BELBASE: Father Of TBM In Nepal

20



**AAPHILAL KHOJDA:** Confessions Of A Professor

27



**UNICEF REPORT:** Children Suffering

19



# Poly Tricks

*Despite efforts of his rivals to contain his authority, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has shown that he knows the political techniques to beat his rivals*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Just a week after a gentleman understanding between Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to equally share state powers and positions, Prime Minister Oli's cabinet took a major decision appointing his close political aid and former finance minister Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada as ambassador to the United States and former chief secretary as ambassador to United Kingdom.

Co-chair Prachanda and his group opposed the move in media blaming PM Oli for violating the gentleman understanding. Some persons close to Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal demanded withdrawal of the cabinet recommendations.

However, no one raised any question over the appointment of ambassadors and cabinet reshuffling issue at the Secretariat meeting of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

The meeting has concluded without discussing the much talked about Cabinet reshuffling and new appointment. NCP spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha said that the meeting was centered on previous agenda of the party as the Chairmen duo, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' could not present concrete proposals on the issues as entrusted to them.

The Secretariat meeting held on Sept. 22 had given the responsibility to the two Chairmen to come up with concrete proposals about the reshuffling of the Council of Ministers.

"Both the Chairmen informed Secretariat meeting that they were working on the responsibility given to them and that they had yet to forge a clear basis for the issues," said NCP spokesperson Shrestha.

In all this, Prime Minister Oli



has shown that the party has nothing to do with his administrative and day to day authority. It seems that Prachanda and other party colleagues accept this.

This is not the first time PM Oli showed his strength. In all the political battles, he has been able to win over rivals of his party. From appointment of ministers to other matters, PM Oli has not surrendered his power.

What Prime Minister Oli has is a unique political trick, which some people term Oli-trick of politics. Prime Minister and co-chair of Nepal Communist Party (NCP) Oli does not have strong theoretical political knowledge of political tricks and tactic but what he knows is a typical Nepali style of traditional cunning, tactic and skill to manage the affairs.

Although he claimed to be a follower of Marxist, Maoist and Leninist communist, what prime minister Oli has been displaying is his skills in the traditional power game based on manipulation and conspiracy of Hindu dominated society to defeat his powerful and united enemies.

Chanakya says everything is justifiable during the war time and there are no questions of ethics and morality. He argued that nothing is wrong to win

over enemy in war.

This is what Prime Minister Oli has been pursuing in his politics and turning the thing in his favor. He conspired to break the strength of his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Nepal duo by encouraging Bam Dev Gautama to rebel. Oli offered Gautam vice president of the party and member at National Assembly for weakening Prachanda-Nepal faction.

After almost two months of hurdles and turmoil, Prime Minister Oli was able to force standing committee to take decision favorable to him.

The strategy of Oli is a product of his culture and times. His morality is based on justification of any means, by hook or crook, to remain in power. Oli's political tactic also evolves around the politics of Mahabharata. However, his tactic is very much influenced by Chanakya.

Whether one likes it or not, PM Oli remains a successful politician. One can argue about the ethics of his methods, but he has laid the foundation in his political party as to how to run divergent groups and interests. As the legacy of Chanakya, Oli is ruthless and compromising to be in the centre of unchallenged power.



## NEWSNOTES

### Germany: 30 Years Of Unity



Ambassador of Germany to Nepal Roland Schäfer tweeted, “30 Years of Germany Unity on October, 3rd – friendship instead of hatred: Germany unification brought former opponents together. We must build on that and together contribute to peaceful and friendly cooperation worldwide.”

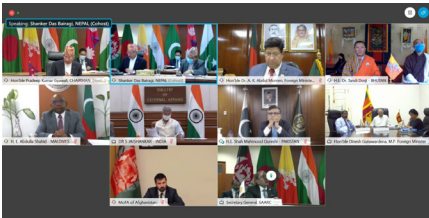
In his statement delivered through a press release, he said:

“This is the time of the year when we are accustomed to inviting you all to a happy moment in Gyaneshwar, on my residence’s lawn.”

This year is special, however. “Because of Covid-19, I can extend my heartfelt greetings, those of my wife and those of all the staff of the German Embassy, only through the internet. Our best wishes to all of you – and a big thank you to those who have already sent us their greetings!

“This year’s German Unity Day is also unique as Germany celebrates 30 years of reunification. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of East and West Germany 30 years ago were only possible through the peaceful commitment to freedom, democracy and human rights - a commitment by the citizens of East Germany and in other European countries. The responsible behavior of world leaders at that crucial moment was also decisive,” said the ambassador.

### SAARC Foreign Ministers Hold Virtual Meeting



Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali stressed the need to make the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) an effective and result-oriented regional

organization capable of bringing visible changes in the lives of the peoples of South Asia.

Addressing an informal virtual meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers as a chair, Minister for Foreign Affairs Gyawali urged the Member States to explore all viable options to hold the 19th Summit at an early date and to generate the new momentum and dynamism in SAARC.

At the event attended by ministers for Foreign/External Affairs of all the SAARC Member Countries, foreign Secretary Shanker Das Bairagi delivered Nepal’s national statement in the Council Meeting.

The Meeting was hosted by Nepal as the current Chair of SAARC. In this context, they appreciated the initiative of the Prime Minister of India in convening the SAARC Leaders’ Video Conference on COVID-19 in March this year.

Esala Ruwan Weerakoon, Secretary-General of SAARC, also addressed the Informal Meeting. In his address, the Secretary-General presented a progress report on regional cooperation since the last informal meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers.

### KAAN And KOICA Distribute Food To Ashram

KOICA Alumni Association of Nepal (KAAN) and KOICA have donated essential food and hygiene materials to Manavsewa Ashram

KOICA Alumni Association of Nepal (KAAN), with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), organized a donation program on October 05, 2020 to support essential food and hygiene materials to Manavsewa Ashram worth US\$ 3,059.51.

The donation ceremony was completed in the presence of KOICA, KAN and Manavsewa Ashram in Lalitpur.

According to a press release, the main objective of the program was to support essential food and hygiene materials to the needy people (orphans, disabled, handicapped, helpless and mentally ill) who are mostly affected by the COVID 19 and are under the target group of Manavsewa Ashram.

With this support it is expected that KOICA and KAN can contribute a little in making the deprived people’s livelihood easier and cope with the current difficult time. This program is directly going to support about 334 beneficiaries of Ashram who are residing in Kathmandu Valley.



### India Gifts 41 Ambulances And 6 School Buses

Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi by placing flower at his statue situated in the Embassy premises on the occasion of 151st Gandhi Jayanti.

During the program, the government of India gifted 41 ambulances and 6 school buses to government and not-for profit organizations in 30 districts of Nepal.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy, the Embassy, continuing the tradition of gifting of ambulances and school buses, handed over forty one ambulances and six school buses to various governmental and non-governmental, not for profit organizations working in the field of health and education.



### Nepal, Israel Sign Agreement On Labor, Agriculture

Nepal and Israel have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish Agricultural Center of Excellence in Nepal. As per the agreement such centre would be established in each of the seven states in the country, reports RSS.





According to RSS, Nepali ambassador to Israel Dr Anjan Shakyia and Foreign Affairs Minister of Israel E. Gabi Ashkenazi have signed the pact.

Following the signing ceremony, ambassador Shakyia shared that she was effortful to sign the pact soon after she resumed the post.

### RoK Ambassador Park Chong-suk Calls On Minister Gyawali

Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali received Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Nepal Park Chong-suk in his maiden courtesy call on the Minister at Singha Durbar.

According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they discussed bilateral matters. Ambassador Park Chong-suk presented his credentials last

week.

The newly appointed Ambassador had presented his credentials to President Bidhya Devi Bhandary at a special function organized at the presidential office Shitalniwas on 27 September.

Nepal and Republic of Korea established diplomatic relations more than 45 years ago.

During the ceremony, foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and other high level dignitaries were also present.

### British Council Nepal Organizes Education Symposium

The British Council Nepal hosted its 4th Virtual Education Symposium this month with the theme of School Leadership from 23 to 27 September 2020.



This virtual symposium provided a platform for presentations, debates and discussions around School Leadership, the principles around it and the practices in Nepal and other countries at policy and practice levels,

involving national and international decision-makers and stakeholders, and members of the wider education community.

For most countries around the world, school leadership has become a key point of discussion when framing education policies as it plays a key role in defining teaching and learning practices.

Often considered to be the mediator between policy and practice, school leaders play an important role in developing the school infrastructure, overall management, teacher effectiveness and impact on student learning. Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) also stresses the need for enhancing leadership capacity in schools stat-

ing that the "head teachers will have an increased focus on instructional leadership including reviewing teacher performance, monitoring teachers' time on task and building teacher capacity."

### U.S. Embassy In Nepal Organizes PPSP

United

States Ambassador Randy W. Berry inaugurated the Pre-Professional Parliamentary Support Program (PPSP) recently. The PPSP was a first of its kind fellowship for youth in Nepal that teaches law-making and public policy in Gandaki Province.



Recognizing youth make up 52% of the Nepali voting population, the U.S. Embassy has partnered with Pokhara Research Center (PRC), organized an online public-policy training for 50 youth aged 20-30 selected from all 11 districts of Gandaki Province from September 15-19.

During the program, the participants learnt a range of issues, including geopolitics, diplomacy, federalism, economic policy, and good governance. "Youth not only have the right to be included in political decision-making, but their inclusion strengthens government," said Ambassador Berry. "Bringing Nepal's youth to the policy drafting table ensures that Nepal's democracy represents all of its people."

### Ambassador Kwatra, CEO Gyawali Launch CBRI Website

Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay M. Kwatra and CEO of National Reconstruction Authority Sushil Gyawali jointly launched the CBRI project website on Post-Earthquake reconstruction initiatives in the education sector

In a virtual launch ceremony, Ambassador Vinay M. Kwatra and CEO Gyawali jointly unveiled a dedicated website on Government of India-assisted post-earthquake reconstruction projects in the education sector in Nepal.

The website, available in both English and Nepali versions, is a one-stop, user-friendly window for all information related to education projects under GOI-assisted post-earthquake reconstruction initiatives.





## BUSINESS BRIEF

### UNHCR Representative Presents Letter Of Credentials



The newly appointed UNHCR Representative in Nepal, Ms. Carolin Spannuth Verma, presented her Letter of Credentials to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

Ms. Spannuth Verma, a German national, arrived in Kathmandu on 15 September

to take up her new assignment as UNHCR Representative in Nepal.

Upon resuming Office, Ms. Spannuth Verma said “The Government and people of Nepal have an impressive tradition of protecting those who are forced to flee persecution. The generosity of Nepal is acknowledged by the international community, especially in light of its own challenges of resources. I look forward to advancing with the Government and other UNHCR partners this important agenda in a spirit of collaboration, law and compassion.”

Spannuth Verma’s journey of serving the cause of refugee protection through UNHCR has now spanned almost 25 years. She has served in various international protection and legal positions in Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Northern Macedonia, Bulgaria and at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva.

### NIBL Branch Office In Mahendranagar



Nepal Investment Bank Limited (NIBL) has expanded its operation by opening its 83rd branch at Mahendranagar, Bhimdutta Municipality, and Farwest Province. The newly opened branch was inaugurated by Subhash Chandra Ghimire, Head, Provincial Office, Nepal Rastra

Bank, Dhangadhi. The Mahendranagar Branch will provide full-fledged banking services, fully catering to local demand, with the aim to aid financial accessibility to customers and widen financial literacy throughout.

NIBL has been catering to its customers from 83 branches, 125 ATMs, 17 extension counters, 10 revenue collection counters and 56 branchless banking counters. The bank, being the recipient of five Bank of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euro money awards for “Best Bank 2018” from the international publication - Euro money. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A+.

### Global IME Bank Revamps Services To Cut Covid-19 Risks



Global IME Bank has refurbished its services and operations to minimize the risks posed by Covid-19.

In order to minimize crowding in the branches, the bank has allotted different time slots for various services. For instance, branches of Global IME Bank can only accept cash and cheque deposits from 10 am to 12:30 pm. Similarly, 1 to 3:30 pm is allocated for amount withdrawal. Then, the time from 4 pm to 5:30 will be dedicated to account opening and miscellaneous queries.

It should be noted that branches might change these time slots depending on customer demand. Also, neighboring branches should operate alternate services at any given time. This enables the customers to get a service at other nearby branches if a branch is on the time slot for another service. For example, if a branch is providing cash withdrawal services in the morning, the other nearby branch must provide the deposit receipt services.

### Horasis Hosts Extraordinary South Asian Meeting

Foreign Minister. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali addressed the virtual panel discussion on ‘Potentials for South Asia’ at the Horasis Extraordinary Meeting held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.



Facilitated by the chairperson of CG Crop Global and member of House of Representative Binod Kumar Chaudhary, ministers from Maldives and Bangladesh also took part in the webinar.

Panelists discussed the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Asia. South Asian Ministers said that there is a coherent approach in South Asia to deal with COVID-19.

Horasis is an independent, international think tank, headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. Founded in 2005, by Frank-Jürgen Richter, former director of the World Economic Forum, Horasis is dedicated to the innovation and development of sustainable emerging markets.

### Hyatt Regency Kathmandu Reopens

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu announced the reopening of business from October 1 with limited service.

The hotel is implementing several safety protocols and procedures to protect the safety of its workers and guests as part of the reopening, as per a media release.

Hotel employees will go through a wellness check prior to each shift and are required to wear protective masks while on the property.

To help deliver on the global care and cleanliness commitment, the hotel has partnered with the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) — a division of the International Sanitary Supply Association (ISSA).

