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VIEWPOINT
Dr. Tilak Rawal



ARTICLE
Hemang Dixit



ENVIRONMENT
Batu Uprety

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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WEDNESDAY

NEPALESE MIGRANT WORKERS

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INSIDE



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Looking at the flock of the people standing at border points of Nepal and India in far-western and western regions, anyone can see the pathetic situation of the country and possible economic catastrophe in the region. However, Nepal's political leaders, who have been in a power struggle, seem to have ignored the plight of the people, maintaining imposition of free movement at the border points. The cabinet in its recent decision extended the border closure till December 15. Although people have been leaving home to work in India, large numbers of people who don't have any valid work document of India have to leave back home. In the last six months, hundreds of Nepalese have also crossed the border. As the festive season comes to an end, hundreds of Nepalese from far-western, mid-western and western regions are heading to work in India. For the people living in those areas, India is a main destination for work and to sustain livelihood. This is the reason tens of thousands of people have already left their home in search of work despite the threat of COVID-19. With no job back home and no other sources of income, people of western region have no option other than to go to India. Thanks to generosity of Indian authorities and people of India, Nepalese are living in the border with the hope to get to work. We have decided to cover Nepalese migrant workers leaving for India as our cover story for this issue. We also cover ongoing political tussle in the ruling party and its implications to the stability of the country.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

CONTENT

BANDANA RANA'S RE-ELECTION Nepal's Success	3
NEWSNOTES	4
BUSINESS BRIEF	6
VIEWPOINT Dr. Tilak Rawal	8
NEPAL-INDIA High-level Exchange	10
GLOBAL VIEW Abijit Sharma	17
TANAHUN HYDRO PROJECT Work Despite Holidays	18
ENVIRONMENT Batu Uprety	20
NEPAL-INDIA Railway Connection	29
OPINION Sambriddh Ghimire	30
ADB Support To Airports	33
ARTICLE Pratik Poudel	34
WORLD BANK Lifting Rural Enterprise	35
ARTICLE Hemang Dixit	36



COVERSTORY: NEPALESE MIGRANT WORKERS: Rush To India 23



BATTLE IN NCP: Routine Emergency 14



MELAMCHI TUNNEL TEST: Deadline 2021 28

Nepal's Success

Re-election of Bandana Rana to the CEDAW shows that Nepal's Foreign Ministry officials have the capacity to work with the UN Forum

By A CORRESPONDENT

If Nepal's Foreign Ministry mandarins are allowed to work, they can use their caliber to make gains for the country – they have shown this in the last major election in the UN.

With support from various countries, Nepal has been able to get a re-election as a member of United Nations Human Rights Commission. Last month, mobilizing diplomatic missions, particularly Nepal's UN Mission, Nepal has been able to reelect Bandana Rana as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

As per the UN Convention, every individual needs nomination from the member country to take part in any election in UN and the vote pattern will also depend upon the country's performance along with individual candidate's personality.

Having worked for several years on women's agenda globally, Bandana Rana has her own international contacts. However, Nepal has also improved its position in UN and global diplomacy recently.

Winning the second term in a global organization like United Nations in a competitive election is not easy. With strong backing of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nepalese UN Mission, Nepalese candidate Bandana Rana has made it for second term, securing a wider margin of vote.

Her victory is not only personal but also a victory of Nepal government's stand and commitment as well. With her capacity for articulation, Rana strongly put Nepal's progress in a global forum to become a cause to win the elections.

Nepal government backed her candidacy and used all its goodwill to gain support for her while Rana's individual capability, as well as her modest approach contributed to the success.

Under the leadership of Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, chief secretary Shanker Das Bairagi, foreign secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and UN

Mission Chief Amrit Rai, Mani Prasad Bhattarai and Ambassador / Permanent Representative in Nepal's Mission in Geneva, played a crucial role to reelect Rana.

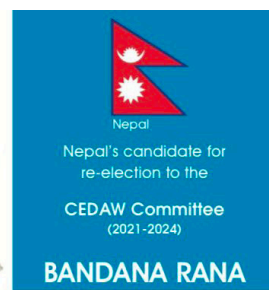
On her Facebook wall, Rana acknowledged the important role played by Nepal's Foreign Ministry, its officials and missions.

"I am so very humbled with the trust and confidence placed on me by the 137 countries who voted for me. I pledge to work with even more conviction to address discrimination against women globally. I am profoundly grateful to the Government of Nepal, Minister Pradeep Gyawali, the MOFA team, NY Mission, Geneva Mission, Delhi Embassy and all other Nepali embassies for their invaluable and tireless efforts! Sincere gratitude to all. Collectively we made it," Rana wrote on Facebook.

Nepal's candidate Ms. Bandana Rana has been re-elected to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for the second term in the elections held during the 21st Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in New York.

What a coincidence, Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli-led government is in power in both her nominations. RPP leader Kamal Thapa was the foreign minister to back her candidacy for the first tenure and Nepal Communist Party leader Pradeep Gyawali is the foreign minister now.

She obtained 137 votes, the third-highest among 19 candidates contesting the election. She was one of the eleven candidates elected for the term of 2021-2024. Experts from the Netherlands, Bahamas, Lithuania, Ghana,



Australia, Mexico, Lebanon, France, Philippines and China were also elected.

Currently the Vice-chair of the CEDAW Committee, Ms. Rana is the first Nepali national serving in the Committee. She has over three-decade-long experience of working in the field of gender equality and women's rights.

Following the election, the Leader of the Nepali delegation to the 21st Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention Ambassador Amrit Bahadur Rai stated that Rana's re-election was a recognition of her proven expertise and experience. This is also an acknowledgment by the international community of Nepal's sincere efforts in implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocol as well as an appreciation of the achievements we have made in the promotion of women's rights in particular and human rights in general, he said.

Ambassador Rai also thanked all States Parties for their continued trust and confidence in Nepal's candidate Ms. Rana's capabilities.

With so many diversities and differences, blocks and groups, contesting and winning elections require a lot of effort, support and personal quality. Having been a founder member of some of the best organizations back home in Nepal and worked in a tangible way with diverse groups, Rana knows the art of living and working together.

NEWSNOTES

Zonta Club Kathmandu Supports Durbar School Online Learning

Zonta Club Kathmandu has supported Durbar School for online learning and education by distributing mobile devices and laptops.



The equipment will help students access knowledge online. They can get tutorial from OLE Nepal e-paath. They will have access to

e-pustakalaya with tons of books to read.

Zonta Club was supported by Sunrise Bank, CPSN and Sankriti International School in this program.

According to a press release issued by the club, the project provides an online education platform amidst COVID-19 to these students. Sanskriti International School's director as well as a Zontian, Diptee Acharya has volunteered to do the training, soon the teachers will be able to teach subject contents and assess student comprehension.

Nepali, Indian Scholars Discuss Ayurveda For Covid-19

Embassy of India in association with Ayurveda Campus, Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University organized a webinar Ayur Talk 2020 on "Ayurveda for Covid-19" as well as an international essay competition on the same theme.

The program was organized on the occasion of the 5th Ayurveda Day (Dhanwantari Jayanti). At the function attended by about 200 participants from India, Nepal and other countries, panelists included 6 eminent speakers/Ayurveda practitioners from India and Nepal who shared their views and expertise at the webinar.

Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra delivered a video message highlighting the benefits and growing popularity of Ayurveda. Deputy Chief of Mission Ms. Namgya C

Khampa, who attended the event, spoke about the growing consumption of Ayurvedic products like turmeric that are commonly known in homes of India and Nepal.

According to a press release issued by Embassy of India, Kathman-

du the event was also attended by Prof. Dr. Shiv Lal Bhusal, Rector of Tribhuvan University and other leading academicians of the university. The winners of the International Essay Competition were also announced during the event.



UNFPA, UK Government Hand Over IT Equipment To CBS

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has handed over IT equipment to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), as it ramps up its preparations for the 12th National Population and Housing Census (NPHC), due to take place in June 2021 – the first census to be conducted under the new Constitution and federal structure.

The 2021 NPHC data will be invaluable for policymakers and planners to understand the situation across the country, development needs and where or how to invest in everything from schools to health care to roads.

"We commit to undertake the census to address the data gaps at the lowest administrative level while ensuring that the health and safety precautions of our personnel and the respondents is in compliance with government guidance," remarked Nebin Lal Shrestha, Director General, CBS, which is leading census operations under the guidance of the National Census Steering Committee, chaired by the National Planning Commission, Vice-chairperson.

"The census is the cornerstone of the statistical infrastructure – it provides a numerical profile of the country hence is of great value to the public and government alike. UNFPA is proud to offer technical and financial support to the Government

to ensure that the census is of high-quality, upholds international standards, and produces data that are widely disseminated and utilized for development gains," said Lubna Baqi, UNFPA Country Representative in Nepal.

"The UK's support to Nepal always aims to be based on data that is reliable and which includes everyone. The census is one of the most important chances to capture data so that any number of organizations – from government through to development partners and community organizations – can direct their assistance in the best way. In turn this will help improve the services provided to women, men, children, the poor, the vulnerable and other groups of people. I am pleased that the UK has been able to contribute equipment and technology in this way through our partners at UNFPA and the CBS," added Lisa Honan, Development Director at the British Embassy Kathmandu.



Korea Provides Search And Rescue Gears

Park Chong-Suk, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Nepal, handed over 17 Search and Rescue Gears and Equipment to Maheshwor Neupane, Secretary of Ministry of Home Affairs, amid a function.

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea donated 17 different types of search and rescue gears and equip-



ment worth USD 154,360/- to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Government of Nepal.

Nepal has the beauty of diverse natural environment with magnificent Himalayan Mountains and long stretches of rivers originated from these mountains.

Along with diverse natural beauty, Nepal is continuously challenged with natural disasters. Nepal is prone to mountain avalanche, floods, landslide and earthquake and the Government of Nepal has developed a good mechanism of disaster response under the Ministry of Home Affairs. To strengthen the efforts of the Government of Nepal to combat various natural disasters, the Republic of Korea decided to support essential items including high-tech search and rescue equipment to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

One of the equipment amongst the support is Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) which enables rescue workers to scan the breath and body that is buried by avalanche, landslide or earthquake for about 20 meters. Similarly, advanced metal detector with display will help rescuers detect the traces of buried body much more effectively and promptly than before.

During the handover program, ambassador Park expressed that this assistance will contribute in strengthening the capacity of the Government of Nepal in search and rescue activities in disaster affected areas and assured that Korean Government will continue to support Nepal in various sectors.

Similarly, Maheshwor Neupane, Secretary of Ministry of Home Affairs expressed gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for such a valuable support and added that Korea has always made meaningful support to Nepal as a sincere friend.

India Provides 28 Ventilators To Nepal

As part of further support to the Government of Nepal in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, India has provided 28 ventilators to Nepal.



According to a press release issued by Embassy of India Kathmandu, ambassador Vinay M. Kwatra handed over 28 ICU ventilators to Bhanubhakta Dhakal, During the handing over ceremony, Am-

bassador Kwatra reiterated India's solidarity with the Government and the people of Nepal in their fight to prevail over the pandemic, and reaffirmed India's commitment to provide all necessary help in this regard.

Japan Provides Equipment To Treat Diabetic Retinopathy

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal Yoshikoa Yuzo signed a grant contract with Dr. Chet Raj Pant, Chairperson, Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh, for installing medical equipment for the treatment of patients with diabetic retinopathy at Kirtipur Eye Hospital.

The project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of USD 154,100 (approximately NPR 18.35 million).

Similarly, the Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal, YOSHIOKA Yuzo, signed a grant



contract today to support construction of a hostel for blind women in Kageshwori, Manohara Municipality.

The agreement was signed between the Embassy of Japan and Ramesh Pokharel, President of the Nepal Association of the Blind, a Nepalese Non-Governmental Organization.

The Project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Government of Japan. The grant assistance amounts to USD 95,740 (approximately NPR 1.14 crore).

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal, YOSHIOKA Yuzo signed a grant contract with Matrika Prasad Devkota, Executive Director of KOSHISH, for building a Mental Health Therapeutic Center at Pharping in Kathmandu District.

The project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of USD 296,856 (approximately NPR 35.36 million).

US Government Hands Over Raft Boats To Nepal Army

US Government handed over 6 raft boats and four Mitral Raft to Nepal Army

amid a function at Gauchar airport. During a program, US Military attaché to Nepal LTC John Matt Sova and ODC Chief Major Michael P. White handed over the



equipment to Colonel Rajendra Mani Giri of Nepal Army.

According to a press release issued by Directorate of Public Relations and Information, those equipments will be used to operate rescue and relief during flood and water induced disasters.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NIBL Ace Capital To Distribute Mountain Energy Shares



Mountain Energy Nepal Limited has appointed NIBL Ace Capital as its share registrar. Mountain Energy Nepal Limited is a Limited Company incorporated in Nepal under the Companies Act, 2053 having its registered office at Dillibazar, Kathmandu. The company's main objective is to develop Hydropower Projects.

The hydropower company had recently issued its ordinary shares in IPO to the general public from November 11, 2020 to November 19, 2020.

The Share Registrar Service Agreement was made between the two companies on Mangsir 04, 2077.

NIBL Ace Capital Limited is the share registrar for 43, including Mountain Energy Nepal Limited.

Global IME Bank Supports Teach For Nepal

Under its Corporate Social Responsibility (SCR), Global IME Bank Ltd provided Rs.800.000 (Eight hundred thousand) to support programs run by Teach for Nepal. Head of Global IME Bank's marketing and Business Provision Department Shanta Shivakoti and CEO of Teach for Nepal Swastika Shrestha signed an agreement amidst a program.



Addressing the program, Shivakoti said that Global IME Bank is always eager to support this kind of work.

CEO Shrestha thanked Global IME Bank for providing support to run the programs. Since its establishment, the bank has been providing support to such programs under its CSR.

Action Against Hunger Nepal Donates KN95 Masks

Action Against Hunger Nepal has donated KN95 masks worth 5.8 million Nepalese Rupees to Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP).

Action Against Hunger Nepal's Country Director Philippe Hamel handed over KN95 masks worth of Rs. 5.8 million to Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh, Director General of the Department of Health Services DoHS and Dr. Ramesh Kharel, Director of the Management Division under the DoHS amid a program at DoHS premises Teku.

According to a press release issued by Action Against Hunger, they will be distributed among front line health workers to combat the ongoing

coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Nepal.

The program was organized following Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures released by the Ministry of Health and Population, and WHO. It was attended by key government delegates, Action Against Hunger Team and media personnel.

During the program, Director of the Management Division, Dr. Ramesh Kharel expressed his gratitude on behalf of the DoHS towards Action

Against Hunger Nepal for their ongoing Covid-19 Response. He further assured that the donated masks will be rightly utilized wherever there is need.

Established in France in 1979, Action Against Hunger is a global nongovernmental, non-political, non-religious, non-profit oriented humanitarian organization.

The organization has led the global fight against hunger in nearly 50 countries across the globe since its establishment and has a vast experience in large scale emergency, disaster and calamities. Committed to end child hunger globally, Action Against Hunger saves the lives of malnourished children while providing communities with access to safe water and sustainable solutions to hunger.

Since 2005, the organization is working in Nepal to achieve three major aims: mitigating the consequences of hunger, address the causes of hunger and change the way hunger is viewed and addressed.



Integrated Check Post Construction At Nepalgunj Begins

Construction of Integrated Check Post at Nepalgunj has begun with the joint Ground-Breaking ceremony.

Krishna Gopal Shrestha, Minister for Urban Development and Piyush Goyal, Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry, jointly witnessed the ground-breaking ceremony to mark beginning of the construction of Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Nepalgunj at an online ceremony,

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Rambir Manandhar, Minister of State for Urban Development, also witnessed the event along with Dr Ramesh Prasad Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development from Kathmandu.

Istiyak Rai, Member of Parliament from Banke-2 and Dr. Dhawal Shamsher JB Rana, Mayor of Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city participated in the event along with others from the Nepalgunj Project site.

Government of



India is building Integrated Check Posts on either sides of Indo-Nepal border to systematize the movement of cross-border cargo trucks between the two countries by bringing customs and immigration facilities under one roof. ICPs at Birgunj and Biratnagar were jointly inaugurated and operationalized in April 2018 and January 2020 respectively by Prime Ministers of India and Nepal.

ICP at Nepalgunj, once completed, will have export & import cargo handling facilities such as warehousing, including refrigerated cargo facilities, medical, plant and animal quarantine areas, amenities for drivers and passengers, CCTV and other security systems, 24/7 power backup, waste-water treatment facilities, etc. to facilitate smooth movement of cargo and passenger vehicles.

23 AGM Of Oriental Hotel Ltd Concluded

Twenty-third Annual General Meeting AGM of Oriental Hotel Ltd or Radisson Hotel Kathmandu concluded. Held under the chairmanship of President Subhadra Shrestha through

virtual Zoom, AGM also passed annual report of 2019/20 presented by President Shrestha.

With total turnover of Rs.788 million, Oriental Hotel Ltd has made net profit of Rs.110.4 million with operational cost of Rs.670.89 million.

Last, year with total turnover

of Rs.1.20 Billion, Oriental Hotel Ltd has made net profit of Rs.308.5 million. President Shrestha also said that the income and profit margin has drastically declined due to shutdown of hotel and tourism industry.

The president Shrestha also stressed the need to reduce the service the operation of the hotel will continue using limited human resources following the health safety protocol.

At a time when there is uncertainty over controlling COVID-19 and normalization of situation, she also proposed to reduce the burden of employees and start the operation using minimum human resources strictly following safety protocol proposed by the government.

She also said that the ongoing expansion work needs to complete in the time so that the hotel will be in a position to provide necessary service once the situation normalize.

Oriental Hotels Limited (OHL) has concluded 23rd AGM on 4th Mangsir, i.e. November 19. Because of the ongoing threats of the pandemic, the AGM was hosted online via Zoom. Investors willing to participate were provided access credentials.

Oriental Hotels Limited has not distributing any dividend for the fiscal year 2076/77 because of the reduced profitability of the Hotel sector because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the travel restriction that followed. Oriental Hotels Limited had reported a fall in its net profit by 79.8% in the fiscal year 2076/77 compared to the fiscal year before it.

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu Recognized As Leading Hotel

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu has been recognized as Nepal's Leading Hotel by World Travel Awards during the 27th annual event. This is the fifth consecutive win for the hotel from 2016 to 2020, as well as for the years 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2013.

Strategically situated near the International airport and in walking distance to the UNESCO World Heritage site, Boudhanath Stupa, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu opened its doors in 2000.

"We are really humbled by this recognition. The industry is going through a difficult phase currently, and awards such as this are going to boost our morale. We thank all our patrons for their continuous support," said Rajesh Ramdas, General Manager.



World Bank Provides Nepal Rs.42 Billion To Support Urban Development

Government of Nepal and World Bank have signed financing agreements of \$350 million (around Rs. 42 billion) to support urban development and financial sector stability in Nepal to boost economic recovery

Kathmandu, November 18, 2020 – The Government of Nepal and the World Bank signed two separate agreements recently to help strengthen urban governance and the financial sector in Nepal in support of the country's COVID-19 resilience and recovery efforts.

The agreements for the Nepal Urban Governance and Infrastructure Project and the Finance for Growth Development Policy Credit were signed by Finance Secretary Sishir Kumar Dhungana on behalf of the Government of Nepal, and the World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka Faris Hadad-Zervos.

"We are thankful to the World Bank for the support in strengthening urban development and improving financial sector stability in Nepal," stated Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary, Ministry of Finance. "The projects support Nepal's implementation of federalism and the financial sector reform agenda, while contributing to the government's recovery efforts from the COVID-19 crisis."

The \$150 million (around Rs. 18 billion) Nepal Urban Governance and Infrastructure Project will support municipalities located in two strategic urban clusters: Eastern-Terai region (Provinces 1 and 2) and Western region (Gandaki Province and Lumbini Province).



Are We Stable?

People in Nepal were sick and tired of too frequent change of governments in the past, which they thought was the root cause of the lackluster performance of our economy. They were desperately wanting a stable government at the center too work in the best interest of Nepal and its people. The decision of the two major left parties (UML and Maoist) just before the last general election to fight as one party, with common manifesto and election symbol and merge into one party, was very positively taken by the stability-seeking voters who gave the party a strong majority in the Parliament. The major political party (NC) was relegated to a very weak position, in terms of its strength in the House, and equally weak was the position of other parties. Many prominent leaders of NC suffered electoral debacle at the hands of candidates of the two united left parties. Consequently, therefore, they succeeded in forming a federal government in Kathmandu and provincial governments in six out of seven provinces of Nepal, with the sole exception of Province- 2 where the Madhes- based parties, mainly two, joined hands to form a government. Undoubtedly, people were happy, thinking that a stable government in Kathmandu and in seven provinces of Nepal would allow those at the helm of affairs to concentrate on resolving the major problems faced by the country and its people. Looking at the developments within the new left party, however, people have numerous reasons to be unhappy and feel that lots of cold water has been thrown on the hopes they had pinned on these leaders.

The ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) has been experiencing serious intra-party wrangling ever since its formation in May 2018. The party is seemingly divided into two factions led by Prime Minister Oli and the other led by Prachanda (one of the two chairmen of CPN) who is also supported in his never-ending confrontations with Oli by senior leaders Madhav Nepal and Jhal Nath Khanal. It seems that PM Oli is using most of his time managing feud within the party. Decisions made by relevant bodies of the party such as the Standing Committee and commitment of the leaders to abide by them throw some ray of hope, which, however, does not last long because news of noncompliance and reemergence of complications in the party spreads only days after the decisions are made public. There were times when top leaders of the party went to the extent of demanding Oli's resignation who, however, is tenaciously sticking to his claim/argument that he has to remain number one in both the party and the government because this can only save the nation from getting into serious problems. His occasional decisions/agreement that Prachanda should be the executive chairperson of the party have also remained unimplemented due basically to the continuing rift



BY: DR. TILAK RAWAL

between them. It is said that the two factions are doing their best to muster support in their respective favour in different bodies of the party such as the standing committee, parliamentary party and the central committee. In addition to these party-related confusions, something or the other, no matter how insignificant, is happening to abundantly confuse the people in the current politically fluid situation. Worth mentioning in this context is the recent visit to Nepal by Mr. Goel, chief

of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), an intelligence wing of Government of India, which has remained very active in Nepal, dealing with politicians, since long. Mr. Goel's late-night one-on-one lengthy meeting with PM Oli invited lots of criticism from different quarters. More than the opposition NC leaders, leaders belonging to NCP were more vocal in attacking this act of Oli. Equally controversial, many thought, would be the visit here of General Naravane, Chief of Indian Army, who was conferred the honorary title of Chief General of Nepali Army by President Bhandari on November 5, in keeping with the decades old tradition of honoring the Chief of Staff of the Army of one country by the army of another country. It may be noted that the Indian General had issued controversial statements related to disputed land area in far west Nepal (Kalapani, Lipulek and Limpiyadhura),

over the ownership of which the two countries are in dispute. Some noise was heard about the visit but did not attract serious attention of observers unlike what had happened during Goel's visit. General Naravane did well by correcting his statement before coming here and Nepal Government also did well by not trying to unnecessarily veil his visit, which kept the trip more or less controversy-free. In the context of chang-

Looking at the prevailing situation, there should be no hesitation in admitting that Nepal is not at all stable economically, too and people are desperately wanting stability on both fronts (political and economic), which can be ensured by a result-producing good, honest and clean government like the one once led by Lee in Singapore, which is voted back to power endlessly.

ing regional and global developments of strategic importance, he may have tactfully taken up other issues with the concerned authorities here but both sides acted tactfully to make the visit relatively less noisy. A point to be noted is that despite Goel's visit here as a special envoy of Indian Prime Minister, PM Oli's effort to keep the visit a secret created lots of controversy, sending his party into a turmoil. Unfortunately, therefore, even a strong government, in terms of parliamentary strength, is often seen ineffective due to never ending problems in the party, which

has led many to believe that the country is still politically unstable and the root cause of which is the CPN. Indeed, the major opposition party NC cannot be blamed for the current situation because it has many internal issues of its own to resolve prior to its forthcoming general convention and appears in no position to pose a threat to the government. People, therefore, believe that a strong faction within NCP is acting as the opposition party, bringing controversial acts and decisions of the government to the fore. This act is not disliked by people at a time when opposition parties have not been effective in discharge of their responsibilities and government has failed to effectively tackle serious problems such as Corona pandemic. People's only fear is that the continuing serious dispute within the party may push the nation into a chaotic situation reemergence from which could be very difficult and costly. In fact, people do not care much about who rules the country as long as those at the helm of affairs are meaningfully engaged to ensure stability and prosperity of the nation. It's time that we gave a thought to the good works of others done elsewhere.

While talking about the contribution of leaders in pushing their nations towards prosperity, one is often tempted to cite the role that late Lee Kuan Yew played in ensuring over time a very high level of living for the multilingual, multiracial population of Singapore, which in the long past was a small fishing village of less than 200 fishermen. It may also be mentioned that per capita GDP of Singapore was US\$ 400 in 1958 when Lee took office as prime minister, which climbed to more than US\$ 12,200 in 1990 when he stepped down as head of the government but continued to backstop the dispensation. Let us not forget that Lee also had to confront serious problems of varying nature right from the beginning, the biggest headache being the economy at a time when unemployment was alarming at 14 percent and the country had ceased to remain the center of the wider area that the British once governed as one unit. Indonesia was confronting Singapore and Malaysia was hell bent on rendering obsolete the tiny state's role as the entrepot and middleman for the trade of the region. Between 1959 and 1965, Lee's government had fearful clashes with the communists and then the Malay communalists. With Indonesia confronting Singapore and Malaysia determined to bypass it, Lee even thought it would be difficult for his country to survive economically and had thus not ruled out the possibility of reemerging with Malaysia. However, from a period of despair that was rampant in the 1960s, the country was taken ahead into an era of unprecedented growth and development, confronting problems that surfaced intermittently. Looks like economic prosperity achieved there has paved way for his party to rule Singapore forever. Singapore today looks unshakably stable on both fronts-economic and political. Let us now delve a bit into our case.

Despite near two-thirds majority enjoyed by the current dispensation, people don't feel that the nation is politically instable, which could shake the country vehemently. Side by side

with the disappointing situation on the political front, lackluster performance of the economy has also made people very unhappy. As per data made available by Nepal Rastra Bank for the first two months of the current fiscal year (FY), a decline of 22.1 percent in merchandise imports compared to the corresponding period of the last FY, and some improvement in exports have led to an improvement in export/import ratio (from 8.1 to 11.4), balance of payment (from a surplus of Rs.8.83 billion to RS.67.63 billion) and current account position has also remained relatively better. Some other areas to derive solace from would be comfortable foreign exchange reserve position (adequate to cover merchandise import of 16.5 months) and a moderate level

(4.52 percent) of inflation.

Further, remittances have not taken a nose dive, despite what was apprehended in the wake of Corona. These positive signs currently observed should, however, not be misconstrued to paint a rosy picture of the economy at a time when capital expenditure of the government has remained frustratingly low at Rs.29.60 billion, which is just 8.4 percent of the allotted Rs.352 billion under this head and sluggish growth. It would be unwise, however, not to give benefit of doubt to Mr. Poudel, just a few weeks into his job as finance minister, who seems to be

Undoubtedly, people were happy, thinking that a stable government in Kathmandu and in seven provinces of Nepal would allow those at the helm of affairs to concentrate on resolving the major problems faced by the country and its people. Looking at the developments within the new left party, however, people have numerous reasons to be unhappy and feel that lots of cold water has been thrown on the hopes they had pinned on these leaders.

worried about these problems and resolves to frame strategy to fight Corona. He may note that concerned agencies and knowledgeable people all over the world have suggested governments to increase their spending to create employment opportunities and enable people to demand goods and services with income from their newly-created jobs. It may be reiterated that some of the positive signs seen in some areas (foreign exchange reserve, BOP and current account) are basically on account of low internal demand and the economy is almost certain to face stronger headwinds in times to come, if we don't genuinely try to correct the problems and simply try to veil the reality resorting to hard-to-believe words. It may also be noted that the International Monetary Fund has very recently revealed that the global economy has begun to recover from the depths of the Corona, which could be uneven in nature because the momentum could be a slow one in countries that have failed to fight the virus effectively and some having already seen its resurgence. Looking at the prevailing situation, there should be no hesitation in admitting that Nepal is not at all stable economically, too and people are desperately wanting stability on both fronts (political and economic), which can be ensured by a result-producing good, honest and clean government like the one once led by Lee in Singapore, which is voted back to power endlessly.

Dr. Rawal is a former governor of NRB

NEPAL-INDIA

High-level Exchange

After two earlier visits to Nepal by senior Indian officials, Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla is set to make a highly significant visit

By KESHAB POUDEL

As two other senior officials from India, Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla is paying an official visit to Nepal giving importance to India's historical and civilizational linkages and connections with Nepal.

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's message to Nepal remains the same: attach high significance to India's civilizational, religious and cultural linkages with Nepal.

"India has historical and civilizational linkages with Nepal. In recent years, bilateral cooperation has strengthened, with several major infrastructure and cross-border connectivity projects completed with India's assistance. My visit provides an opportunity to further advance our bilateral ties," said foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

Foreign Secretary of India Harsh Vardhan Shringla's schedule is to visit Nepal on 26-27 November 2020. This will be the first visit of the Foreign Secretary to Nepal after he assumed the office.