Following medical expert guidance to help reduce





the spread of COVID-19, face masks or coverings are required in hotel's indoor public areas and when moving around in outdoor areas, where social distancing practice is not possible.

### Rahul Chaudhary In Hotelier Power List Again

Rahul Chaudhary, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of CG Hospitality Holdings, has been included in Hotelier India's Power List 2020. For the third consecutive year, India's prestigious Hotelier magazine has listed Rahul as one of the 25 most powerful hoteliers.

The list includes world famous hotel brands like Oberoi Hotels, Hyatt, Hilton, IHG, Marriott, Leela, Accor, Radisson, and Taj Hotels.

Rahul leads the Hospitality business of Chaudhary Group (CG) and is the youngest member on the list.

'Hotelier' recently revealed the list of 25 most successful entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector for the year 2020. The list includes successful entrepreneurs operating and leading hotels and resorts across India. Rahul had been featured on the magazine's Powerful Hotelier list in 2018 and 2019.

Rahul is serving as MD and CEO of CG Hospitality and CG Corp Global from New Delhi, India. CG Hospitality Holdings has expanded its services to dozens of countries, besides India. CG has partnerships/investments in established and famous chain hotels like Taj, Fern and Zinc Hotels, 80 hotels/resorts in India alone.

Despite majority of hotels closed during COVID-19 pandemic, CG has been conducting workshops and virtual trainings for its employees to help protect themselves and their families. Rahul claims that he has successfully made his hotels and resorts safer and more reliable during this ongoing public health crisis.

Rahul believes challenges provide us opportunity and learning. "COVID-19 has offered a chance to re-evaluate the tourism sector. It has inspired us to rethink the existing business structures. The pandemic has taught the world to move this sector forward in a sustainable way," he stated.

"CG Hospitality boasts of 135 hotels/resorts in 94 destinations in 12 countries with more

than 8000 rooms. Adapting to the current situation, we are now focused on reducing fixed costs and providing delivery service for food and beverages from our hotels in urban areas. Our resorts are now offering Covid-19 testing. We are driven by our core mantras - Quality, Safety and Reliability. Based on this, CG Hospitality has formulated an action plan for the next three years – to hold out, recover and then fly high."

He remarked that in the current situation the focus will be on providing relaxation, leisure activities and interesting travels to guests.



## BUSINESS BRIEF

CG Hospitality Holdings, which operates Vivanta, Summit, Fern and world-class resort like Meghauli Serai in Nepal, plans on setting up hotels in Pokhara and Lumbini, adding more keys in Kathmandu and expanding Hotel Summit in Lalitpur.

Chaudhary Group had formally entered the hospitality sector two decades ago, after partnering with Tata Group / IHCL in Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Maldives.

### NIBL's EGM Approved Acquisition Of City Express Finance Company Ltd

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd (NIBL), a leading bank in the "A" class banking category, Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) approved the acquisition of City Express Finance Company Ltd, a class 'C' financial institution.

NIBL hosted an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on the 14th of October 2020 at its Durbar Marg Head Office premises. Taking into consideration the Nepal Government's directive to maintain social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted through virtual medium.

The EGM approved the acquisition of City Express Finance Company Ltd, a class 'C' financial institution. City Express Finance Company Ltd. will be acquired in the swap ratio of 100:30. After the acquisition, of City Express with a paid up capital of NPR 400 million, the paid up capital of Nepal Investment Bank will reach NPR 14.37 billion. The promoter shareholding will be 68.48% while the general public will hold 31.52% shares post- acquisition.

NIBL has been catering to its customer from 83 branches, 125 ATMs, 17 extension counters, 10 revenue collection counters and 56 branchless banking counters. The bank, being the recipient of five Bank of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euromoney awards for "Best Bank 2018" from the international publication - Euromoney. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A.





# Ganja Legalization Bill: The Need, Weaknesses And Needed Improvements



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

If ever proof was needed that water, which is life, is linked to everything, it came from Nepal Water Conservation Foundation's *Pani Satsang* on 3<sup>rd</sup> October focused on the proposed bill to legalize *ganja* (also going by names such as cannabis, marijuana, hemp, hashish and *bhang*). Over a year ago NWCF, supported by Canada government's research-supporting outfit IDRC, had begun a study with IW-MI-Nepal and PEI on water-induced disasters and their impact, within the context of massive outmigration, on the marginalized "left behind". As field investigations proceeded in the East Rapti watershed stretching from upper Makwanpur to lower Chitwan, it surprised us how *ku-bika*-issues (including rampant and unscientific road-building, pesticide pollution, *ganja* ban and other allegedly "development" initiatives) contributed to increased vulnerability of the marginalized poor during water-induced disasters.

At the *Pani Satsang*, local rural municipality representatives Nirmala Hingdung (vice chair Raksirang), Tanka Moktan (chair Kailas) and Hari Dallakoti (chair Benighat) as well as MPs such as Santa Bahadur Chepang (representing one of the most marginalized communities in the Rapti basin), Indra Baniya (of the Nepali Kangress who was also a former state minister of home affairs), Birodh Khatiwada (who tabled the bill) and Sher Bahadur Tamang (former EMaKe law minister unfairly MeToo-ed and edged out in inner-party tussle) were unanimous in voicing the need to legalize *ganja*.

Their concerns focused on how the ban has only harmed the poorest of the poor for whom *ganja* had been a traditional source of livelihood; how they have been criminalized and jailed while the big smugglers and traders have remained free to carry on its trade; how that has led to family hardships for the poor and breakup of families; how it has led to corruption in the police and civil administration; and how its widespread informal growing is a subject of unhealthy political vendetta at the local level during elections.

The history behind the *ganja* ban, its antecedents and consequences are stories in themselves. A traditional and widespread herb, it has been freely available in South Asian societies for medical, religious and recreational uses since time immemorial. Indeed, the names *ganja* and *bhang* are of old Sanskrit origin while cannabis comes from the Arabic *kinnab*. It was the British East India Company that realized it could make money by taxing its trade in 1856, although it is not clear how much that unfair legislation contributed to the Sepoy Mutiny in the following year.

Nepal banned *ganja* growing, trade and consumption on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1973 under pressure from the Nixon administration. At the time, the US administration itself was under pressure from the Watergate scandal as well as youth and Hippie counter-culture that was part of the anti-Vietnam war protests. Kathmandu was the Mecca for all Beatniks and subsequently Hippies because of the free availability of hashish and hence targeted by a "law-and-order" Nixon presidency.

Prior to the advent of the Beatniks in the 1960s (on Christmas 1966 – the year of my graduation from high school – an anarchic "international Beatnik convention" was held in Kathmandu's Tundikhel that declared: "Beatniks are dead; long live the Hippies!"), *ganja* was never an issue in Nepal as its use had been regulated by tradition, similar



to vodka in Russia. Not all Russians are alcoholics (indeed how could they if they could resurrect themselves back from Soviet collapse as a super-power to be feared by the West?) because tradition decreed how it could be drunk. As its poet (if I am not mistaken, Chingiz Aitmatov) wrote: "It is not wrong to drink; one only needs to know why, when, with whom, for what and how much". The same could be said of *ganja* in Nepal and the rest of South Asia.

There are a couple of interesting accounts of the consequences of this ban. After it was enforced following US pressure, King Birendra, on his yearly Development Zone visit to Surkhet in the mid-1970s, was confronted by a delegation of Bajhangi elders. Their leader reached into his *bakkhu* pocket, pulled out some seeds and held it in front of the King, asking: “Do you know, Your Majesty, what this is?” He then proceeded to explain to the shocked King that they were *bhang* seeds from which they made oil for their cooking, *achar* to eat with their *dhindo*, clothes from its fibre, a medical supplement fodder for their cows, and the meagre cash from its sale to buy salt and clothes for their children. He then told the King: “This is our life; are you telling us not to live in your kingdom?” By then, the US pressure on the King – whose relations with the Soviets had soured by then – was so strong (and Nepal so aid-dependent on the US-led development agencies) that he was unable to help his poor subjects.

The ban did have more serious political consequences. In a USAID-supported survey of the Maoist insurgency in six west Nepal districts, including the Kham Magar heartland of Rolpa, Robert Gersony wrote a report (*Sowing the Wind: history and dynamics of the Maoist revolt in Nepal's Rapti Hills*, submitted to Vice President Nancy Lindborg of US-based Mercy Corps, 2003) tracing the link between this *ganja* ban and the alienation of the poor in these districts from the Nepali state. The loss of their livelihood and consequent impoverishment proved to be a fertile ground for Maoist recruitment.

Instead of learning the right lessons, Nepal not only went ahead with more police raids but also unthinkingly tied itself in 2003 to the UN

Convention on Narcotics and Drugs that was Western values-led and not appreciative of traditional Nepali economy of the poor and spiritual culture or ecological concerns (naturally grown organic *ganja* is after all a high value cash crop that does not require irrigation or fertilizer). Ironically, following the establishment of Maoist-led Loktantra, pro-poor oriented approach to Nepal's rural economy gave way to a trading class favouring economic policy where the state came down even more heavily on the *ganja*-growing poor, especially during the last local elections.

Pratap Bista, a Hetauda-based journalist has written in Kathmandu Post (September 11) how, because of the inability of the current Marxist-Maoist government to provide fertilizer and market access to their vegetables due to the lockdown, farmers in Raksirang and Kailas rural municipality of the East Rapti Basin have gone back to

cultivating *ganja* as the only option to ward off starvation. If the Maoist-led state police go back to destroying *ganja* crops after the easing of the pandemic lockdown, it may be sowing the seeds of yet another Maoist-type insurgency in the years ahead.

Sensitive to these grassroots issues, MPs Birodh Khatiwada and Sher Bahadur Tamang have registered a private bill in Nepal's parliament to legalize *ganja*. It won't, however, be tabled for discussion and voting unless they can convince their own party and government to carry it forward. While their initiative is commendable, the bill itself suffers major flaws (described below), which hopefully will be rectified by the process of healthy democratic debates inside and outside the parliament.

First, *ganja* is a medicinal herb like any other found all over the Himalaya, which becomes narcotic (as with many other drugs) only if mis- and over-used. Hence it should be treated as any useful herb and not inherently criminalized. Second, different ecological zones in the Himalaya have different types of *ganja* with differing strengths, properties and natural growth suitability. There is no need to specify in the proposed bill that only Delta9THC 0.2% *ganja* be allowed to be grown, since that leads one to suspect the handwriting of some big *ganja* dealer colluding with politicians. Third, the bill fails to recognize the multipurpose local use of *ganja* (e.g. fibre, food additives, livestock treatment etc.), and sees it only for its narcotic properties and international trade.

Fourth, the proposed bill is pro-rich dealers and anti-poor farmers as it is heavy on licensing with conditions impossible for small and mostly illiterate farmers to fulfil, and hardly facilitative enough. One cannot imagine an illiterate Chepang of Raksirang coming to Kathmandu or even Hetauda, filling multiple forms to have a permit issued to him. The

bill also has too many “to be specified” provisions, indicating that not enough homework has been done to specify those points as any good law should. These centralizing (and not decentralizing) provisions would not only lead to heavy rent-seeking and corruption but, to actually fulfil its mission, eventually demand the creation of a separate *ganja* ministry!

The very West that forced this ban on Nepal is now legalizing *ganja* and countries like Canada are earning a lot of money from this useful herb. Indeed, even the US Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell is advocating the spread of hemp in his Kentucky state and asking for hemp masks to be promoted as the most effective against Covid-19. Given this changed international scenario, Nepali politicians will hopefully find the wisdom and the spine to do the right thing for *ganja* in its original home Nepal.

**Nepal banned ganja  
growing, trade and consumption  
on 16th July 1973 under pressure  
from the Nixon administration.**



SHANKER DAS BAIRAGI

# Diplomat At Helm Of Civil Service

*Known for his soft and humble nature, Shanker Das Bairagi is from a rare group of foreign secretaries promoted as the chief secretary*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every civil servant aspires to be chief secretary. Not all make it. There is the need of commitment and dedication to lead Nepal's over 90,000 civil servants. For a civil servant from the foreign service, the possibility is rare.

Only a few bureaucrats serving the foreign office have chosen to be the chief secretary. They are often interested to serve ambassadorial positions following their retirement. However, Shanker Das Bairagi chose a different course. Instead of trying to head the foreign mission as his predecessor, Bairagi declined the offer to serve as ambassador.

Although Bairagi is the second chief secretary from foreign service, he is the first chief secretary promoted on the basis of seniority from the foreign service. Other senior contenders included Kedar Bahadur Adhikari and Mohan Krishna Sapkota.

Major-General late Shobhag Jang Thapa a bureaucrat, army officer and diplomat, was the first to serve the post of chief secretary after a major administrative reshuffle carried out almost immediately following the political change of 1960.

## **Continual Western Domination**

Bairagi's appointment as chief secretary is also regarded as the continuation of domination of civil service by western part of Nepal. For a long time, the position of chief secretary has been dominated by civil servants from eastern and central parts. Bairagi is fourth chief secretary from west Nepal.

After retirement of Bhoj Raj Ghimire, who hailed from eastern Nepal, all previous five chief secretaries were from western Nepal, except Rajendra Chhetri from the center.

## **Bairagi's Journey**

Close to his career or just weeks before the completion of his tenure as the foreign secretary, Bairagi has been appointed the chief secretary. Born in Parbat on 26 January 1966, to a Khanal family, Bairagi assumed the responsibility of Foreign Secretary of Nepal on 11 October 2015.

He had joined Nepali Foreign Service in December 1987 and held a variety of positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal and the Nepali Missions abroad. Bairagi and his wife Hema



Bairagi have three children.

Waiting patiently and risking lucrative ambassadorial position as a reward for all early retiring foreign secretaries, Bairagi finally became what a civil servant aspires to be.

Dominated by legal and administrative groups of civil service, the coveted post has often eluded foreign service and civil servants from other services often discard foreign secretaries as inexperienced to hold the post of chief secretary.

Holding several posts in the MoFA, as well as Nepali Missions abroad, Bairagi was ambassador/permanent representative of Nepal to the United Nations, World Trade Organisation and other International Organisations in

Geneva, as well as international organisations based in Vienna and Rome, from February 2012 to November 2013.

During the same period, he served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Nepal to the Swiss Confederation with concurrent accreditation to the Republic of Italy.

Bairagi, who graduated in law from Nepal Law Campus in 1989, and completed his master's degree in political science from Tribhuvan University in 1995, also obtained a master's degree in European Integration and Development (Euromaster) from Free University of Brussels in 2002.

Prior to his ambassadorial appointment, Bairagi served as Deputy Permanent Representative/ Minister Plenipotentiary of Nepal to the United Nations, New York (November 2009 – February 2012). He led at the expert level the Group of 77 and China as a coordinator during the intergovernmental negotiations on the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries, adopted by the 4th UN Conference on the LDCs in May 2011.

The government had provided the role of officiating the Foreign Secretary after the then Foreign Secretary Arjun Bahadur Thapa retired from the post on January 14, 2014. Bairagi has been leading the administration of Nepal's Foreign Services ever. Due to a provision of the Civil Services Act of 1993 that requires at least five years of experience as a joint secretary to become a secretary, Bairagi could not make it to the post of the Foreign Secretary immediately. He was promoted as the Foreign Secretary from his officiating status only in October 2015.

Having enormous experience of serving at the international level, Bairagi will provide the much needed leadership to Nepal's civil service as its chief secretary.

# Young People's Commitments in COVID-19 Response



The COVID-19 is changing the world as it affects all aspects of people's lives in every society. While the consequences of the pandemic are varying from country to country, it is increasing poverty, inequalities and insecurity in many parts of the world. And, people of different ages are experiencing its effects in different ways.

The COVID-19 poses considerable risks to young people in the fields of education, mental health and employment. Women and girls are at heightened risk of domestic violence, inadequate access of essential health care and economic insecurity. The incidence of gender-based violence and forced marriage has increased in different parts of the world. Young refugees and displaced people are further at risk as they are isolated from the support system in many circumstances.

A Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 conducted by partners of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth-between April and May 2020 reveals that the impact of the pandemic on young people to be systematic, deep and disproportionate. It has been particularly hard on young women, younger youth and youth in lower-income countries.

Of the young people who were either studying or combining study and work before the onset of the crisis, three-quarters (73 per cent) experienced school closures, yet not all were able to transition into online and distance learning. The study finds that 17 per cent of young people are probably affected by anxiety and depression. Mental well-being is lowest for young women and younger youth between the ages of 18 and 24.

Various other studies on economic impact of the COVID-19 have revealed that many migrant workers, mostly in tourism, services and construction industries have lost their jobs globally since the lockdown started in March 2020. Women migrant workers are at greater risk of multiple intersections of discriminations and violence based on caste, class, race, ethnicity, nationality and age.

Coincidentally, year 2020 also marks the fifth anniversary of the landmark UN resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security. Emphasizing the critical need of young people to engage and support each other and demand and drive change, UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres said, "The world cannot afford a lost generation of youth, their lives set back by COVID-19 and their voices stifled by a lack of participation." He called for more meaningful youth participation, partnerships, protection and empowerment.

Along with challenges, COVID-19 is opening up new opportunities for collective action for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike Millennium Development Goals, SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries, both developed and developing in a global partnership. The SDGs slogan "leave no one behind" is more relevant today than ever in our global response to COVID-19.

Young people are rising to these challenges as well as responding to contain the virus and helping communities. Young people and youth organizations are bringing voluntary spirit. They are showing solidarity, asserting their voice through campaign, tackling myths and stigma, keeping communication with communities across age and social groups, and protecting women and child-friendly spaces. They are making best use of digital technologies and connecting with networks for online education and e-businesses.

We are inspired by young people for what they do, and they can do more. Yet, many young people are excluded from civic participation and decision-making processes. They are not adequately empowered and motivated for skills and opportunities. Potentials of youth must be realized as a dynamic force for building inclusive and resilient societies.

In the light of these challenges and opportunities, there is a need to invest in youth to build their capacity in leadership, human rights, humanitarian principles, peace advocacy, entrepreneurship and global agendas. There is also a need to provide positive life skills to youth at risk as well as their psychosocial recovery and social integration. Further, there are young people in need such as migrants, displaced, persons with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence and persons with chronic diseases who need urgent support and protection.

We need to empower youth by engaging them in different platforms at sub-national and national levels. We need to build network of youth organizations with other groups and form inter-generational ties with senior members and policy makers. This will enhance solidarity in collective action for community transformation particularly in addressing structural gender and cultural violence.

Technology is bringing youth together for learning and businesses as digital platform solutions are taking shape. We need to take immediate actions to address digital divide specially for rural and marginalized young people for equitable learning and business opportunities as we move forwards.

This global crisis has taught us to the meaning of life and purpose. It has made us to be more compassionate. We have learned that the challenges cannot be dealt in isolation and cannot be dealt by one section of the population. We need commitments to support, protect, capacitate and mobilize youth as informed and engaged citizens. Leaders need to lead the agenda of youth in COVID-19 response.

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# Determined, Deliberate And Deceptive

The real motive behind the series of actions, deeds, misdeeds, and decisions that brought our Republic to the current state-of-affairs is becoming clear and obvious. That is the formalization of a plan of destruction by (i) deliberate omission of truth by those who knew but then held the information in their personal archives; (ii) determined pro-activism in the dissemination of lies by those mercenaries deployed with ideological messages, and; (iii) deceptive delivery of promises by those who actually governed.

The entire plan, commonly referred as 'grand design' by politicians, intellectuals, and laypersons alike seems to have been devised to sow the seed of hatred amongst all, break the unity of the country, paralyze all functioning institutions, and ultimately capture the governance so as to ensure a remote-controlled management from afar. Certainly, in an environment where coining any action or decision that is unsuitable to your palate as 'grand design' is common practice, one may be skeptical about the above viewpoint, but it is certainly not out of place in this specific context.

The outcome yet may not be completely obvious, but it is on track. The real surprises are yet to be revealed, finally quenching the thirst of those drowning in speculation. The blow is likely going to be immeasurably intense, and regrets and shocks will be omnipresent.

Admittedly, the pace of advancing has been a little slow. That may have been partly due to the unforeseen natural disasters, and partly due to the modifications in the strategic exercise of political offers and acceptances, combined with expressions of vested interests and competing offers of extra services. However, the target is still intact; the goal post remains the same.

The "grand design" tragedy, so far, seems inexplicable. Those who are in search of the causality are still exploring the maze and have not arrived at the endpoint. Those few who understand this already have decided to take the vow of silence to avoid being aggressed by others. Those who do not necessarily think they need to understand this, position themselves between the situational ambivalence and their existential-necessity, and continue to look at the opposite direction. Their shenanigans are perennial, systematically hurting the larger citizenry.

So many scandals have gone by without resolution; so much of expectation has vanished without achievement; and yes, a few success stories have also been recorded, but, although deserving, without much accolade. The lack of accolade is likely due to the ambiguity in peoples' minds, filled with angst, frustration, and despair, yet also lightly enveloped with sliver of hope, curiosity, and tolerance.

The Republic is bleeding, both literally and figuratively, and politically as well as economically. The much-needed development work is slow, if not at a standstill, although slogans of development continue to be included in every leaders' speeches at all federal, provincial or district levels. Despite all this, not enough time was devoted to thinking and strategizing about the methods of guaranteeing adequate, transparent, pragmatic, and equity-based opportunities for each of the provinces and districts for them to carry out the de-



BY: DR. K. UPRETY

velopment programs. This matter continues to be more serious and relevant in a country which can implement development programs only from borrowed money that needs to be repaid, thus, making it a citizen-wide obligation, if not also an intergenerational one.

In similar vein, while not enough institutions have been adequately reformed to ensure sustainability of performance in a republican setting, appointments, even the constitutional ones, have been provided a color or price tag and are sold to the first-come highest bidder, without any consideration of the person's background and contribution.

People's ambivalence vis-à-vis leaders' hollow and loud patriotism and artificial nationalism are quite interesting to see. The most vocal ones are often also rewarded with a portfolio of glamour as a token of appreciation for their help, howsoever self-serving that may have been.

The larger citizenry, on its part, broadly appears to have lost faith and developed distrust vis-à-vis the establishment's style, perspective, and behavior. The once-vibrant and omnipotent civil society which had blessed the change flawed in process without deep consideration of the ramifications, now, realizing that it had bet on the wrong horse, more and more believes in spontaneous street-made decisions, essentially generated with emotion, rather than with due processes and logic, and wants to rely heavily on popular internet-based justice. The executive, legislative and judicial powers, it seems, have been, de facto, relegated to the streets. Such a practice has been ongoing for some time, but the leaders prefer staying either non-committal or not fully honest about their intentions to correct. Ironically, notwithstanding the above, at the time of approaching the ballot boxes, the strong and burning stance of the civil society stays only lukewarm, at best. "Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat," said Sun Tzu, a Chinese military strategist of the 5th century BC. This saying holds true in the current context, regardless of the ideology dominating the political parties, the establishment, or the civil society.

On a daily basis, what is noticeable is that squeezed between the contrasting demands from different geopolitical corners, from the North, the South or even farther, and clueless about the approach in responding to such demands in a coherent manner, the decision-makers appear compelled to take unrealistic stances, essentially for media purpose. Such stances, they well know it, are only but hollow dents for camouflaging purpose, which most people, thanks to their limitless patience, tend to preclude from their spectrum of judgment.

Reconnecting with reality, thus, is the prime reminder for today. Without feeling any humiliation, and hesitation, showing heroism happens to be the logical call, even if that means going back two decades and re-embracing the system of that time. A compromising attitude is needed from all sides. That would help to at least bring back peace and security, resume a normal routine, and restore some smile on the face of the people. Indeed, a good compromise is better than a bad victory!

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# Small Farmers Sustain Economic Growth

Despite unprecedented social progress and global development strides that have lifted more than one billion people out of poverty in the recent decades, soaring inequality, exclusion and extreme poverty continue to pose challenges around the globe. In that context, it is heartening that Nepal has risen in the ranking to a lower middle-income country from a low-income country. Yet, there are many people struggling to meet the basic needs, exposing the lopsided economic growth.

Development plans from the first to the recent, fifteenth, have unfailingly prioritized poverty reduction, employment creation, sustainable economic growth and social inclusion. Nevertheless, chronic poverty still remains significantly high, particularly in far-flung rural areas of the country. In Karnali province, for example, 51.2% of the population is multi-dimensionally poor, compared with the national average of 28.6%. Poverty can be seen to be harsher among Dalits: the so-called untouchables, Madhesi, marginalized communities, indigenous people and women.

Inequality of income and wealth is also substantial in Nepal. Gini index of 0.31 in 2075/76 shows high income inequality in the country. The burgeoning gap between rich and poor is both unfair and unsustainable. There is, therefore, a danger that increasing income inequality may lead to further political and social instability.

Nepal is experiencing a demographic dividend for 40.35 percent of the population lies in the age group 16-40. Unfortunately, Nepal is taking advantage of such youth bulge through their earnings from abroad instead of getting benefitted from use of their labor and skill in their own soil.

Youths not in education, employment or training (NEET), also called discouraged youths, have become the source of remittance, trapping the Nepali economy into the so called 'Dutch Disease', a situation where the country's focus is mainly on remittance overshadowing agriculture and industry.

Against this backdrop, if the government real-



BY: DR. SHIVARAM PD. KOIRALA

ly wants to address the issues of poverty, inequality, exclusion and unemployment, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is sine qua non. Growth is said to be inclusive when it takes place in the sectors in which the poor work (e.g. agriculture); occurs in places where the poor live (e.g. isolated areas with few resources); uses the factors of production that

the poor possess (e.g. unskilled labor); and reduces the prices of consumption items that the poor consume (e.g. food, fuel and clothing). Inclusive growth should create opportunity for the unemployed to participate in the economy by creating their own jobs, not mere creation of employment opportunities. The ideas of inclusive economic growth are a major departure from "trickle down" development thinking. Development in fact is meaningful only when it is inclusive and sustainable that benefits all.

Viewed from the perspective of sustainable and inclusive economic growth, agriculture sector in which rural people in general and the poor in particular work, has to be made a profitable venture through agriculture upgrading. Sustainable development of agriculture is the only option if the pace of economic development is to be accelerated, poverty is to be reduced and inclusive economic growth is to be ensured. Studies have indicated that a one percent growth in agriculture sector is 2-3 times more effective in reducing poverty than one percent

growth in other sectors. Production driven economy, rather than innovation/knowledge-based economy like Singapore, is the need of the day. South Korea has experienced one of the largest economic transformations of the past 60 years though it started as an agriculture-based economy in the 1960s and became the 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world in terms of GDP in 2016. Agricultural

production and productivity growth in Vietnam facilitated industrial development and was a major factor in downing poverty. Countries like Israel, Nigeria, Brazil, Thailand and Ethiopia are making a big stride in economic front through agricultural development strategy. The





## VIEWPOINT

agricultural development assisted greatly for industrialization in countries like US and Japan, as evident from the significant progress made by them.