The visit is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries and the priority India attaches to its relations with Nepal. During the visit, the Foreign Secretary

will meet his counterpart and other Nepalese dignitaries to discuss a wide ranging bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Born and grown up in Kalingpong and Darjeeling of West

India's highly dignified professional Foreign Service, Foreign Secretary Shringla is known for his diplomatic capacities and caliber. Nepal's new Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal is also a very capable and

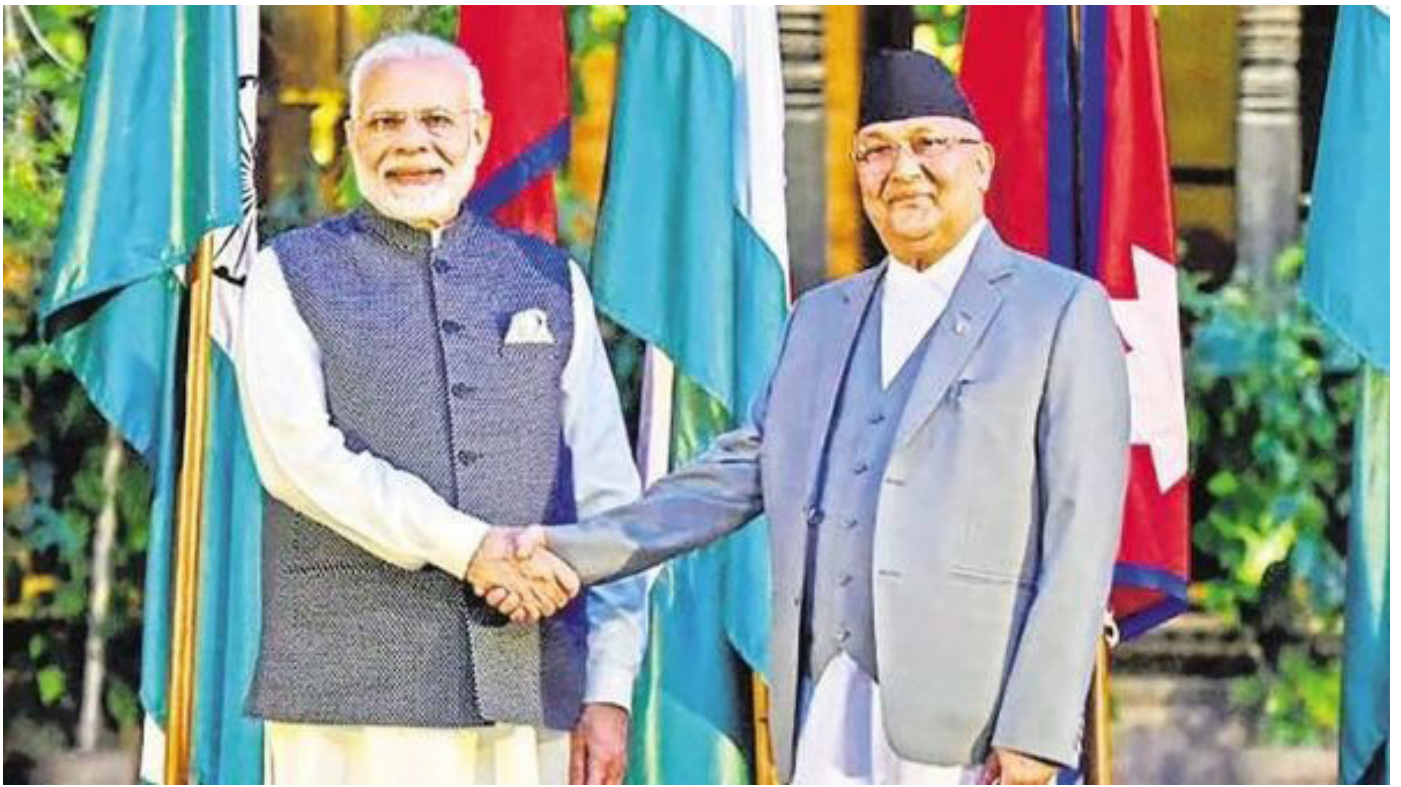


Bengal, Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla knows the core values of two countries. He can make a difference in reconnecting civilizational, cultural and religious relations between the two countries.

A career diplomat of In-

professional diplomat, with wide and extensive knowledge of civilization, culture and religion, heading Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Although the first high level visit by chief of India's nodal intelligence agency Samant Goel



had generated certain noises and controversies due to miscommunication by Nepal's prime minister's office, the second visit of Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane went well.

Showing India's highly important civilizational, religious, cultural and historical connection with Nepal, Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane started his visit offering prayers at Pashupatinath Temple. In his visit, he spent most of the time to enhance and strengthen relations with its traditional ally Nepal Army and to visit places of religious, cultural and civilization importance.

Missing Civilizational Connection

Following the political change of 2006 brought under India-mediated 12-point agreement, Nepal entered into the peace process ending 12 years long bloody Maoist insurgency.

As per the agreement, Nepal has made many changes, including declaring Nepal as a republican, federal and secular state, promulgating a new constitution, laws and regulations and unbundling Nepal's reli-

gious, cultural and core civilization.

Along with removing monarchy, the Hindu Kingdom nomenclature was also removed completely creating new state structures and removing the fundamentals of Nepal's common civilization.

With major political parties and its leader concentrating their efforts on power politics, Nepal's historical, cultural and civilizational linkages have been badly shaken. With no faith in religion, Nepalese political leaders even mis-interpreted the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Pashupatinath -- his personal visit and worship were interpreted differently.

Instead of ushering new era for Nepal and region, the incidents that occurred after the promulgation of new constitution has not only closed Nepal's chapter with monarchy and Hindu religion but also broken its traditional and friendly relations with India.

National elections and formation of government by Nepal Communist Party under the leadership of K.P. Sharma Oli has changed nothing to drastically improve bilateral

relations between the two countries.

As erosion of Nepal's civilizational connection with India continues, problems surfaced. The culmination of that point was the publication of new map by Nepal.

Harping nationalist slogans in each and every issue, Nepal's political leaders have been mostly dismantling the bonds of relations between Nepal and India politicizing all the important aspects.

"We look forward to further strengthening of India Nepal ties, based on our shared culture and history," wrote Indian PM Narendra Modi.

Nepal's Side

With so many connecting factors with India, including shared civilization, religion, culture, history and geography, Nepal cannot ignore the deep rooted relations with India. Bound so intricately with India, Nepal has a very limited space in handling the relations with other countries.

However, Nepalese leaders are always underestimating them. Nepal often uses its relations with China to counterbalance India's deep rooted relations. Just a day after the visit of Indian Army



Chief, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli carried out an onsite visit of Kimathanka checkpoint and North-South highway. North-South Koshi highway is an important road of the country to connect China, India and Nepal,” said PM Oli.

Knowing PM Oli’s mind on the relations with India, his advisors and coterie too are yet to work to reconnect the relations.

Gopal Khanal, Consultant Editor of Government owned The Rising Nepal, writes “this situation is not the outcome of Prime Minister Oli’s diplomacy of pleasing India, but a result of India’s need to maintain friendly relations with Nepal.

“Some are hell-bent on discrediting Oli’s nationalism and patriotism through fabricated news and narratives. But, such attempts have gone down the tube time and again. It is unlikely that they will succeed in future, too. Many po-

litical analysts have nurtured their flawed views that India will never hold talks with Prime Minister Oli on the disputed boundary and will instead take tough measures like that of blockade but they have proved themselves wrong.”

“Prime Minister Oli’s resolute stand on the boundary issue with neighboring India and the latter’s realization has of late created positive atmosphere for holding formal bilateral meeting with it focusing on the substantial agenda. India launched cartographic aggression by incorporating Nepal’s Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulek in its map. Nepal responded to it with ‘tit for tat’ diplomacy, forcing Indians to come to the negotiating table after months of verbal blame games.”

“After the formal visit of India’s army Chief Manoj Mukunda Naravane from 4-6 November, India’s foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla is scheduled to

travel to Kathmandu to formally hold talks with Nepal that has long been requesting the southern neighbor to sit for talks on various issues, including the territorial dispute.”

Khanal’s article published in the Government owned newspaper is a reflection of the mind of the government, particularly the prime minister. Even PM Oli’s advisors and close coterie hold the same view as Khanal’s.

Narrative of Nepal India Relations

Unlike other countries, Nepal and India have peculiarly different narratives based on tradition, culture, religion and civilization. As Krishna said I am mighty as Himalaya and pure as Ganga.

Surrounded by Himalayas, which are the major sources of water of the Gangas, Nepal is the source of water which purifies not only people but also vast areas of land in south.

Nepal and India have certain

unique types of relations. Exchange of the Honorary General title of the armies by chiefs of both the armies of Nepal and India is one example.

As Himalayas and Ganga rivers spiritually and religiously unite Nepal and India, our common civilization shows our destiny.

Surviving on hypocrisy and populist politics, Nepali Communist Party government led by KP Sharma Oli has also missed the second time to woo high level missionary from India to convey his sincere desire to resume talks and defuse strains in bilateral relations.

COAS General Naravane had started his first Nepal visit aiming to revive Nepal-India's cultural, religious and civilizational linkages -- he paid a visit to Pashuptinath Temple and Kumari Temples in Hanuman Dhoka.

Along with others, General Naravane, a Hindu, preferred visiting Pashupatinth, a highly sacred temple of Hindus all over the world. However, the leaders of communist government did not show any gesture allowing him inside the temple to perform the puja.

As the Pashupatinath Temple has been closed only to avoid crowed, nothing can prevent them to allow highly important dignitaries from India to go inside. It is the personal right of every Hindu to pay respect to Pashuaptinath and General Naravane is not an exception.

As Prime Minister Oli has shown his public posture of a kind, he came with a different posture in formal meetings at his residence.

Prime Minister Oli told General that there was a good friendship between Nepal and India and that the issues between the two countries would be resolved through dialogue.

Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, Foreign Affairs Advisor to Prime Minister Oli, said that there is a tradition of conferring honorary rank of General on the Army Chiefs

of the two countries.

The Thaw After months of jingoism, Oli attempted to mend fences with a call to Prime Minister Modi on the eve of Independence Day.

That was followed by a meeting between Nepal's foreign secretary and India's ambassador to Nepal to review progress of India-aided projects in that country.

There have been back-channel talks between the two countries since then, but New Delhi is yet to concede to Nepal's request for foreign secretary-level talks to resolve the border disputes between the two countries.

After the political crisis that Oli faced blew over last month, he also put the brakes on his jingoism and has since then desisted from riling India with intemperate remarks.

Different Past

During the monarchical Nepal, all Kings of Nepal used to give high importance to cultural, religious and civilizational connections with India. The level of state to state relations cannot make any difference to foster, strengthen and flourish civilizational connections between the two countries.

As a Hindu King, Nepal's monarch also maintains Nepal's linkage with spiritual sites of India. Despite signing international conventions, the monarch used to send a Musk to Jaganathpuri annually to maintain the spiritual sanctity of temples. Similarly, India continues to supply sandalwood to Pashupati Temple to perform the puja.

Former King Gyanendra Shah said in his state visit to India in 2002 that Nepal-India relations



is not only confined to diplomatic practices and formal treaties. Our relations are based upon centuries old shared, common civilization, philosophy, culture and relations. Thus our relations are based on the deep understanding of our values and civilization. Our relations are above the formal and treaty based relations.

Although secular India continues to maintain its obligation towards Nepalese Hindu temples, secular Nepal has discontinued its traditions needed to give continuity to retain civilizational continuity.