Promotion and protection of small and medium sized enterprises, which are labor intensive, use local resources as inputs, provide economic opportunities for low income people and produce output from cheaper locally produced materials is another viable option for ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Considering that Nepal is a country of agro-bio-diversity having potentials to produce cereal crops to high value exportable products, the structure of the agriculture sector itself has to change like in China. For example, China is diversifying out of coarse grains into fine grains, out of staple grains into higher valued crops and out of cropping into livestock and grains. Trade patterns are also changing in line with China's comparative advantage. Learning from China's advancement through agriculture development and production industry, Nepal too has to focus on production of high value crops and crops of comparative advantage e.g. large cardamom, ginger, tea, coffee, mushroom, apple, sweet orange, turmeric etc. in large scale and processing as well for value addition and export earnings. So, need of the time is smart farming, innovation and research with adequate investment in agriculture sector together with promotion of Small and Medium sized Agriculture Enterprises (SMAEs). Since most of the primary products that are required in industries are obtained from the agricultural sector, promoting local SMAEs is the most effective and sustainable solution for creating more inclusive growth and are the starting point of development in the economies towards industrialization. Nepal's economic salvation in fact comes from SMEs not from big foreign investments and large-scale industries. A developed country like Germany is propelled largely by SMEs, not Mercedes Benz and similar large-scale industries.

In the context as discussed above, it is worth-mentioning the initiation of small holder farmers promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth of the country. In order to ensure inclusive economic growth, small holder farmers themselves starting from 1993, in the ownership of their own, have so far created about 900 Small Farmers Agriculture Cooperatives (SFACLs) which are community-based organizations. These cooperatives are actively working in 74 districts of the country covering all three ecological regions and 465 local municipalities providing financial and support services to above 900 thousand households particularly poor, disadvantaged and marginalized comprising women, indigenous minorities, ethnic groups and other backward communities. Of the total members, 78 percent are women, Dalits and indigenous minorities being 53 percent. Thus, these cooperatives exhibit the perfect example of social and financial inclusion. SFACLs are established targeting poverty cen-

tered isolated areas where banks and financial institutions are invariably seen as reluctant to serve. In addition, SFACLs educate the small holder/marginalized farmers to do farming adopting modern farming practices and extend support to the member farmers in agriculture related various issues they face. Israel government's support in this connection, by providing opportunity to the youngsters of small holder farmers to learn Israeli modern farming technologies has of course been worth appreciating. This program has been instrumental to attract youth in agriculture and creation of employment opportunity in rural areas of Nepal. Moreover, provision of homestay facility by the member farmers of SFACLs simultaneously serving local foods from organic produce has helped promote Argo-ecotourism thereby enhancing off farm income of the small-scale poor farmers. Women members' involvement in micro enterprises operation has empowered them both financially and socially. Last but not the least, Small and Medium Agricultural Enterprises/industries (SMAE/Is), for example tea, dairy, pulse, rice, seed, mustard oil, managed and run by small holder farmers themselves in thousands in number across the country have helped farmers get reasonable price of their produce through value addition, storage and marketing. Considering that the farm has to get bigger and more efficient, small holder farmer themselves have started making big farm by pooling their small plots of land. Rural Enterprise Financing project (REFP) being implemented with the loan support of Asian Development Bank is sure to add a new dimension to the poverty oriented structural transformation (POST) of rural economy as the small holder farmers themselves will be able to set up many more individual and collective agriculture enterprises/industries in rural area. Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd. (SKBBL) is committed to address the challenges and problems faced by SMEs often called missing middle by providing financial, technical, business development and marketing supports, in addition to linking start-up with the incubation centers.

Given that agriculture sector along with agriculture related local SMEs are sustainable solutions for creating more inclusive growth, small holder farmers need to be given adequate incentives along with policy support for agriculture upgrade, apart from encouraging them to set up and operate SMAEs. SMAEs will start creating entrepreneurial culture which ultimately paves the way for industrialization of an economy. At least 900 thousand small holder farmers of Nepal under the aegis of their own apex wholesale financial Institutions (SKBBL) are united together to shape their destiny and contribute towards achievement of sustainable development goals in general and inclusive economic growth of the country in particular.

*(Dr. Shivaram Pd. Koirala is the CEO of SKBBL)*

# Diplomat With Passion

*Newly-appointed foreign secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal has a task before him to handle an uneasy situation in Nepal's foreign relations in the midst of COVID-19 Pandemic*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**F**rancis De Callieres, a French diplomat of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Guru of diplomacy, writes in his book, *The Art of Diplomacy*, that a man who has the command of himself and is always a cool in temper, has a great advantage in dealing with one who is hot and fiery. "To succeed in the diplomatic employments, one must speak little and hear a great deal, one must have calm, deservedness, a great deal of discretion, and patience in abundance," Callieres writes.

New foreign secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal does have similar qualities. Knowing Paudyal's personal quality, his predecessor Shanker Das Bairagi, who is promoted as chief secretary, had chosen him as the second man in command for the last five years giving him the responsibility as the spokesperson.

With a long tradition and history, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has been much politicized and destabilized in the last 30 years, is still regarded as an institution with a pool of talented civil servants.

In addition to his long experience in the foreign ministry, Paudyal has also served as Nepalese ambassador to Pakistan. He is the 24<sup>th</sup> foreign secretary of Nepal.

At a time when the COVID-19 Pandemic has badly affected the world, which is witnessing growing tensions here and there, Paudyal has taken the major responsibility.

Nepal has seen many ups and downs and passed through odd situations in dealing with India over the last five years. The publication of the new map by Nepal incorporating Kalapani has complicated Nepal's relations with India.

In the words of former foreign secretary Professor Bishwa Pradhan,

"The bulk of our foreign policy engagement is with India. Whether we like it or not, the geo-politics is such that, as an immediate neighbor, we are bound to have bilateral problems of multi-faced characters in our relations with India. As such, it is more in our national interest to seek resolving those problems quickly. Basically, Nepal's foreign policy is India Policy which covers most of the aspects of it ranging from the socio-economic to political fields.

He argues that we have already framed the best of relations by resolving all pertinent issues with Republic of China in the aftermath of 1955 with the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship on April 28, 1960.

As former foreign secretary Pradhan said in his book *Diplomatic Strategy for Nepal*, Paudyal's first meeting with Indian foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla will be highly significant.

Secretary Paudyal, who has seen all these developments closely, will use his diplomatic skills to get things done. Having secured all the goodwill from his predecessors, including preceding foreign secretary and current chief secretary Shanker Das Bairagi, secretary Paudyal does have the backing from institutions and individuals.

With foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali on his side, Paudyal has a solid backing from the policy level. This is a very good asset.

"Glad that Bharat Raj Poudyal, a seasoned diplomat, has been appointed Nepal's Foreign Secretary! Many congratulations and best wishes," writes former foreign secretary Madhu Raman Acharya, on his Facebook wall.

"Congrats a lot. It is always a pleasure and even privilege to wish and congratulate a valuable colleague of



ours. He takes over as the 24<sup>th</sup> Foreign Secretary of Nepal despite the fact that two incumbents and cream of the cream and pride of our service," writes former foreign secretary Madan Kumar Bhattarai in his Facebook wall.

"As a former foreign secretary preferring to call MRP foreign secretary as that took much of the tenure, we wish to record our profound appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Bharatji in his capacity as DG, Passport Department, when the MoFA was in the arduous and even challenging process of delivering services to the customers."

"Warmest congratulations & best wishes on your most deserving appointment as the Foreign Secretary of Nepal! May you rise to your best in professionalizing the foreign service, moving beyond silos for best results & enriching the soul of Nepal as a mature nation state!," tweeted former foreign secretary Durga Prasad Bhattarai.

Born in Chilaunebas, Syangja, Nepal in 1966, Paudyal joined civil service in 1987 through competitive exams. Secretary Paudyal has enormous challenges and opportunities before him. After renowned scholar late Rishikesh Shah and Sardar Bhim Bahadur Pande, Paudyal is the third man from Syangja to secure the highest position of MOFA.



# Nepal In Crisis

*With the increase in the number of people with coronavirus infection, Nepal's health sector is facing a severe stress due to a lack of ICU and ventilator support*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's secretariat recently confirmed 68 infections of COVID-19 along with his personal physician, principal secretary, foreign affairs advisor and press advisor.

Supreme Court has announced a temporary suspension of the hearing in the larger bench following infections among the justices, employees of the court and lawyers.

This is not last here. Prominent industrialist and banker Chandra Prasad Dhaka, who is leading candidates for first senior vice-president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries, has also infected by COVID-19. Industrialist Binod Kumar Chaudhary has recovered from the disease.

The situation with Parliament and members of local municipalities and others is the same as COVID-19 has already penetrated deep inside the community infecting a large segment of the population.

Although Kathmandu valley has been recording the largest number of COVID-19 cases, other bigger cities have a similar situation. Out of 10, 5000 cases until October 10, sixty percent of infections were in Kathmandu district alone.

In the last one month alone, over 60 thousand cases were reported in Kathmandu Valley. As the festival season is approaching, the situation is likely to get worse. "If we continue to violate the health protocols, visiting crowded markets for festival purchase, our health system will be unable to cope with the burden of patients," said Professor Dr. Jageshwar Gautam, spokesperson of Ministry of Health and Population. "I humbly request all to remain inside home. Go outside only if it is necessary," said Professor Dr. Gautam.

His humble plea does not have any impact. Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation is working to open the temples and religious shrines before the Dashain. Experts have already warned that this will further intensify the pandemic

which will go out of control.

At a time when Kathmandu Valley has been reporting over 1500 cases daily with hospitalization rate getting higher by the day, the government is yet make any emergency plan.

"We request all COVID-19 patients to remain in home isolation not to visit the hospital until serious trouble arises," urged Professor Dr. Gautam. There are wider criticisms over his remark. However, there is no option before him given Nepal's health facilities.

As Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and main opposition party leader Sher Bahadur Deuba are facing their own problem in the party, the real threat of COVID-19 seems to be nobody's agenda.

Gopal Sharma, in his news report for Reuters news agency, warned of

ficial data.

The number of new infections per day has been consistently increasing and is second only to India in the South Asia region, according to the Reuters tally.

Nepal's biggest city of Kathmandu and its surrounding areas account for more than one third of all infections, and authorities said cases were on the verge of slipping out of control.

"If infections in the Kathmandu valley continue to increase at this rate, hospitals will not be able to support the burden," health ministry spokesman Jageshwar Gautam said.

He said there were 181 intensive care units and 76 ventilators in Kathmandu and neighboring cities of Lalitpur and Bhaktapur with four million people. Less than half were occupied now, he said.

But patients interviewed by local media said ICU beds were hard to find and some hospitals were refusing to admit the COVID-19 patients.

Nepal enforced strict lockdown measures after its second positive case in March and infections were below many South Asian neighbors, with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli playing down the risks. Cases increased exponentially after the government began to ease restrictive measures in June to prop up its faltering economy.

Experts also say the government failed to enforce strict protocols – wearing masks, individual distancing and sanitation – and failed to keep those suspected of having the virus under strict supervision.

"In absence of proper monitoring of home quarantines, infected people moved freely to mingle with crowds and spread the virus," said Rabindra Pandey, a public health expert.

Nepal's government says the country has the capacity to test 23,000 samples every day, but Pandey said daily average was currently around 13,000, leading to some cases not being traced and isolated.



Chandra Prasad Dhaka

the healthcare crisis after coronavirus infections crossed 100,000.

Nepal's total coronavirus infections passed 100,000 on Friday, the Reuters reported, quoting the health ministry, adding that they are rising at a faster rate than both Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have far larger populations.

The country of 30 million people, wedged between China and India, has reported 100,676 total cases of coronavirus and 600 deaths. On Friday it reported 2,059 new daily cases and ten deaths after performing 13,279 tests, according to of-

# Translating Commitments Into Action

Sharing Nepal's initiatives, efforts and achievements on biodiversity conservation, accepting 'biodiversity resources a lifeline' and 'mountain ecosystem a unique laboratory and true source of knowledge', Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli urged the international community to 'set more ambitious targets with ... people's right over natural resources and its sustainable protection' and 'need for sustained investment in biodiversity conservation'. This call was made at the Biodiversity Summit under the theme 'urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development' on 30 September 2020 during the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The Prime Minister linked 'climate crisis' with the 'existential threat', and emphasised on the urgency for climate action at the UNGA general debate on 25 September 2020, and reiterated on Climate Vulnerable Forum Leaders Event on 7 October 2020 (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/10/08/nepal-stands-limiting-global-temperature-15C-pm-oli/>). The PM's statements highlight Nepal's commitments on biodiversity conservation and urgency for climate actions to protect people and resources. Biodiversity loss is also linked climate crisis.

Understanding the increased pressure on and loss of biodiversity, international community has realised the urgency of conserving biodiversity at ecosystem, species and genetic levels as clearly reflected while observing the International Biodiversity Day on 22 May and World Environment Day on 5 June this year (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/06/03/world-environment-day-2020-promoting-biodiversity-conservation/>). Several events, including the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Community-based Adaptation (CbA) in September 2020 which urged to promote nature-based solutions to address the threats of climate change and biodiversity and called for 'development partners to make longer commitments' with recognition of young people to take leadership, have reiterated to stop rapid loss of biodiversity and urgency of its conservation.

At country level, several efforts are underway to conserve biodiversity since half-a-century. Nepal's efforts in engaging local people in biodiversity conservation within and outside protected areas have been well recognised by the international community. However, there are 'dangerous initiatives' as well to destroy forest biodiversity in the name of 'game changer' projects. Possible conversion of Nijgadh forests into airport questions our commitments on biodiversity conservation.

The government approved 2018 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report of Second International Airport Project (the Nijgadh airport) clearly mentioned 87



BY: BATU UPRETY

percent of its entire project area (8,045 ha) as dense forest. Over half of the area is dominated by Sal forest. The report considered over 3900 seedlings/ha and well-established sapling over 700/ha as 'healthy sign for good Sal forest'. Based on EIA report, the Project will directly affect 585,499 matured trees and 1,864,820 pole-sized different species in this 'least disturbed ... one of the largest and richest biodiversity' of Terai forests. This forest being the 'corridor' of wild elephant has high conservation significance with possible devastation from elephants in absence of this 'corridor' forest. Equally, this area provides habitat for large mammals, including indigenous, endangered and threatened wildlife. The project, if implemented, will lead to 'disappear' location-specific rich biodiversity, compel wild animals to leave their 'best habitat' or migrate to the Parsa Wildlife Reserve or other forests, and induce human & wildlife conflict.

Loss of forest area for airport construction will result to annual loss of 25,580 tons of carbon sequestration and nearly 61 million tons of oxygen release potentials. The EIA report estimated annual loss of ecological services equivalent to over NRs. 231 billion from Nijgadh forests. The report has categorically evaluated loss of indigenous, endangered and threatened plant species, biodiversity and species of conservation significance, and wildlife's habitat loss and displacement as 'significant impact' (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/06/05/world-environment-day-2020-nepal-bio-diversity-nijgadh-forest-under-threat/>). Approved Terms of Reference for EIA study dictates the need for considering forest as important criteria for alternative analysis.

This criteria was not considered but alternative analysis mentioned non-implementation of the project results to retention of large forest area as beneficial impact and implementation of the project results to loss of large dense forest, create ecological unbalance and greater effect to 'ground-water recharge and storage'

which might convert downstream cropland into 'dryland'. In addition, Gaur Bazar from Lal Bakaiya and Gadhimai from Pasaha rivers will likely submerge during rainy season.

Hon. Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Mr. Yoesh Bhattarai is pushing to cut trees and 'destroy habitat' by directing officials to clear forest defying the order of the Supreme Court (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/10/05/nijgadh-airport-row-petitioners-file-contempt-court-against-tourism-minister-bhattarai/>). People have continuously raised concerns and urged for not to con-

**The Government is now in better position to conserve Nijgadh forests as airport construction in Bhairawa and Pokhara is nearing to completion;**



## ENVIRONMENT

struct Nijgadh airport at the cost of large chunk of unbelievable loss of valuable timber and non-timber plant species, wildlife habitat, elephant corridor, and biodiversity (ecosystem, species and genetic levels) in totality.

The Government is now in better position to conserve Nijgadh forests as airport construction in Bhairawa and Pokhara is nearing to completion; international travel is likely to decline with continuation of virtual meetings; Supreme Court has yet to decide on petition and issued interim order not to cut trees; Zurich airport has declined to construct the Nijgadh airport; national funding is sufficiently below the required investment; no other organisations have shown interest with concrete 'proposal and resources' to construct this proposed airport; flight path is yet to agree upon; detailed feasibility study has not been released or prepared transparently; approved EIA report is technically challenged as impacts are not linked to airport activities; approved EIA report estimated the loss of nearly 2.5 million trees which

requires compensatory plantation in over 38,000 ha - nearly 5 times of the size of proposed airport area (8,045 ha); acquisition of private land is yet to be fully compensated; Nijgadh airport is technically inappropriate from economic and environmental perspectives; several reports urged to cut minimum number of trees with no need for constructing smart city in airport area and possibility of shifting the airport towards south or linking with Simara airport. Almost all these concerns are related to conservation of this rich biodiversity area.

Taking into consideration the irreversible adverse impacts of proposed Nijgadh airport on forest biodiversity and 'intrinsic' commitments of the Prime Minister, also made on 30 September 2020 at UN special event on biodiversity, it is appealed to translate international commitments into action by 'immediately stopping' all activities related to destruction of pristine forest biodiversity of Nijgadh area.

# सामाजिक सुरक्षा कोषमा आवद्धता सुरक्षित जीवनको सुनिश्चितता ।



**नेपाल सरकार**  
**सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय**  
**सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग**

# Children Suffering

*UNICEF and Save the Children say 7 million Nepali children plunged into poverty*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As COVID-19 is growing rapidly in recent days, it is likely to invite more restrictions in the coming days. The disruption of mobility will create more problems for children living below the poverty line.

A new study published by UNICEF and Save the Children reveals that the number of children living in poverty rose from an estimated 1.3 million before the pandemic to about 7 million in August in Nepal.

"In Nepal specifically, COVID-19 has seriously impacted child poverty where children have been bearing the burden of poverty disproportionately. The number of children living in poverty rose from an estimated 1.3 million before the pandemic to about 7 million in August. Many of these children are suffering from multiple deprivations that include a lack of access to nutritious food and to education," says the report.

The report says that 150 million additional children plunged into poverty due to COVID-19.

The number of children living in multidimensional poverty has soared to approximately 1.2 billion due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the analysis. This is a 15 percent increase in the number of children living in deprivation in low- and middle-income countries or an additional 150 million children since the pandemic hit earlier this year.

The multidimensional poverty analysis uses data on access to education, healthcare, housing, nutrition, sanitation and water from more than 70 countries. It highlights that around 45 percent of children were severely deprived of at least one of these critical needs in the countries analyzed before the pandemic.

Although the analysis paints a dire picture already, UNICEF warns the situation will likely worsen in the months to come. Save the Children and UNICEF are committed to continuing to monitor this evolving situation and work with governments and civil society to confront it.

"COVID-19 and the lockdown measures imposed to prevent its spread have pushed millions of children deeper into poverty," said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. "Families on the cusp of escaping poverty have been pulled back in, while others are experiencing levels of deprivation they have never seen before. Most concurring, we are closer to the beginning of this crisis than its end."

The report notes that child poverty is much more than a monetary value. Although measures of monetary poverty such as household income are important, they provide only a partial view of the plight of children living in poverty. To understand the full extent of child poverty, all potential deprivations must be analyzed directly. This also points to the need to implement multi-sectoral policies addressing health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation and housing deprivations to end multidimensional poverty.

Social protection, inclusive fiscal policies, investments in social services, and employment and labor market interventions to support families are critical to lifting children out of poverty and preventing further devastation. This includes expanding access to quality healthcare and providing the tools and technology needed for children to continue their education remotely; and investing in family-friendly policies such as paid leave and childcare.

"This pandemic has already caused the biggest global education emergency in history, and the increase in poverty will make it very hard for the most vulnerable children and their families to make up for the loss," said Inger Ashing, CEO of Save



the Children. "Children who lose out on education are more likely to be forced into child labor or early marriage and be trapped in a cycle of poverty for years to come. We cannot afford to let a whole generation of children become victims of this pandemic. National governments and the international community must step up to soften the blow."

There are not only more children experiencing poverty than before, the poorest children are getting poorer as well, the report notes. Some children may suffer one or more deprivations and others experience none at all, therefore the average number of deprivations suffered per child can be used to assess how poor children are. Before the pandemic, the average number of severe deprivations per child was around 0.7. It is now estimated to have increased by 15 percent to around 0.85.

"We must act now to prevent additional children from being deprived in basic life needs like school, medicine, food, water and shelter," said Fore. "Governments must prioritize the most marginalized children and their families through the rapid expansion of social protection systems including cash transfers and child benefits, remote learning opportunities, healthcare services and school feeding. Making these critical investments now can help countries to prepare for future shocks."



MADHAV BELBASE

# Father Of TBM In Nepal

*With his proven technical experience and risk-taking capacity, while trying a new technology, Madhav Belbase, has done a service to the nation by advocating for Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) Technology in Bheri-Babai and Sunkosi-Marina Diversion projects. The Melamchi Project was delayed for almost a decade due to the technical obstructions in the tunnel boring of the first phase. Now TBM can be a game changer to avoid the delay in the second phase, given its successful use in Bheri-Babai in terms of time and cost. Coincidentally, Belbase, who is known as father of TBM in Nepal, is now the secretary of the ministry which looks at the Melamchi Project*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although TBM was one of the proven alternative technologies to bore tunnels, it was regarded as a highly risky decision to introduce it in the first basin diversion irrigation project in Nepal. Taking all risks and criticisms, Secretary Belbase, as the regional director of Irrigation Directorate of Mid-West, had

chosen to use TBM for the construction of tunnel in Bheri-Babai Diversion Multi-purpose Project.

Bringing new technology always brought criticism and opponents. Belbase also faced harsh criticism for bringing TBM in Nepal. Not only within his own department, higher officials at the ministry also tried to stop his move

to bring TBM.

“I had few options: take risk, face criticism for construction or drop such a highly important irrigation project to irrigate large portion of land in mid-west and be on safe side,” said Belbase. “I decided to take a risk for the sake of project as well as to bring new technology in the coun-



try for the future development. “I am proud to say that my decision to bring TBM proved a success.” On a very crucial choice between TBM and traditional Drilling, Blasting and Mucking (DBM), Belbase chose the former one. As the regional director Belbase had two options: wait for a series of technical studies reports of DBM, or search an alternative technology appropriate to bore tunnel in a fragile geology of Chure mountain range.

“The construction of 12.2

kilometer long tunnel from both ends with no feasible ADIT would likely take 7-8 years. In this context, it forced us to search for alternatives. In the process, I invited an engineer from Chinese company CGGC at the site and discussed further. After his visit, he proposed TBM would be most appropriate for the tunnel. After this suggestion, our team started studying TBM. At that time, we did not have any information about TBM,” writes Belbase on his Facebook wall.

Frustrated and discouraged by various people regarding the use of TBM, Belbase’s confidence and stand got the support after visiting TBM sites in India and acquiring information on various technical issues related to it. With this visit, Balbase along with his colleagues at then Ministry of Irrigation recommend TBM technology.

“Given India’s first failed experiences and hostile opinions of Nepali experts, doubtful opinion of few foreigners and severe negative





perception prevailed at the top level. Yet we decided to go ahead. After this our concern was the type of contractor to use for TBM. With so much of uncertain opinion, we had never thought that the TBM could drill tunnel so easily, particularly in the most vulnerable Tolikhola Fault and complete the work before the time,” said Belbase.

Boring tunnel in a fragile geology like Chure mountain range involves heavy risk. However, using TBM in that fragility is more challenging and risky. Choosing some risk, Belbase proposed to use TBM, a new technology for Nepal.

His decision proved technically right as the construction of the tunnel has completed before the schedule without any technical difficulties. Knowing the TBM’s success, Belbase as a executive Director of Water and Energy Commission, proposed TBM for 13 Kilometer long Sunkosi-Marine diversion project. The project has already issued the tender for TBM.

A Chinese company started the work on November 2017 and completed the tunnel in April 2019, earlier than the project timeline or just over 18 months.

In my 30 years of professional career, the preparation time for TBM project was the best and most memorable time. “I would like to express regards to the colleagues of my team. Preparation of TBM design, cost estimate and tender document by the manpower of Department of Irrigation without out consultant was a big achievement.”

In the case of Bheri-Babai Diversion, TBM also showed that it is financially cheaper and technologically appropriate compared to DBM. In many cases, DBM proves costly and time consuming. Melamchi Drinking Water Project is a good example on how DBM is costly.

Spending a lot of time and energy to convince higher officials, Belbase’s decision to use

TBM proved most realistic as Bherai-Babai Tunnel completed before schedule.

Till a decade ago, it was unthinkable to use TBM in Nepal’s construction sector. However, the completion of Bheri-Babai tunnel using TBM has changed the perception.

Given tedious and time consuming experience of construction of first phase of Melamchi tunnel through DBM, Ministry of Drinking Water is now considering whether it can use TBM in construction of second phase of Melamchi.

### **Belbase’s Suffering**

As it says, every change comes with a price. One has to pay price for change and transformation. Taking risk for technology even putting his position at stake, Belbase, a person with professional integrity, had to pay a heavy price in bringing the modern technology in Nepal.

Soon after putting the ten-

der process of TBM, Belbase was transferred as a Director General of Department of Irrigation to Water and Energy Secretariat, which is known as a dumping ground. His promotion for secretary got delayed for almost four years.

Although WECS is regarded as a think tank created to feed policy level ideas on water, irrigation and energy related issues to decision makers, it is now-a-days a shunting ground. However, Belbase, an active person, used his position in WECS to prepare the national water and energy strategy.

His support to TBM continued even from WECS. He provided much needed technical and other advice and encouraged concerned officials to solve the technical problems using TBM.

Until the breakthrough of the tunnel, Belbase used all his capacity to support the project and project staff.

### **TBM Option for Melamchi**

Following successful use of TBM in Bheri-Babai, the technology is now at the forefront in other tunnel boring projects. Frustrated by delay and cost escalation in the first phase of Melamchi Drinking Water Project, there is now a debate on using TBM in its second phase.

Preparation has begun to devise a new technology to excavate tunnel to bring water from Yangri and Larke rivulets to Kathmandu under the second phase of the much-awaited Melamchi Drinking Water Project.

The first diversion tunnel was excavated by DBM technology to divert raw water from Melamchi rivulet to Sundarijal outlet in the first phase. As this method was more time-consuming with change in contractors and escalation of cost, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Melamchi Drinking Water Development Committee have mooted TBM.

With the use of TBM, the cost estimation was also made

revision to give way to apply a new technology.

Yangri is nine kilometers away from Ambathan of Helambu rural municipality – the origin of the Melamchi rivulet, while Larke is two kilometers away from Yangri. Both Yangri and Larke rivulets are located in Panhpokhari Thangpal rural municipality of Sindhu-palchowk.