At a time when India has started to give priority to its civilizational, cultural and religious connectivity to Nepal, the two countries' relations are also likely to change. As American Professor late Leo Rose in his book Nepal Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom said, a perception held by a small group of elites cannot change culture, religion and value penetrated deep inside at the root. He argued that cultural and value-related phenomenon existing below the elite level is highly significant to determine Nepal's relations with India.

Routine Emergency

The recent deepening of political crisis in ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) looks sudden but such incidents have been regularly occurring in Nepali political spectrum

By KESHAB POUDEL

As prominent Nepali laurel, poet, dramatist and philosopher late Bal Krishna Shum said in his book *Niyamit Akasmikata* (Routine Emergency), every event looks unusual but routine. Nepalese politics has been passing through several such unusual but regular events.

For many, the sudden unification of Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist) was puzzling. Similarly, the current deep crisis of unified party is another shocking event in the emergency routine.

As they united in a dramatic and unusual manner, it will not be taken as shocking in case they break the party. This kind of abnormality is a normal practice in Nepali politics. Although several factors, internal and external, directly and indirectly, are playing different roles, one cannot rule out the possibility

of the unity crumbling overnight.

As the internal dissension deepens in the ruling party, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli reportedly held two hours of meeting with leader of opposition Nepali Congress Sher Bahdur Deuba. This gave rise to speculations over the possibility of forming new collation between Nepali Congress and PM Oli led factions.

Prime Minister Oli's meeting with Nepali Congress President leader Deuba has been interpreted by media outlets as the PM's attempt to seek the main opposition party's support to run a coalition government if the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) splits.

A war of words has escalated between the ruling party's rival factions after NCP Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal presented a 19-page proposal in the party Secretariat meeting accusing the PM of failing to run the government and the party. The Oli faction has dismissed Dahal's proposal

as a document of baseless allegations.

However, Chief Secretary of NC Secretariat Krishna Prasad Paudel said the talk of Oli discussing a possible alliance with the NC was just a rumor. "Our party is neutral in the NCP's intra-party feud and is committed to shouldering the responsibility of the main opposition as mandated by voters."

NC Spokesperson Bishwa Prakash Sharma tweeted that the NC would remain in the opposition and would not be enticed. He added that NC lawmakers were not part of any power equation.

What the two leaders aspired for during the meeting is yet to be public officially but it has sent the message that the government is in a fragile situation and it has lost the majority strength.

Oli And Prachanda

There is nothing in common between PM Oli and Prachan-





da but what is common between them is to form any kind of opportunistic alliance for political power.

When one sees the ideology, individual style and level of orientation, Prime Minister Oli and Prachanda led factions in the ruling party have nothing in common.

In terms of personalities and party ideologies, the unification of ideologically radical Nepal Communist Party–Maoist and moderate left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist) was itself unusual and illogical three years ago. However, both the parties moved overnight forward and decided not only to form a joint alliance but unify shortly.

As the unification of the party under the leadership of Prime Minister Sharma Oli, who projected himself as a die-hard critic of Maoist, is politically unnatural, consent given by Prachanda, a die-hard critic of PM Oli, to be co-chair with a political rival was another puzzle.

The unification was itself a puzzling matter. However, there were euphoria among the cadres

and leaders of the both the parties. It was shocking for Nepali Congress, which shared power and contested the local elections jointly with Prachanda led Maoist pulling down the government led by Oli.

Left, Right, Left

This is not the first political puzzle of Nepal. Since 1990, Nepalese have already seen many such political puzzles. During the 1990s, there were waves of liberal democratic order which pulled down all communist governments and communist ideology had drastically declined with the fall of Soviet Empire.

However, communist forces rose to the height in Nepali politics with support from Nepali Congress, a liberal and moderate democratic political party. Nepali Congress helped give international legitimacy and recognition to Nepal Communist Party.

The rise of communists in Nepal, at the cost of monarchy, a traditional force and republican force, was unusual. In just a matter of five years of overthrow of monarchy led Panchayat, the first minority commu-

nist government was formed in Nepal.

The fall of communist government has opened a series of experiments of communists, Nepali Congress and rightists-monarchist alliances. Although ideologically, they don't have any closeness, there were left right, right left and right center alliances.

After launching the Maoist rebellion, the country has seen another political puzzle. Maoist leaders, who waged a violent insurgency against mainstream political parties, CPN-UML, Nepali Congress, RPP and monarchy, came to power with the support and alliance with Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and other left and right fringe parties through abrogation of the constitution of 1990 and monarchy.

Under the leadership of Nepali Congress leader late Girija Prasad Koirala, who was known as a die-hard anti-communist, Maoist came to national mainstream making Nepal as a complete red state.

In a matter of three decades of liberal political order, now

POLITICS

communist parties are governing the country with two thirds majority in the central parliament and six out of seven provincial governments and over 70 percent local governments.

In the era of rising right including in India with BJP in center and several states, Nepal is under the communist domination.

Everything looks unusual at that political context but every event looks to fit a usual order.



However, Nepalese political parties have been constantly playing as a force of political instability in the country over the last 70 years.

Political instability, intrigues and massacres, started since the unification of Nepal and death of founder of Nepal Prithvi Narayan Shah, continue.

Current Dispute

The internal bickering in the ruling party started a few months after the formation of the government. Settling several crises one after another, the current political scenario has reached another climax.

Following the tabulation of 19-page document, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda had accused Oli of defying power sharing deal with him, ignoring party rules and decisions, and failing to run the party and the government.

This document has angered PM Oli. He immediately asked his henchmen to counter it. Upon PM Oli's request General Secretary Bish-

nu Poudel told Dahal to withdraw his proposal and seek resolution of issues on the basis of consensus.

PM Oli countered the allegations made against him by Dahal and majority members of the party Secretariat and sought 10 days to pen his rebuttal.

Deputy parliamentary party leader of the party Subash Chandra Nembang also met Dahal and told him that the best

course of action for the party was to abide by the recent decisions of the party's Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee had decided that Oli would complete his five-year term as PM and Dahal would act as the executive chairperson of the party as proposed by the six-member task force, ending the intra-party feud that had threatened party unity.

However, a war of words has heated up between the two leaders. While Dahal has accused Oli of defying party rules and decisions, inciting party lawmakers to file a no-trust motion against Karnali Chief Minister Mahendra Bahadur Shahi and making appointments to constitutional bodies without consulting party bodies, Oli has termed Dahal's proposal as a document full of baseless accusations.

NCP Standing Committee Member and Chief Political Advisor to the Prime Minister Bishnu Rimal has claimed that the accusations leveled at party Chairman and PM

KP Sharma Oli by another Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' were apolitical and impulsive.

At a time when the cadres and lower rung leaders of the party are worried whether the party would split because of the intraparty feud, chief political advisor of PM Oli Bishnu Rimal viewed the accusations of Chairman Dahal as mere inhibitions.

After the discontents and accusations of Chairman Dahal and five other members of the Secretariat were made public, how PM and Chairman Oli will respond is a matter of curiosity for the party insiders and observers as well.

According to leader Rimal, if the weightage of vote of then CPN (Maoist Centre) and CPN-UML were made the bases for unification, it could be 70:40 ratio to UML and Maoist Centre factions.

When the party unification was announced on May 17, 2018, it was also declared that party's general convention would be held within two years and new leadership elected on the basis of consensus.

The government led by Nepal Communist Party (NCP) with a solid majority is in problem due to a prolonged intra-party feud. The unification of the largest two left parties CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Centre and their subsequent victory in the elections of the federal parliament and provincial assemblies had created hope for political stability that would ultimately create a favorable environment for social and economic development. But the party integration couldn't work as expected since the top leadership did not live up to their promises and self-interest prevailed.

Although the present political crisis reaches the climax and it looks PM Oli faction and Prachanda faction are in a point of no return, one cannot rule out the possibility that the feud will end in a fiasco.

Chinese Economy: The Dragon Roars Ahead



BY: ABIJIT SHARMA

Just when the COVID-19 pandemic had started to gain foothold back in April, I had written an opinion piece in one of the dailies stating how the world would change post the pandemic with China emerging as the new superpower. I had every reason to believe so. China had already begun to control the rise in infection while in the US, where the number of infected was below 30,000, a swift rise was being observed. Then, in the run up to the American Presidential elections, where both the Presidential candidates were busy bashing Beijing, very few seem to have noticed that the latter had already raced ahead.

Seven months after I wrote the op-ed, I have stronger reasons to believe in my argument. According to a government data released last month, the Chinese economy grew 4.9% between July and September becoming the first major economy to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The growth is remarkable considering the fact that for the first three months of this year, the Asian giant's economy shrank by 6.8%. It was the first time China's economy had contracted since it started recording quarterly figures back in 1992.

This is not to say that the Chinese economy is back to where it was before the pandemic. But it is a position where many other big economies will take months to reach. Speaking at an event last month, China's top economist and a cabinet advisor Justin Lin Yifusaid that no matter how the international situation changes, China's GDP still has the potential to grow by 8 percent a year by 2030. He further added that even if affected by Covid-19, China's GDP growth rate this year may be between 2 and 3 percent while he predicted that 'the world's growth may be minus 5 percentage points, the US growth may be minus 8 percentage points, and Europe's growth may be minus 10 percentage points'.

While 8 percent might sound a little too ambitious for many, there is no doubt that the Chinese will be leaving rest of the world far behind when the impact of the pandemic subsides. Until now, China's growth had come about mostly from accelerating industrial production and robust

export growth. The production and subsequent export of consumer electronics, personal protection equipment and other goods that were in high demand during the pandemic turned out to be a boon for the economy. Further, to increase growth, the government also rolled out a raft of measures including more fiscal spending, tax relief and cuts in lending rates and banks' reserve requirements to revive economy and support employment. Add to that, domestic consumption and spending which was still lower until August has picked up since October; a time when millions of Chinese travel and spend during their national holidays.

Policymakers across the globe are now pinning their hopes on a robust recovery in China to help restart demand as many economies struggle especially with second wave of coronavirus infections emerging. However, it is too early to expect China to become the savior. Its imports are still low. More importantly, although its measures to control the Covid infections have been largely successful, there are still areas in major cities which have been recording local transmissions. Until last few, Chinese authorities were testing millions of people, imposing lockdowns and shutting down schools after multiple locally transmitted coronavirus cases were discovered in Tianjin, Shanghai and Manzhouli. Controlling the pandemic, thus, still remains one of the top priorities for authorities along with reviving with economy.