Melamchi Project's Deputy Executive Director Kamal Raj



to expedite the excavation work through DBM method to divert water from Yangri and Larke to the valley.

There was a preliminary estimate that it would cost Rs 10 billion for the excavation of around 11-km tunnel through this method. Since excavation seems to get delayed while working through the DBM method, the Melamchi Drinking Water Project has made a

Shrestha told RSS that preparation was in the final stage to work in the tunnel through Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) method.

“Machines will be used while excavating tunnel using this method. The TBM technology was also applied in the construction of Bheri-Babai project. The project had successfully piloted the technology in Nepal,” said Shrestha.





### What Is TBM

A tunnel boring machine, TBM, is a machine that is used to excavate tunnels. TBMs can bore through a variety of ground conditions, from hard rock to sand.

It will be most appropriate if there the is no ADDITIONAL INSPECTION TUNNEL (AD-DIT). In the tunnel like Melamchi, where there is the need to bore from one end to another, TBM can be a game changer.

To construct the tunnels, the TBMs will progressively line each tunnel with curved concrete segments as they dig. The twin tunnels will comprise 56,000 individual concrete segments.

TBM has different sizes and kinds. It can be used at the Metro Tunnel Project which will use mixed shield TBMs – commonly known as slurry TBMs – that are purpose-built to suit the local ground conditions. Once the

TBM's cutter head bores through the ground, the excavated material will be mixed with slurry and transported back to the above-ground slurry treatment plant.

Each TBM is 7.28 meters in diameter, weighs more than 1,100 tones and is 120 meters long - as long as 3 E-Class trams end-to-end. The heaviest component is the cutter head, which weighs 100 tones and acts as a drill that can tunnel through rock six times harder than concrete. The face of the cutter head is 7.28m in diameter.

On average the TBMs will move around 10 meters every 24 hours. A crew of up to 10 people, including a TBM operator, will work on the TBM at any one time.

As Nepal is proposing a number of hydropower projects, multi-purpose projects, roads and subways, TBM technology, which was introduced by secretary Belbase, can be a game changer to

achieve progress in Nepal. Although he faced criticism, isolation and hostility within Department of Irrigation and Ministry of Irrigation, secretary Belbase has shown the need to take risks for success.

As Melamchi is going to start its second phase soon following the completion of the first phase, the boring tunnel remains a major challenge. As it took 15 years to complete 27 kilometers of tunnel in the first phase, increasing the cost and time, it may take 5 to six years for 11 kilometer second phase tunnel through traditional DBM technology.

At a time when secretary Belbase, who is also known as the father of TBM in Nepal, is at the Ministry of Water Supply, no one needs to go for justification on using TBM as it can save time and cost of boring 11 KM Tunnel of Melamchi second phase.

# Tale Of TBM In Bheri-Babai Diversion Project



BY: MADHAV BELBASE

Identified by Tahal Consulting Engineers Ltd, an Israeli firm in 1970s, Bheri-Babari Diversion project was placed as a high priority project in JICA's Master Plan. JICA started Detail Project Report study in 1990s and conducted highly important studies including alternative alignment for tunnel and current tunnel alignment. JICA withdrew the study without completing it during the Maoist conflict showing security concerns.

Following the withdrawal of JICA, the project was in a limbo for years. It was revived in 2005 by Nepal government. With the recommendation of then secretary Shanker Prasad Koirala, Water Resources Minister Bishnu Poudel took a decision to carry out the construction of the project through Department of Irrigation. After this decision, preparing DPR work was given to local consultancy firm BPC-JV. Under the DPR design, tunnel was constructed through D & B.

However, construction of 12.2 kilometer long tunnel from both the ends with no feasible ADIT would likely take 7-8 years. In this context, it forced us to search for alternatives.

In the process, I invited an engineer from Chinese company CGGC at the site and discussed further. After his visit, he proposed TBM would be the most appropriate for the tunnel. After this suggestion, our team started studying TBM. At that time, we did not have any information as such about TBM.

Then, we were informed that TBM was used in Haidarabad to bore a 40-kilometer-long tunnel. Our team visited the construction site in Haidarabad and took the first-hand knowledge on how TBM worked. During our visit, we discussed whether TBM could be used in Nepal's Shivalik range or not. We were briefed about the tragic story of failure of TBM in Parbati 2 in India's Himanchal State with similar mountains like Nepal. Even with that bitter experience of Himanchal, we decided to move ahead with TBM in Nepal as the only alternative to divert Bheri River to Babai.

With support from a few colleagues, including foreigners, among whom was one 80-year-old American TBM expert, the team conducted a preliminary study. The words of the old American still hunt my mind as he said with confidence, "I do not see anything here frightening for the TBM." This inspired and encouraged us to take the decision.

On the basis of the preliminary study, colleagues, including Shiv Kumar Basnet, Ajaya Adhikary, Prakash Pudasaini and Manoj Panth, prepared a design and cost es-

timate. When we started talking about TBM, majority of experts in Nepal blamed us as heading for an unviable technology. Had we surrendered before criticisms, Nepal would never have introduced TBM.

Even in the face of India's first failed experience and hostile opinions of Nepali experts and doubts shown by a few foreigners, our concern was to bring an experienced TBM contractor. With so much uncertainty of opinions, we had never thought that the TBM could make the tunnel so easily, particularly in the most vulnerable Tolikhola Fault and complete the work. We had decided to publish the tender for tunnel only amid much confusion around.

Our original plan was to call tender for head works and powerhouse and sign the contract after crossing Tolikhola. However, it was not materialized in such a hostile situation around us. Forget about the opinion outside the Department of Irrigation, there were hostile opinions against TBM in the Ministry of Irrigation as well. Even some of my senior colleagues reportedly complained to the minister and secretary saying that Belbase was dragging the country into uncertainty using TBM.

Ignoring such accusations and firmly standing on the decision, we introduced TBM. However, the department took the ownership of the project only after TBM speeded up work unexpectedly. At one time, there was no one in the department to give a proper direction and decision. Frustrated and demoralized by such behavior of seniors, Shivadai used to come to WECS to get some guidance.

Had TBM Tunnel, Head Works and PH contract been made simultaneously, what would have been consequences in case of completion of HW and PH and incomplete tunnel? Due to uncertain condition of TBM, we were unable to take that decision on that. Following the progress made by TBM, more than expected, some of our colleagues found time to question the total project contract issue.

In my 30 years of professional career, the preparation time for TBM project was the best and most memorable time. I would like to express regards to the colleagues of my team. Preparation of TBM design, cost estimate and tender document by the manpower of Department of Irrigation without out consultant was a big achievement. The completion of the work before the project time and at a lower than the contract price was another milestone.

*(Translated from the author's Facebook post)*



# काठमाण्डौ उपत्यका खानेपानी व्यवस्थापन बोर्डको अनुरोध

- पानी नै जीवन हो यसको महत्व बुझी सदुपयोग गरौं ।
- खानेपानीका श्रोत तथा परम्परागत ढुंगेधाराहरुको संरक्षण गर्ने गरौं ।
- खानेपानीका मुहानहरु प्रदुषण हुनबाट जोगाउँ र मुहान संरक्षण गर्ने गरौं ।
- वर्षातको पानी ढलमा नमिसाई खाल्डो खनी पुनर्भरण गरौं ।
- सबैले वर्षातको पानी संकलन गर्ने प्रविधि जडान गर्ने गरौं ।
- भूमिगत पानीको उपयोग गर्दा अनिवार्य रुपमा यस बोर्डबाट अनुमती पत्र लिने गरौं ।
- खानेपानीको महशुल नियमित रुपमा भुक्तानी गर्ने गरौं र जरिवाना तथा वक्यौताबाट छुटकारा पाँऊ ।
- काठमाण्डौ उपत्यका भित्र भूमिगत पानीको दुरुपयोग, भूमिगत श्रोतको अनाधिकृत दोहन आदीको बारेमा थाहा पाएमा यस बोर्डलाई जानकारी गराऔं ।



काठमाण्डौ उपत्यका खानेपानी व्यवस्थापन बोर्ड

सैबु, भैसेपाटी, ललितपुर

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Aphailai Khojda

# Confessions Of A Professor

*Having encountered a number of situations in his life, Bishwambher Pyakuryal's Aphailai Khojda is mostly his own confessions*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau makes his Confession, Bishwambher Pyakuryal has his Nepali version of similar moments. He narrates every single issue and event of his life in the book. BP Koirala in his Atmakatha and Daman Raj Tulahdar in his autobiography candidly presented the event of their lives. Presenting honestly the events of life, Pyakuryal also puts himself in the list of the great authors.

His correspondence throws much light on his life and character. It is not easy in our day to realize the effect wrought upon the public mind by the events.

This is one of the few books written in the personalized style without oppressing the reader with a sense of languor and unreality. Its faults and beauties are on the surface; Pyakuryal's own estimate is freely expressed from beginning to end.

Pyakuryal is well known for his name and fame in Nepal. A personality from being a professor of Tribhuvan University to a renowned lyricist, Pyakuryal is known all over Nepal. Whether in the teaching profession, or being a lyricist, or writer or consultant of high respect, for that matter, Nepal's renowned economist Pyakuryal is simple, humble and likeable to all.

From writing poems, lyrics, economy related books and articles, economist and former ambassador Bishwambher Pyakuryal has observed life of man and economy of the country.

Dedicating his time tirelessly on issues and for others, professor Pyakuryal this time came out with an auto-biography telling a lot about himself and his observations, collections and interactions in the life.

Unveiled recently through a video event amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Pyakuryal's book Aphailai Khojda narrates his life, experiences, encounters and observations.

Spending over four decades teaching at the Central Department of

Economics, Professor Pyakuryal shared his knowledge with hundreds of students, many of whom have served in high-level positions in civil service and private sector.

Known for his knowledge on economy and professional skills in academic sector, professor Pyakuryal has also earned a fame in the music sector, writing a number of hits as popular songs sung by renowned singers like Narayan Gopal.

Banker and chairperson of Star Hospital Kishore Maharjan said: "I found Pyakuryal is a highly analytical personality and frank person in my over three decades of banking sector experience. His auto-biography will be very useful for all."

His first hit song in 1970s Timile Bhanekaa Sara Dev Chhoyer, his second hit song was Ankhaharu Chahi aljhidaa in 1990s and his recent song Ankhamaa Arko Madakta were ideal, said Maharajan.

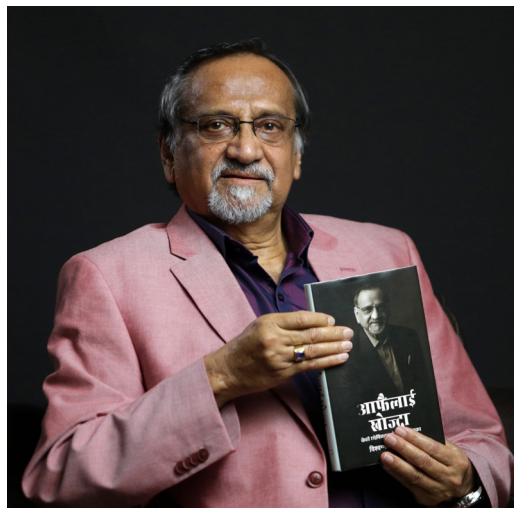
He said that Pyakuryal has presented his struggle and ups and downs concisely in the book.

Similarly, senior artist, film producer and director Nir Shah said that man needs to give justice to the role he or she played during the life and maintaining the originality while mixing them. Bishwambherje has been able to keep it up ...

Shah said whether presenting himself as a country boy or urban student in politics, literature or in love, marriage or cook or consultant, during heavy heart

or light heart, all these are connected in the same rope. Those elements have been made by himself or his philosophy of life and these elements are not demolished yet. "When I searched myself, I find these truths as well as inspiration for life ...

Youth leader Ramkumari Jhankri in her comment said the book, presented simply, help us understand the society, age and system of those days. She said that there are so many important things in the book for younger generation to learn and read.



Author Pyakuryal said he has narrated all the ups and downs, the hardships, pleasures, happiness and sadness.

"I have presented all my experiences honestly and as I was taking an oath to write the truth. I went to prison during student days

as an activist, I taught in school and I have taught for a long period at Tribhuvan University," said Pyakuryal.

"I have written poems, lyrics and stories. I spent my life closely with musicians, singers and writers. I enjoyed with them. I might be productive and unproductive in my life. I went to US for higher education and enhanced quality of education. I made mistakes but I am always aware to correct my mistakes. I was rewarded for work and faced humiliation," said Pyakuryal. "My book is all about this."

(Published by Fine Print, the book is now available in the market.)



# Work in Progress

*Despite facing major disasters, including earthquake, blockade, landslide and the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, 456 MW Upper Tamakosi, Nepal's largest hydropower project, is making progress step by step. For all these troubled years, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Bigyan Prasad Shrestha has been working quietly in the project in various capacities leading professional and competent teams of technicians and other staff. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari has recognized the progress of the project by conferring Shrestha with the Prawal Janasewashree (Third) medal*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although he has been working in the Upper Tamakosi project in different capacities over the last 15 years, CEO Shrestha prefers to work quietly and without any public hype. Despite his individual character to work in a low profile, the progress made by the project is an open secret. The announcement of Prawal Janasewashree (third) by President to Shrestha as the CEO of Upper Tamakosi is a recognition and reward worth it for the entire team of Upper Tamakosi.

On the Constitution Day, Shrestha's name came up in the President's list of national medal recipients. The President will confer Shrestha Prawal Janasewashree (Third) on coming Baisakh 1, 2078.

"This medal is recognition of the endeavor made by all staffs working in the project with dedication and commitment tirelessly to complete it in time," said CEO Shrestha. "All the progress is made through the team spirit of our competent technical and managerial staff and I am just part of it."

CEO Shrestha's involvement in the project started from its conceiv-

ing period. He walked to the project site in the most difficult trekking terrain. He was part of the team to start the initial study. However, since 2064, Shrestha has worked in Upper Tamakosi as its manager (electrical), project chief and CEO since 2017.

Shrestha worked as deputy project chief under Mrigendra Bahadur Shrestha, the first project chief who has immensely contributed to implementing the project. "As a project chief, Mrigendra Bahadur Shrestha took a lot of initiatives to make the project possible. What we have been doing now is following his path and idea. Although he retired from NEA

Having learned a lot from the earthquake and blockade, Tamakosi team under the guidance of Shrestha continues to maintain the pace of work even in a naturally hostile situation in the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19.

The 456 MW Upper Tamakosi Project has made a major breakthrough installing a 373 meter lower shaft, the project is maintaining the pace to complete it within 2020 during the lockdown. Mr Shrestha also appreciates roles of past MD of NEA, Mr Kulman Ghising, who chaired the Company for four consecutive years.

With a skillful team of technical and managerial staffs, Upper



a few years back as Project Chief, Shrestha will be always remembered as a pioneer to push Nepal's largest hydropower project."

Tamakosi project is now pushing the contractor of lot 2 Hydro-mechanical Works Texmaco Rail & Engineering Ltd. India to complete its remaining





work by bringing the much needed equipment from its factory.

Although construction of the 456-MW Upper Tamakosi project has so far witnessed over 99.5 percent progress in terms of physical development, it is still in limbo due to the delay in manufacturing, transporting and installing some key equipment by the contractor of Lot 2.

Giving special priority to the energy sector, even all officials including prime minister, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barsha Man Pun have had a high hope that given the current progress the project will be completed in the upcoming fiscal year.

Management of the Upper Tamakosi Hydropower Ltd also has not been sparing any chance to work to complete the project. Following the announcement of lockdown on April 4, there was a rush for labor to go home all over Nepal. Analyzing the huge financial cost of obstruction in case of suspending the work during the lockdown, Tamakosi Hydropower Ltd decided to take a risk, making arrangements to retain the laborers to

continue the work.

“Upper Tamakosi, I felt sometimes, is the best project starting its construction at a wrong time. From design change to Great Earthquake, the project has gone through several painful situations, from time to time, including design change, the Great Earthquake and the bad performance of one of the contractors and now the corona virus pandemic. Looking at such a situation, I have a feeling in my mind whether this project would have started long time back completing before these painful situation or it would have started a bit later. When we talk about generating electricity in 2/3 month’s period, it gives me hope and pleasure and satisfaction. With some existing critical problems, there is a likely delay in the generation of electricity. This uncertainty

hurts my heart,” writes Bimal Gurung, Deputy Manager (Civil) Head of Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the project, who has been in the team since a long time.

As in the initial period of COVID-19 Pandemic, the local people and local bodies opposed the move







of the project to retain the workers and start the work. The project made several efforts to convince them that adequate safety measures would avert problems but often they come to obstruct the work.

Although it involved risks, the decision to continue construction work keeping the workers safely inside the project has paid as the project was able to install the most challenging 373m high Lower Penstock Shaft in the project.

With his team, CEO Shrestha has worked tirelessly to achieve the project's target. But, the project has been facing some unavoidable technical issues. Despite several efforts, the project is unable to bring expert technicians to monitor the final work in tunnel. Similarly, the contractor of lot 2 is yet to manufacture and transport some key components of the project.

Although the project has recovered from the trauma of earthquake and devastation of the road by the landslides, it is still uncertain whether the project would complete as per the new schedule given the existence of above mentioned critical issues. However, CEO Shrestha and his entire team's dedication and backing from NEA and line ministry have been making everything possible to bring the project in the time.

Coordinating with all different stake holders including the use of Nepal's Consulate General Office in Kolkata, the project is trying to trans-

port critical equipment from the factory of Lot-2 Indian contractor so that the project can complete in time.

The recent achievement is the result of all-out efforts made by the project management even during the lockdown. With support from all, finishing work in tunnel, transmission line construction and other works continued in 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Project.

"Despite obstructions caused by Pandemic and local community, the work is going on in the project," said



Dr Ganesh Neupane, spokesperson of the project. Major challenging work has already completed but some very critical work continues," said Dr. Neupane.

Facing frequent opposition

and threat from local population, Chinese, Italian, Indian and Nepali personnel are working there. They have been working there since even before the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

Dr. Neupane said that all possible safety and caution had been applied to save the workers from infection. Civil works are performed by Chinese Sino Hydro, electro-mechanical work is being done by Andritz, hydro-mechanical by Texmaco Railway Engineering and substation and transmission lines by Indian company KEC International.

KEC has already completed 220 kVA Double Circuit, 47.0 km (Gongar to Khimti Substation) Transmission line and the work of substation is at the final stage.

With successful testing of head works, Upper Tamakoshi has completed 99.5 percent work in the project. After completing concrete lining and grouting works in the tunnel, chemical grouting is underway at some locations.

Head works. Similarly, the installation of equipment in the power station has already completed. The

construction of 127 towers of transmission line and 47-kilometer transmission line has completed.

The civil work in 220 kV substations in New Khimti Substation





at Phulashi is in the final stage and the installation of equipment in the substation is underway.

The necessary testing of its dam, headwork and semi-reservoir, the project has proved the progress in civil works.

CEO Shrestha said that the chemical grouting and concreting in Adit Tunnel gates are in the final stage.

With the capacity to generate 2,281 GWh of energy annually, Upper Tamakosi will be a major game-changer in the power sector. After the completion of the Chilime Project, this is the second project constructed by NEA subsidiary with Nepali investment and Nepali project management.

**Challenges of Project [Advised to edit from your part to avoid repetitions]**

“Main challenge is to get or deliver all outstanding key equipment from Kolkata based Factory of Texmaco and its erection. Pressure test and wet test of high head project like this one, is technically challenging in order to avoid any small mistakes which may convert to big casualty.said CEO Shrestha.

Similarly, the project is also facing difficulties in foreign exchange. Till last year, Nepal Rastra Bank directly issued the foreign exchange payment on the basis of letter of the

company. Now, there is the need to secure recommendation from Department of Electricity Development for foreign exchange. Due to this process, there is a delay in 2 to 3 weeks for foreign currency payment. [Advise to



delete]

Similarly, the visa related issue for foreign works and labor permission is also affecting the project. Particularly, the new provisions in the act are creating problems to bring for-

eign experts for temporary periods.

Due to delay in releasing the loan for the project by Nepal Government and national banks, there are difficulties for the payment to consultants and contractors as per the monthly bill.

Due to the threat of COVID-19, local people entered the project sites and threatened the employees disrupting the work for weeks. Local people even forbade the employees from visiting the sites. There is a problem in transporting cement, iron rod and chemicals. Despite completing cement grouting in the main tunnel, the work of chemical grouting is yet to be completed due to the failure to bring 2 foreign experts as international flight is yet to start.

Due to various obstructions, employees of project, engineers and technical staffs of consultants are facing difficulties in the movement from Kathmandu to project site.

Despite facing several major natural hurdles and difficulties during the construction period, 456 MW Up-

per Tamakosi, Nepal's largest hydropower project, is close to completion. If things go at the current pace, the project will start generation of hydropower by the end of 2020.



# Upper Tamakosi Pains & Pleasures

Upper Tamakosi, I felt at times, is the best project that got started at the wrong time. From design change to Great Earthquake, the project has gone through several painful disasters. Suffering from the Great Earthquake, blockade and bad performance of one of the contractors, now it is facing the pain of coronavirus pandemic. Looking at such a situation from the side of implementation, I have a feeling why not this project would have started a long time back, completing before these painful situations or it would have started a bit later after all these events leading to this situation.

When we talk about generating electricity in 2/3 months' period and lighting a bulb, it gives me hope, pleasure and satisfaction. When I see some existing critical problems, they indicate a likely delay in the generation of electricity. This uncertainty hurts my heart.

The project has been suffering from hostile situations of coronavirus pandemic and mismanagement of concerned hydro mechanical contracts. Even if the contractor of lot 2 starts transporting the equipment now, it will likely take weeks and more time will be consumed in installation and testing. Thus, the situation is not yet there to announce exactly when the generation of electricity will start from the project. There is uncertainty over the completion date.

Despite such a condition, the prime minister, prime minister's advisors, ministry of energy, board of Nepal Electricity Authority, company and project officials have been working to complete the project in time. With the coronavirus pandemic showing no signs of going away, hundreds of workers and employees have been working in the project avoiding family union for a long time sacrificing individual interest for broader national context. They have been working day and night to complete the project. Due to this, the project has made progress even during the lockdown.

All this progress would not be possible without coordination, support, love and cooperation of Bigu Municipality, Ward Office, local people, members of parliament, minister, Dolkha District Coordination Committee, Dolkha District Administration, Nepali Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police. We have been receiving their continual love and affection.

Although we are not in a position to declare the exact date for electricity generation, the project has made a big progress even during the period of national and international lockdown. Thanks to a decision taken at the higher level, it paved the way to continue construction work. Had the decision not been taken, all the workers would have gone home and the project would have shut down now. Had that decision of allowing the project to continue the work not been taken, the completion of project would have been delayed by at least 2 years.

After the beginning of lockdown on April 4, the project sent a request letter seeking to continue the work on April 10. On the basis of the letter, energy secretary and then Managing Director of NEA took efforts to address the request. As a result of the initiative and facilitation of Minister of Energy, Physical Planning Minister and development expert of prime minister Engineer Gan-



BY: BIMAL GURUNG

jendra Thapaliya, the high level CMCC chaired by deputy prime minister and minister of defense Ishwor Pokharrel had given a go-ahead letter to the project on 13 April. Due to this decision, we are able to give continuity to the project.

Had the decision not been taken promptly or delayed by 2/4 days, about 1000 workers of the project would have gone home. In that situation, we would not have other options than to shut down the project. Due to the crucial decision, the project did not have to stop the work and has continued the work. The decision of CMCC has done a great service to the national pride project. During the lockdown, one of the most complicated tasks was installation of lower and upper vertical shaft and they were completed. This was a major breakthrough.

There is the need of permission from Nepal Rastra Bank to give payment of foreign currency to foreign consultant and contractors. Due to various reasons, it was delayed for years and nothing came out even knocking at different offices. Finally, we went to principal secretary of Prime Minister Bishnu Rimal seeking his support to settle the problem. We briefed him about the situation. After his facilitation, a yearlong problem got settled in a matter of weeks. This initiative helped us to sort out the major problem regarding the issue of payment to foreign contractor and consultant. The project is very thankful to him.

At present our major challenges are to transport the small equipment and machineries from hydro mechanical contractor Texmaco Railway's Kolkata head office. Showing the coronavirus pandemic, the company is delaying the manufacturing of equipment and transport to project site. With restriction on surface transport and international air, the project is unable to send its official to Kolkata to accelerate the work. Even the contractor has not shown any effort to complete the work. In this situation, we have decided to seek help of Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali. We have requested the minister to direct Nepalese Consulate General Office of Kolkata to facilitate the dispatch of the machine from the factory. We also informed the problem to principal secretary Rimal, PM's Foreign Advisor Dr. Rajan Bhattarai and Engineer Gajendra Thapaliya. They also took the initiative upon our request. After our request, the ministry has directed consulate general to take the necessary steps. Following the direction, the consulate general, along with his employee, visited the factory site. With this, we are very encouraged that all equipment will arrive within 1.5 months and we will be able to generate electricity from first unit at the end of November. The project is grateful with those who supported us in difficult times. In fact, the people who support, help and encourage at the time of crisis are the real friends. We are very grateful to those who supported us.

*(Gonger Dolkha, 2077/6/4 from a Facebook post)*

*This event and things mentioned in piece is just to share our work with all to show many people as much as possible to show how we are moving. This is not for any dispute or making news. I humbly request all not to make any news on the basis of this opinion.*

# Strengthening Partnership

*The 12th meeting of the Joint Commission between Nepal and the European Union (EU) concluded after discussing a wide range of issues*

By A CORRESPONDENT

European Union is among Nepal's largest bilateral development partners, supporting various sectors, including social and economic development. At a time when Nepal has been facing major crisis in all the sectors due to COVID-19, the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of Joint Commission between Nepal and the EU is highly important.

During the 12th meeting of the Joint Commission between Nepal and the European Union (EU), which took place on 2 October 2020 via a video conference, both sides discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest in a cordial, candid and constructive atmosphere.

The EU appreciated the achievements made by Nepal and welcomed the implementation of a modern and progressive constitution. It stressed the important role of strong, effective and independent institutions, civil society and the press for democracy and good governance.

The EU welcomed the increasing participation of women in political life and the decision making process in Nepal. The EU also welcomed Nepal's commitment to transitional justice as outlined in the statement of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli in the 75th UN General Assembly and by Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali at the UN Human Rights Council in February.

The EU informed about the preparations for the programming and implementation of the new Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) which will be the EU's main instrument for international cooperation and development assistance as of 2021.

Co-chaired by Bharat Raj Paudyal, Officiating Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Government of Nepal and Ms. Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific of the European External Affairs Service (EEAS), the meeting focused on the current COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic impacts in both Nepal and the EU.

The EU prepared in April a €75 million support package for Nepal with

the aim to stimulate the economy and labor demand, thereby supporting people's incomes. Nepal welcomed the EU's support during the pandemic. Nepal and the EU agreed that the current crisis highlighted the importance of an effective multilateral system and underlined that the World Health Organization (WHO) is central to our collective efforts to tackle the pandemic.