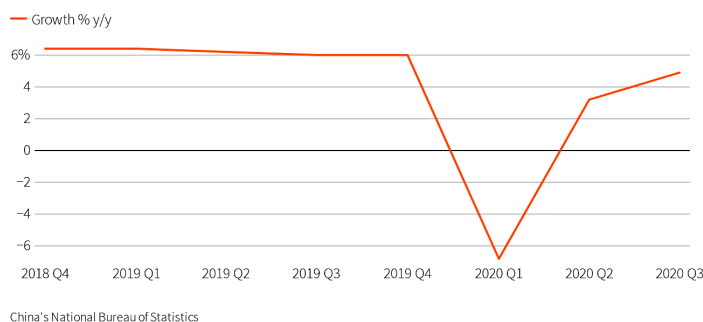
One thing, however, is for sure. Since China will have raced ahead when the

other big economies start reviving, its bargaining power will have increased exponentially. In such a situation, many big economies will start to cozy up to the Asian giant for their own gain. For the new American President, it might just be one of the many tough decisions he will have to make in the years to come – continue the trade war or cozy up to the Chinese?

Sharma is a political analyst with a Political Science degree from Delhi University and an International Law degree from ECUPL, Shanghai.

China's V-shaped recovery?

China recorded its steepest GDP slump on record in Q1 as the coronavirus shut down the economy but it has since made a significant comeback.



Work Despite Holidays

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and Dashain holidays, expert work on Tanahu Hydropower project goes on

By A CORRESPONDENT

From regular medical tests to following the most complicated health protocols in pleasing the local community, COVID-19 has brought so many constraints to big development projects.

From civil work to other technical works, there are more difficulties for the hydropower projects in continuing their construction strictly following the health protocols.

Bearing all risks and facing all challenges, Pradeep Kumar Thike, managing director of Tanahun Hydropower Company, has been pushing the construction work by mobilizing contractors and consultants.

To start the construction work during the COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult and complicated task. From following health protocols to allowing labors to work, Tanahu Hydropower Project has shown a way to accelerate construction giving testing as a key.

Delayed for over two years due to various unavoidable reasons, MD Thike, who prefers to work quietly to achieve the high performance, does not want any interruptions on the construction. Working quietly in a low profile, MD Thike has been mobilizing the whole teams including project staffs, contractors and consultants in the project site to achieve the target.

Despite a series of lockdown, obstructions by local community and disruption of movement of people due to the spread of COVID-19, Tanahu Hydropower Project has made a breakthrough in 188 long cable-tunnels, a critical part of the project to start the excavation of powerhouse.

“We have been taking very cautious approach, convincing community and giving priority to safe-

ty of the workers and other staffs,” said MD Thike. “We have been following the health safety protocol seriously and deputing the workers only after the negative PCR Test.”

Since the last March, almost all major hydro power projects have been facing difficulties to carry out the work. In the first three months, they spared times to develop the safety protocol.

Having long experiences in various under construction projects in different capacities, MD Thike has complete grasp on construction management and mobilization. With practical knowledge of the complication of construction, MD Thike, who prefers to work quietly in a team spirit, rarely boasts the performance.

As many projects shut down during the biggest festival of Ne-

of Tanahun Hydroelectricity Project. There were no disturbances in the construction process despite the Dashain festival. Although the Nepali workers were on leave, the Chinese workers gave continuity to the construction.

“During the holidays, we continued expert works like installing various equipment underground powerhouse,” said MD Thike. “We have already started to take PCR-Test of labors returned from home. The construction of powerhouse is now almost full swing.”

Chinese contractor Sino Hydro Corporation has been working in the site under the package 2, on powerhouse construction, procurement of hydro-mechanical and electro-mechanical equipment.

The project has encountered many major problems after MD Thike



pali Hindus, Bada Dashain, holidays couldn't halt the construction work

took charge. After scrapping the contract with CMC di Ravenna, Italy in



April 2019, the project had to start the contract bidding process from scratch.

The procurement of Package 1(Head works) has been significantly delayed due to unavoidable termination of the Contract with CMC di Ravenna, Italy and the rejection of all bids received for the re-bidding, being substantially non-responsive to the requirements of bidding documents.

After the re-invitation of Re-bid II on 28 February 2020 and the opening of bids on 06 July 2020, the evaluation of technical bids has completed with support from the Project Supervision Consultant (PSC). “Now, it will be sent soon to Asian Development Bank for final evaluation,” said MD Thike, who handled every issue carefully and brought the project on a track.

According to a local reporting, some 200 Nepali and 50 Chinese workers have been deployed in the construction site by Sino Hydro, Chinese Company that had received the deal to construct the second package of the project.

“During Dashain, the Chinese technicians and laborers installed various equipments in the powerhouse,” said Thike. The workers who returned from home have been going through Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test before

being deployed in the work site.”

During the period, many equipment of hydro and electromechanical equipment were installed.

Similarly, the construction of the transmission line of the project in Rhising Ruram Municipality-1, Jhaptar is also underway. KEC, an Indian company, for the construction transmission line with 200 KV double circuits ranging from Damauli to Bharatpur of Chitwan.

The \$550-million project is being built with a credit facility extended by the Asian Development Bank (\$150 million), Japan International Cooperation Agency (\$184 million), European Investment Bank (\$85 million) and investment amounting to \$87 million from the electricity authority and government.

The Tanahu Hydropower Project, one of the biggest reservoir-type projects in the country, is projected to generate massive 587.7-gigawatt-hours in the first 10 years of operation. The project can generate energy for six hours daily during the dry season.

The project aims to complete the construction of the storage type project and generate electricity by June 2024. With the length of cable tunnel, 188 meters, it helps excavation upfront of the underground power

house. Works at the Cable Tunnel have been resumed since 10 July 2020.

On completion of the package one construction, which includes the construction of a 140-meter high



PradipThike

dam, cofferdams, two river diversion tunnels and other structures, the project will enter into a new phase giving MD Thike a sigh of relief after signing the contract agreement with the new contractor.

Ambitious Draft NDC 2020



BY: BATU UPRETY

Climate change is one of the greatest existential threats facing humanity. People call for actions urgently, and urge governments to outline their own pathways to reach net-zero emissions. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol (KP) and Paris Agreement (PA) provide ample opportunities to address climate change impacts on human beings, properties and resources. One of the principles of the Convention is to protect climate system 'in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities'. The Convention calls the developed countries to take the lead in combating adverse effects of climate change. The Convention recognises the 'specific needs and special circumstances' of the countries like Nepal. In order to effectively implement the Convention provisions, Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005. The USA, major greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter, did not ratify the Protocol and Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 which entered into force in November 2016. The Agreement provides several provisions on Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

While adopting the UNFCCC in 1992, USA emission was about one-fourth of the total global GHGs emissions. In 2018, GHGs emissions from China, USA, India, Japan and United Kingdom were 28, 15, 7, 3 and 1 percent of the total emissions respectively. In terms of per capita emissions in 2018, Saudi Arabia, USA, China and India ranked 1st, 4th, 13th and 21st respectively.

Article 4.2 of the Paris Agreement provisions that 'each Party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs that it intends to achieve'. Article 4.9 provisions to communicate a NDC every 5 years in accordance with decision 1/CP.21 (21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC), and Article 4.11 provides opportunities to a Party to adjust its existing NDC at any time with a view to 'enhancing its level of ambition'. Paragraphs 23 and 24 of the decision 1/CP.21 urge Parties to communicate by 2020 a new NDC or update NDC. Decision 4/CMA.1 (First session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement) provides further guidance in relation to the mitigation section of the decision 1/CP.21.

For least developed country (LDC) Party like Nepal, Article 4.6 provides provision that 'LDC may prepare and communicate strategies, plans and actions

for low GHG emissions development reflecting their special circumstances'. Paragraph 35 (decision 1/CP.21) invites Parties to communicate their long-term GHG emission strategies, by 2020, pursuant to Article 4.19 of the Paris Agreement. With this background on NDC provisions, the following paragraphs outline national initiatives.

The Prime Minister, Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli expressed Nepal's commitment on 7 October 2020 to 'communicate enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (eNDC) by the end of this year' while making a statement at the Virtual Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Leaders Event organised in conjunction with the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of keeping climate issues at the top of global political agenda and urgency of climate action to respond to the inception of 'survival deadline' and urged to 'start action'.

No doubt, more and more determined efforts are urgently required to fight against the adverse effects of climate change, and protect people and resources. For this, NDC provides Parties multiple opportunities to reduce GHGs emissions within the agreed time-frame.

Several Parties to the Paris Agreement such as Andorra, Chile, Cuba, Jamaica, Korea, Mongolia, Rwanda, Thailand, and Viet Nam etc have submitted their 'updated first NDC' in 2020 while Suriname submitted its second NDC. Eighteen countries have shared their NDCs in 2020 (<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>, accessed on 24 November 2020). In general understanding, Parties submitted their first NDC while being a Party to the Paris Agreement, and updated their mitigation and adaptation 'contributions' and submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat in 2020 as per decision 1/CP.21.

The Ministry of Forests and Environment - Nepal's focal point for climate change - posted in its website a draft NDC 2020 for comments/suggestions within 10 days as per the decision of 18 November 2020. The 'enhanced NDC' was drafted by a taskforce established as per the decision of the Minister for Forests and Environment on 18 October 2020. The taskforce was constituted after 10 days of PM's statement to CFV and prepared a draft 'eNDC' which looks very 'ambitious and authoritative' in fixing country commitments to reduce GHG emissions by 2030 in identified sectors. However,

er, it does not define ‘enhanced’. As mentioned above, many countries have submitted ‘updated NDCs’ in 2020.

Nepal shared its Intended (i) NDC in February 2016. The NDC was submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat in October 2016 while being a Party to the Paris Agreement. The state of implementation of Nepal’s 2016 NDC was shared ([https:// www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/05/23/towards-carbon-neutrality/](https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/05/23/towards-carbon-neutrality/)) and is also reflected in [http:// prc.org.np/assets/uploads/resource/f0c17922124c0b3da8053dc5c16d9cb3.pdf](http://prc.org.np/assets/uploads/resource/f0c17922124c0b3da8053dc5c16d9cb3.pdf). Review on 2016 NDC documented “much remains to be done”, “progress is too low compared to the target”, “impossible to meet 2020 target”, “significant gaps between targets and progresses” and ‘implementation untouched’ etc. Review also flagged only 0.75 percent registration of e-vehicles against the target of 20 percent by 2020 (compared to 2010), and volume of fossil fuels (petrol & diesel imported) doubled since 2016 against the NDC target of decreasing dependency on fossil fuel in the transport sector by 50 percent by 2050. Yet three decades remains to meet fossil fuel target. Use of renewable energy is only 3.2 percent compared to 20 percent target by 2020 in 2016 NDC.