Nepal and the EU agreed on the need to strengthen the global capacity to prevent and respond to future pandemics and on the need for a future vaccine to be a global common good.

Nepal welcomed the EU's strong support for the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) as well as for the extension of the Initiative for another year at the upcoming G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors/IMF-World Bank Group Annual Meetings in October. Nepal and the EU agreed that the swift and full implementation of the DSSI by all official bilateral creditors is a key priority in order to ensure predictability given the continuing financing pressures on the beneficiary countries



owing to the pandemic.

The Nepali delegation briefed on efforts being made by the Government to contain and fight the global pandemic in Nepal and provided an update on its economic impact. It also updated the EU on the impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and underlined its commitment to deliver on those in line with the national aspiration of "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepal". The Government of Nepal also presented its plans for graduation from Least-Developed Country status to

a middle-income country.

In the Sub-Commission on Development Cooperation held on 29 September, Nepal and the EU took stock of the progress achieved and lessons learned in the implementation of ongoing cooperation, particularly in rural development, nutrition, education, governance, trade and investment.

Nepal and the EU welcomed the recent signature of the Financing Agreements on Nepal's Multi-sector Nutrition Action Plan (€22 million) and on Provincial and Local Government Support Program (€33 million); as well as the adoption of the European Commission's Financing Decision in favor of Supporting Nepal's School Sector (€20 million) to be implemented through budget support and complementary technical assistance.

The Joint Commission participants welcomed the lending activity of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in Nepal, which will focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as improved connectivity in the coming years.

Regarding people-to-people contacts, Nepal and the EU discussed ongoing higher education cooperation, whereby there have been a growing number of Nepali students studying in European universities. Nepal ranks among the top 20 countries worldwide in terms of students being awarded scholarships for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programs.

Nepal briefed on its substantial efforts to improve air safety, notably regarding the proposed new aviation legislation, which is currently under consideration of the Federal Parliament of Nepal. The EU acknowledged this positive development while reiterating that further progress needed to be made in the implementation of the legislation. In view of continuing to work together on this issue, the EU announced that it is looking forward to developing a technical assistance project to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal in order to support their efforts to enhance the aviation safety oversight in Nepal.



# ग्रामीण लघुवित्त संस्थाहरूको सहयोगी निकाय साना किसान विकास लघुवित्त वित्तीय संस्था लि.

लघुवित्तको कार्यक्रम मार्फत ग्रामीण समुदायको आम्दानी एवं रोजगारीका अवसरमा अभिवृद्धि गरी गरिबी निवारण गर्ने कार्यमा सघाउ पुर्याउने उद्देश्य लिएको यस वित्तीय संस्थाले देश भरी एघार (११) वटा इलाका कार्यालय र केन्द्रीय कार्यालय मार्फत ७३ जिल्लाका ११४६ वटा साना किसान कृषि सहकारी संस्था लि. र समान प्रकृतिका अन्य सहकारी संस्थाहरू मार्फत लघुवित्तका लागि थोक कर्जाका साथै गैर वित्तीय सेवा समेत उपलब्ध गराउँदै आएको छ। नेपाल सरकार, अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय दातृ संघ/संस्थाहरूको सहकार्यमा समुदायमा आधारित सहकारी संस्थाहरू मार्फत सामाजिक तथा सामुदायिक कार्यक्रम संचालनमा समेत सहयोग पुर्याउँदै आएको छ।

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केन्द्रीय कार्यालय सुविधानगर, काठमाडौं।

फोन. ०१-४१११७५२/८२८/९२३

फ्याक्स : ०१-४१११-९०१

# Dismal Growth

*The World Bank says Nepal's economy will grow 0.6 percent in 2021*

By KESHAB POUDEL

As Nepal's finance ministry is without full ministers following Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada, who exited as finance minister after completing his tenure of National Assembly, the World Bank's recent report shows a bleak picture for Nepal's economy.

Although Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is yet to appoint new finance minister to clear the economic mess created by COVID-19 Pandemic, it will not be easy for new finance minister, whoever he or she may come, to bring back Nepal's economy on the right track.

This is not for the first time Nepal's economy has seen such a dire scenario. During the peak of Maoist insurgency, Nepal faced negative growth, even without the global pandemic. However, there were many friendly hands to support Nepal during the period.

Nepal's economy is projected to grow by only 0.6 percent in 2021, inching up from an estimated 0.2 percent in 2020 as lockdowns caused by COVID-19 disrupted economic activity, especially tourism, says the World Bank's latest South Asia Economic Focus.

The twice-a-year-regional update notes that South Asia is set to plunge this year into its worst-ever recession as the devastating impacts of the pandemic on the region's economies linger on, taking a disproportionate toll on informal workers and pushing millions of South Asians into extreme poverty.

The report forecasts a sharper than expected economic slump across the region, with regional growth expected to contract by 7.7 percent in 2020, after topping 6 percent annually in the past five years. Regional growth is projected to rebound to 4.5 percent in 2021. Factoring in population growth, however, income-per-capita in the region will remain 6 percent below 2019 estimates, indicating that the expected rebound will not offset the lasting economic damage caused by the pandemic.

In previous recessions, falling

investment and exports led the downturn. This time is different as private consumption, traditionally the backbone of demand in South Asia and a core indicator of economic welfare, will decline by more than 10 percent, further spiking poverty rates. A decline in remittance is also expected to accelerate loss of livelihoods for the poorest in some countries.

"The economic consequences of the pandemic and impact on livelihoods across Nepal is expected to be the most acute for informal workers or those without social security or assistance, who are more at risk of falling into extreme poverty," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. "Swift action is needed to provide incomes, social protection, and employment to support them. This includes key investment climate reforms to promote physical infrastructure and access to finance for the informal sector to shorten the transition to recovery."

Informal businesses make up around 50 percent of enterprises in Nepal and are the main source of income for most of the labor force. Within this group, urban informal sector workers and self-employed households in urban areas are more vulnerable than rural households who can fall back on subsistence farming. Most informal firms operate with limited savings, and owners may face the difficult choice of staying home and facing starvation during the lockdown or running their business and risking infection. These scenarios accentuate financial difficulties as well as the spread of COVID-19.



The report urges governments to design universal social protection as well as policies that support greater productivity, skills development, and human capital. In that effort, securing international and domestic financing will help governments fund crucial programs to speed up recovery. In the long term, digital technologies can play an essential role in creating new opportunities for informal workers, making South Asia more competitive and better integrated into markets—if countries improve digital access and support workers to take advantage of online platforms.

"COVID-19 will profoundly transform Nepal and the rest of South Asia for years to come and leave lasting scars in its economies. But there is a silver lining toward resilient recovery: the pandemic could spur innovations that improve South Asia's future participation in global value chains, as its comparative advantage in tech services and niche tourism will likely be in higher demand as the global economy becomes more digital," said Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for the South Asia Region.

Along with Nepal, other South Asian countries are also passing through a bleak economic situation. For Nepal, the coming days will be more challenging and difficult because it is in the process of state restructuring.



# Old Goodies In New Wraps

This is an adaptation of the old saying 'Old Wine in New Bottles' which depicts what is happening in Nepal these days. Generally the old wine would have been beneficial but in this present case, the goodies in new wraps are definitely harmful!

National newspapers and electronic media flashed on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020 that eight persons had been held in connection with the changing of expiry dates of imported food items such as chips (Pringles), chocolates (Mars, Snickers), biscuits (Oreo), nutritive drinks (Bournvita, Horlicks) and even cosmetics. These items had apparently been collected from the local market for tampering i.e. new labels with new dates. Following this, these were then stored in three houses in the Kalanki and Bafal temporarily. After the tampering and changing of wraps they were then destined to be sent back to various small shops or even department stores in the valley!

The police and the concerned government department have sealed the warehouse and impounded the three vehicles used for carting the various items from here and there. The costs of the confiscated goods have been estimated to be Rs. 10 million. Of the two distributing concerns involved, the head of only one and seven of the workers caught in the act were being held by the police. The workers were freed the next day! It is reported too that most of these products were imported by the Vishal Group of traders. As this is a heinous crime which can affect the health of the people, one hopes that drastic action will be taken. One may recall that two years back the surveillance of the mithai shops of Kathmandu had revealed that sweetmeat items were being produced in very unhygienic conditions. This Dasain and Tihar season is an appropriate time to check if things have become better or not.

To counter such practices one must take alternative action. It is about time that we took pride in our food and our drinks. Sattu, makai-bhatmas, and mohi these are the things that should be branded in Nepal and we should give them our top priority as a healthy food. Even when nutrition experts are claiming that nutritive drinks (Bournvita, Horlicks) are waste of money we still find it customary to visit patients with such drinks. During my clinical practice days, I did not recommend such products for consumption to my patients. Surprisingly many mothers, in their desire to make them world class sportsmen, religiously give their children such drinks! What charm is there in eating foreign products which may not be fit for consumption?

About thirty years ago it was rumoured that a certain drug producing concern in Eastern Nepal was replacing the old expiry dated labels of unsold medicines with new ones. This was the first instance of a Nepali owned venture doing such misdeeds. Subsequently because of the then norm of many Nepali importers to go to 'foren' cities such as Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore in foreign lands and bring back from pavement peddler the sub-standard or rejected goods at dirt or throwaway prices; a lot of foreign products started being imported into Nepal. Selling these glitzy and well packed goods at exorbitant prices was a very worthwhile enterprise. All Nepalis are after all, very gullible. In such a situation it is useful to recall that in the hey days of the garment industry it was very beneficial for the Kathmandu dwellers to be donning very nice looking garments which could not be exported to foreign lands because of minor flaws. These were then sold around the precincts of Dharahara to Kathmandu dwellers.



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the economic condition the country of being in the doldrums and expectation is that recovery will be slow. Currently, many Nepalis have returned to Nepal and hopefully some of the schemes that our government has put in place for their employment or help will start to produce results.

Such start-up enterprises need not only governmental but the support of every one of us. The next four months of the festival season in Nepal is a time of maximum expenditure and sales.

If our buying habits change to purchase Nepali products we will create more jobs and help the ailing economy. This action in our living pattern will bring about wonders. We cannot take pride in wearing fake foreign brands even when we are fully aware that the products are in fact made locally!

In the case of fake labels one might say that it could have been locally made, but what is the harm in that? The harm is to person, who despite manufacturing the product for decades and serving the nation for long is unknown, and his/her contribution is not felt by the society. Some other manufacturers may not feel the need to improve the quality of the product at times in that s/he can always make the product under a different label. In such instances it is again the consumers who will be getting substandard products. The necessity is for efforts of support by us Nepalis to 'Support and buy Nepali'. Lately efforts have been made by various Nepali brands and producers which carry the 'Made in Nepal' labels and by Online sales concerns such as 'The Made in Nepal.com' to bring all Nepali brands and manufacturers big and small in one platform. We the public, and our government must be fully supportive. Wherever possible and legal, duties must be slapped on goods coming into the country. It is only by such actions that even Nepali products e.g. fruits and vegetables and produced eatables will be consumed by us Nepalis.

One good trend that one has seen over the years as one reads the papers or scans the social media is the large number of books, songs recordings and cinemas that are being produced by our folk in Nepali or in the other languages of Nepal. This is a very healthy trend and must be supported by all of us so that the current influx of foreign dominance becomes restricted to a certain extent. This occurrence is a healthy trend and should be an example to other areas e.g. agricultural and industrial field to copy and implement. In recollection I would like to recap what I stated in late August in New Spotlight Online titled 'Swadeshi Char Laksha' and the four objectives of Swadeshi finance, Swadeshi labour, Swadeshi produce and Swadeshi use. This should be our motto now.

Lastly I would like to recollect that in the immediate post 2007 Saal after the ushering in of democracy in the country there was an air of change. If anyone did or said anything odd and someone remarked on it, s/he would more than likely reply, 'This is Prajatantra'. What all of us must realise is that in this modern age such anti-people activities can never be done. If done and the culprit caught then they must be given hefty sentences so that others are not inspired and tempted to repeat such actions. In conclusion, may Lord Pashupatinath protect us Nepalis.

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# TANAHU HYDROPOWER LIMITED

Tanahu Hydropower Limited (THL) was established as a subsidiary company of NEA to develop 140 MW Tanahu Hydropower Project (Previously known as Upper Seti HEP). All pre-construction works including camp facilities and access to the project sites have been completed, whereas the major construction activities under Package 2 (Powerhouse, Waterway and Related Equipment) and Package 3 (Transmission Line) have commenced from January 2019. Following the termination of the Package 1 (Headworks), the Invitation for Re-bid was again issued 28 February, 2020.



**The main features of the Project are as follows:**

Installed Capacity : 140 MW  
Annual Energy : 585.7 GWh  
Design Flow : 131.2 m<sup>3</sup>/s  
Dam Height/Type: 140 m/concrete gravity  
Headrace Tunnel: 1162 m (7.4 m Dia)  
Surge Shaft : 61.5 m (ht.), 28 m (Dia)  
Penstock Pipe : 160 m (l), 5.7 m to 4 m (D)  
Turbine : Vertical Shaft Francis  
Powerhouse : Underground Type  
Transmission Line : 33.9 km

The total cost of the project is estimated to be 505 million USD. The project is co-financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

THL has engaged Tractebel Engi GmbH (Lahmeyer International GmbH), Germany in association with Manitoba Hydro International Limited, Canada as the Project Supervision Consultant, whereas Electro Consult (ELC), Italy in association with GEOCE Consultant Limited, Nepal has been working as the Environmental and Social Management Service Provider (ESMSP).

The project is scheduled to be completed by June, 2025.





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