Those who have they can ‘contribute’. This situation calls for being ‘realistic’ in making the ‘global commitments’.

Nepal followed the decision 4/CMA.1 (Annex 1) in drafting its ‘eNDC’. As mentioned in the draft, Nepal is communicating its ‘eNDC’ as per Article 4.2 and 4.11 of the Paris Agreement and later Article may be for ‘unscheduled’ communication.

The draft ‘eNDC’ has strong ‘commitments’ on clean energy generation, sales of e-vehicles, operation of 200 km long electric rail network, and wastewater treatment. Sector-wise GHG emissions reductions have been mentioned for the period of 2021-2030. It neither quantifies targets for industry sector nor states total GHG emission reductions by 2030 after the full implementation of ‘contributions’. The 2013 ‘C’ (contribution) has turned to ‘commitment’ and will soon turn to ‘compliance’. In transport sector, the draft ‘eNDC’ commits to ‘decrease 28 percent in fossil fuel dependency’ by increasing sales of e-vehicles, and equal percent of emission reduction by 2030. The ‘eNDC’ mentions to reduce about 23 percent of GHGs emissions, by 2030, from residential cooking and biogas. Similarly, it commits to reduce 258 Gg CO_{2-eq} by treating 38 million litres/day of wastewater and managing 60,000 m³/yr of faecal sludge. In tourism sector, it targets to ‘ensure at least 5 tourist destinations carbon neutral by 2030’. Mitigation co-benefits is mentioned ‘not applicable’ which is difficult to understand. Non-clarity remains in draft report.



The ‘eNDC’ also includes adaptation component in the spirit of the Climate Change Policy (2019) and commits to, *inter alia*, prepare and implement climate resilient and gender-responsive adaptation plans in all 753 local levels by 2030 and formulate National Adaptation Plan (NAP) by 2021. It plans to establish and/or operationalise Inter-Ministerial Climate Change Coordination Committee (IMCCCC) by 2025 which contradicts with ‘NDC was discussed at the IMCCCC’.

The 2016 NDC was ‘adaptation-focussed’ as Ne-

pal’s GHG’s emission was only 0.027 percent of the total global emissions. This 2020 draft ‘eNDC’ is ‘mitigation-focussed’ although Nepal emits only 0.06 percent (based on GHGs inventory

2017) of the total global GHGs emission.

The ‘eNDC’ includes both conditional mitigation targets and unconditional targets and estimates a total cost of US\$ 25 billion and US\$ 3.4 billion respectively. It does not include cost of achieving the adaptation activities and informs to include in the upcoming NAP.

As an example, Mongolia intends to reduce its GHG emissions by 22.7 percent from total national GHG emissions by 2030 (this was 14 percent in 2015 iNDC). The financial needs of Mongolia for NDC implementation is estimated at US\$ 11.5 billion (6.3 billion for mitigation & 5.2 billion for adaptation). It has considered co-benefits between mitigation and adaptation actions.

There might be several assumptions while drafting this ‘eNDC’. Recalling ambitious targets of the ‘eNDC’, state of implementation of the 2016 NDC and other commitments, the government may reconsider ‘unrealistic’ targets. Few examples may support for ‘rethinking’. The government has yet to submit the Third National Communication to the UNFCCC Secretariat although it was mentioned in the Climate Change Policy (2019) to submit by 2019. The 15th Plan outlines number of key problems in addressing climate change impacts. These problems are related, *inter alia*, to the lack of inter-sectoral coordination, differences in understanding, non-mainstreaming of climate change into overall development process, lack of institutional capacity, necessary finance, technology and

ENVIRONMENT

knowledge. Functioning of the Motihari-Amlekhgunj fossil fuel (oil) pipeline and a plan for Siligudhi-Charaali oil pipeline and exploring petroleum products indicate possible continuation of fossil fuel-based economy. Furthermore, continued pressure of infrastructures would reduce forest carbon sink. Based on approved EIA report, clearing of forest for the proposed Nijgadh airport would result to annual loss of 25,580 tons of carbon sequestration potentials, besides other ecological services. However, by 2030, 'eNDC' targets to manage 50 percent of Tarai and Inner Tarai forests. There are policies that might support towards meeting the target but state of implementation of several policies, plans and programmes does not convince to bridge 'gaps between

commitment and implementation'.

No doubt, Nepalese people have become 'climate refugees' in their birthplace. People need to build capacity to adapt to, and build resilience to climate change. In this context, statements of the Head of the State in Katowice, Poland in 2018 and the Head of the Government on 25 September 2020 at UNGA session provide guidance, concerns and priorities in addressing climate change impacts, including through NDC.

Regarding communication of long-term GHG emission strategies by 2020, the draft 'eNDC' informs to formulate this strategy by 2021 and mentions to present a vision towards net-zero GHG emissions. The then Ministry of Environment drafted the low carbon

economic development strategy in 2013. It might have been waiting for decision after repeated revisions.

It is most likely that even the 'unconditional targets' of the NDC will face 'implementation difficulties' as it undermines the 'national circumstances, and means of implementation, including investment priorities'. The question is who takes 'implementation responsibility'. In due course of time, some 'drafters' may be engaged in reviewing 'progress' as in 2016 NDC. 'Shade effect' of a big tree on a life-protecting 'herb' will continue as usual.

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समयमै श्रम अडिट गरौ ।

जिम्मेवार प्रतिष्ठानको परिचय दिऔ ।



नेपाल सरकार
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

NEPALESE MIGRANT WORKERS Rush To India

With no job back home, large numbers of Nepalese migrant workers are returning to India in search of employment. For people leaving in western, mid-western and far-western region, migration to India is only option for survival

By A CORRESPONDENT

Raj Kumar Chaudhary of Ghoda Ghodi Municipality-3, who has been working in India for the last 15 years, said, “I am returning to India because of the lack of job opportunities here in home country, Nepal.

Lokendra used to work at a shopping Complex in New Delhi as a security guard for the last five years and had returned four months ago. Others like him too had to leave their jobs in India to return to their hometowns.

“Malls have opened in India. I got to join my duty. It has been

four months since I reached Nepal to skip the pandemic but I have got nothing to do here. At least I have a job in India with which I am able to meet the expenses of my family. I am therefore thinking about returning to India for the work which is there for me. My employer has been for weeks asking me to return, so I am off to New Delhi,” Lokendra said.

More than a thousand workers from Nepal have been crossing the Customs at Kailali District of Southern Plain of Nepal to rejoin their jobs in India.

Although the exact number of Nepali migrant workers is not recorded by any of government institutions, thousands of Nepalese are working in India. People of various age groups go to India on annual basis mainly from Far-Western Nepal which has become a means of living for them.

As no visa or permit is required to work in India, various cities there have been job centers for Nepali workers. Likewise, thousands of Indian workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh also crossed the border to work in various sectors in Nepal recently.



With the rise in COVID-19 cases in India during the month of March and the imposition of lockdown in India, more than two hundred thousand Nepali migrant workers had returned to Nepal. Now with business falling back to track in India despite rising number of cases there, Nepali workers despite knowing the risk are flocking to India for jobs.

With the economy in India gathering pace again, thousands of workers from Nepal have been crossing the customs point at Kailali District of Southern Plain of Nepal to rejoin their jobs in India.

A report quoted a migrant worker as saying, "Malls have opened in India. I got to join my duty. It has been four months since I reached Nepal to skip the pandemic but I have got nothing to do here. At least I have a job in India with which I am able to meet the expenses of my family. I am therefore thinking about returning to India for the work which is there for me. My employer has been for a week asking me to return, so I am off to New Delhi."

The Covid-19 lockdown in

March had made more than 2, 00,000 Nepali migrant workers return to Nepal.

Closed **Open** **border** **Mobility**
Nepal shares borders with two neighbors, India on the South and China on the North. Following the spread of coronavirus, Nepal has completely shut down the borders with China and India.

Despite shutting down human mobility from Nepal, India always keeps its borders open for export and import of goods and human mobility. India's border is the lifeline for Nepal's national economy and lifeline for people.

With insistence from Chinese authorities, Nepal's two main trading ports with China are yet to open. Goods worth of billions of rupees have been lying in the Chinese side of the border due to the border shutdown by Chinese authorities citing the COVID-19.

Although Nepal is yet to officially open its borders with the southern neighbor India for the mobility of people, India has allowed desperate Nepalese seeking to go

back for employment, which is the means of survival for their families.

According to officials, over 500,000 Nepalese have already entered India from four border points including Gaddachauki, Gaurifanta of far west, Ruapadiya and Sunauli of Province 5.

Coronavirus infections have been surging and there is a threat of infection, people of far-western Nepal, who rely on employment opportunity in India, have started to return for employment.

As India is a main destination of employment for an overwhelming number of Nepalese people in far-west and Karnali province, Province 5 and Gandaki, the remittances generated from India is a source of livelihood.

Migration From Farwest

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing an exceptional level of reverse migration of Nepali migrant workers from the destination countries and places. The current global pandemic is increasing health and safety risks.

There are reports of migrant workers being unemployed, unpaid, and at the mercy of the em-

employers, resulting in them living off their inadequate savings. Nepal began to see a significant influx of migrant returnee people from India as India saw an increase in new cases throughout the country.

Nepali migrant workers coming from India struggled to get back as India announced its own nationwide lockdown from March 25. Many walked hundreds of miles through the Indian lockdown and finally came to the border towns and entered Nepal from designated 20 border points.

DCA-Nepal Study

According DCA-Nepal, the organization has been working in the Sudur Paschim Province on migration issue and conducted several studies and research aftermath of COVID-19.

A study “COVID-19 Impact on Migrants Workers” in Kanchanpur, Doti, Achham and Kailali District, with 1572 migrant returnees” conducted by DCA, a Danish Development and Humanitarian Agency through its local partners in Sudur Paschim Province shows that 98.7% of migrant’s returnee have lost their household livelihood due to COVID-19. For FullReport:<https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/survey-report-cov->

[ers-sudurpashchim-pradesh](https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/survey-report-cov-)

In addition to the other early recovery programmes, DCA is planning to support 8 cooperatives in Doti and Achham Districts with a seed grant, that will be mobilised to design appropriate low-interest loan products for the potential migrant returnees, which will support them to start income generation activities.

Samjhana Bista, Head of the Programs, said that a Survey Report “COVID-19 Impact on Migrants Workers” in Sudurpashchim Pradesh highlighted various aspects of migration and migrant workers.

The study undertaken by DCA-Nepal identify the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers in Kanchanpur, Kailali, Doti and Achham districts, the situation is dim in Sudurpaschim.

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This study was undertaken to identify the impact of COVID-19 on Migrant workers in Kanchanpur, Kailali, Doti and Achham district. It covered 1,572 migrant’s returnees. The multistage stratified systematic random sampling method was adopted to identify the respondents for the survey. The majority 94.3%, were male.

The mean age of the migrant’s returnee is 29 years. 33.8% of respondents have studied up to grade 6 to 10. Most of the migrant’s returnee HHs (78.4%) fall into the vulnerability category. 19.4 % of the respondents stated that they have a person with Disability (PWD) family members in the HHs and 64.1% of respondents fall under Poor and Food Insecure (PFI) household. 97.1% of



id-19-impact-migrants-work-

off their inadequate savings. Ne-

migrant returnees come back from

COVERSTORY



abroad, while 2.9% returned from other districts of Nepal. The respondents that returned from abroad, 98.2% returned from India, while 1.8% returned from Gulf countries i.e. Dubai, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

98.7% of migrant's returnee have lost their household livelihood due to COVID-19. The key reasons for the disruption in their current livelihoods activities are (i) shutdown of markets due to lockdown, (ii) had to stay at home to look after their children due to school closures, (iii) impact on markets due to the economic downturn (iv) travel restrictions and contract termination were also a reason for livelihood loss.

The main food source for the HHS is its crop production, livestock rearing, and purchasing from the market. 12% of migrant's returnee HHs do not have food stock; whereas 37.8% have food stock for 3 months and 30.8% have food stock for 6 months.

Likewise, 38.2% of the respondents purchase more than half of the food items from the market. 40.8% of respondents believe that their local market places are not safe in terms of the spread of COVID-19.

The women's workload has increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic; 77.2% agreed that women's workload has increased mainly in terms of preparing and

managing food for their family, taking care of their children and livestock. Mostly, 84.1% adult female member and 73.4% adult male members of the family is most stressed in the current situation. 57.5% agreed that the risk of Gender-Based Violence has increased. There is a need to create livelihood opportunities for the migrant's returnee to make an environ-



ment to use their skill. Of returnees, 56.2% have agriculture-related skills; 35.5% have cooking skills, 6.5% have housing construction skills; 6.3% have iron smith skill, 5.2% are skilled in driving. Similarly, 5.4% have tai-

loring and driving skills respectively.

In another, COVID-19 Socio-economic Survey Report - Humanitarian Response Team DCA Nepal Office conducted on June 17, 2020 also reveals many interesting part.

The study of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents showed that the mean age of the respondents was 34 years, with 62.3% of the respondents being between the age group of 25 to 44 years.

Most of the HHs (45.1%) fall into the vulnerability category of poor/food insecure. 37.7% of the respondent's stated that they have vulnerable member in their family i.e., elderly people in their HH and 12.3% have a Person with Disability (PwD).

There is a need to revive their livelihoods by creating new income generation opportunities in the communities with special financial and technical support in collaboration with the local government (LG).

The major source of income for livelihood is daily agriculture and non- agricultural

wage labour (61.3%) followed by subsistence farming (59.8%) and seasonal employment (17.2%).

The HHs have stated that the key three reasons (multiple responses) for the disruption in their

livelihoods activities are (i) closure of market due to lockdown (87.7%), (ii) need to take care of the children due to school closure (66.2%) and (iii) losing agriculture and non-agriculture related wage labour opportunities (41.2%). 47.5% HHs reported that more than half of their HH supplies comes from the market.

There is a need to create livelihood opportunities for the migrant returnees - an environment where they are able to use the skills that they have learnt in their host countries such as cooking, vocational skill for manufacturing industries, modern agriculture practices etc. for income generation. Majority (60%) of the migrant returnees reported that they spent 1-10 years for working abroad. The jobs mainly consisted of working in hotel/restaurants, security guards, cook and "other work" which including working as a receptionist, gardener, care-taker and in the assembly line of factories.

The three main sources of food for the HHs is from their own crop production, livestock rearing and purchasing from the market. Most of the HHs have sufficient food stock for less than 3 months. 52% HHs agreed that COVID-19 has already had an impact on their sustenance, whereas 44.6% HHs are expecting a negative impact if the current situation continues. 53.9% HHs agreed that they are having additional health issues due to food scarcity. The issue of food insufficiency is becoming a big challenge in those communities. Thus, there is a need to address this emerging problem on time.

Going Back

With no employment opportunity back home, large numbers of Nepalese, who returned home after lockdown in March, have started to return to India. Although Nepal is yet to formally announce opening of border, India has been allowing Nepalese migrant workers to return in their place in India.

However, this is not the



same with Indian citizens who want to come to Nepal. With a decision of banning border till October, Indians have to wait to enter Nepal through official borders.

However, Nepal opened its border for trade with India even during the complete lockdown. As a result of global COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal has, as many other countries, implemented the lockdown measures to curb the spread of the deadly virus.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nepali returnees from India have now started going back to India because of the lack of food and employment at home despite the risk of contraction of the virus.

Dinesh Thakhulla, an official at the Citizen Help Desk at Trinagar border in Dhangadhi, Kailali, said, "In recent times, more than 1000 migrant workers are returning to India on a day."

The police deployed at Trinagar post said that the migrant workers go to Mumbai, Pune, Del-

hi, and Lucknow through the Gaurifanta border point. As the number of Nepalis going back to India has increased, Indian authorities at Indian border side have made it compulsory to show the ration card or Nepalese citizenship to enter India.

"It's easier to fight the virus than hunger. So I am going to work in India as a migrant worker," said Kripa Ram Niraula, 50, a resident of Punarbas Municipality- 6, Kanchanpur, who has been a migrant worker in India for 22 years. Niraula made the comment while entering India through the Gaurifanta border point.

Another migrant worker, Kemraj Chaudhary of Bardagoriya, Kailali, who has been working in India for the last 6 years, said, "If I do not go to India for earning, then my family of four will die from hunger." He is more worried about the unemployment than getting infected with the virus.

MELAMCHI TUNNEL TEST

Deadline 2021

The testing and commissioning of Melamchi Drinking Water Project will start on January 2021

By A CORRESPONENT

After suffering a major set-back in July, Melamchi Drinking Water Project will start testing and commissioning of the project only by completing a thorough inspection from foreign experts.

Although the project was scheduled to start the testing at the beginning of December, completing all the remaining works, including the damaged gate and audit tunnel, the decision now is to bring foreign experts for final inspections of the work and gate before filling the water.

"Following thorough inspections and observations by foreign experts, we will start final testing and commissioning. It will start only in January 2021," the secretary of the Ministry of Water Supply told New Spotlight. "We have learnt a lot of lessons from the past and we will resume testing and commissioning after all technical inspections."

The tunnel is going to be re-tested correcting the error after an incident occurred in course of a trial run around four months ago.

Spokesperson at the Ministry of Water Supply, Ritesh Kumar Shakya, said that a plan has been set to test the tunnel again sending water in it as activities to correct the pervious error are likely to be completed. He shared that the activities to correct the errors in the sluice gate to the tunnel are likely to be completed within December.

Following completion of the corrective works on the tunnel gate within November, a high-level foreign expert will likely arrive in December to inspect the work and see the corrective step taken in the tunnel.

Drinking water would be distributed in Kathmandu Valley only after the water reaches the water treatment centre at Sundarijal. There are two water treatment centres in Sundarijal.

The water diverted from the Melamchi stream in Sindhupalchok district would be distributed soon after the water reaches Sundarijal, Kathmandu as necessary structures have already

been constructed in Kathmandu Valley for the same.

An incident occurred on July 14 when the gates of tunnel at Helambu rural municipality-1 of Sindhupalchowk district collapsed due to technical error.

A committee formed under the Joint-Secretary of the Ministry, Ramakanta Dawadi, to study about the incident concluded that the incident had taken place as the gates, which should be inside the tunnel, were kept outside the tunnel.

The Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) is considered to be the most viable long-term alternative to ease the chronic water shortage situation within the Kathmandu Valley. The Project is designed to divert about 170 MLD of fresh water to Kathmandu Valley from the Melamchi River in Sindhupalchowk district. Augmenting this supply by adding about a further 170 MLD each from the Yangri and Larke rivers, which lie in the upstream proximity of Melamchi are also being investigated as future supply sources.

It is said that a main reason for the failure of the gate is that the door opened into the adit, rather than into the main waterway. Had it been installed to open into the waterway, it would have been self-locked by the water pressure. The water pressure instead pushed the adit door open.

According to a report presented by the inquiry committee, there is a structural damage to the tunnel and its rock support in filling and the rapid emptying of the tunnel. Similarly, the rock of audit and other infrastructure remains intact.

The tunnel is designed as a



lined tunnel with rockbolts and shotcrete for immediate support and with 35cm of shotcrete final lining specified by the design. Reaches in good quality rock classification 1, 2 and 3 are unlined.

With the incident, the Ministry has already directed to change the design of the gates and install them to open into the waterway.

There are a total of 29 control gates for the operation of the water supply tunnel including five 12.5m 2 adit bulkhead gates with a radial gate at the intake and a control gate at the downstream end.

The gates for the project are designed, supplied and imported to Nepal and installed by a company from India. The project contractor, Sinohydro of China, completed the civil works associated with the installation of the gates including the rock support around the doors and the shotcrete support of the adit junction with the main tunnel. All the adit gates were closed ahead of the watering-up test.

The accident was caused due to errors in the knot bolts used to lock the adit bulkhead door. "The door had been tightened with 30 knot bolts. The knot bolts got slipped due to the water pressure, which unbolted the door," a quote said.

Learning from the last accident, team of project officials led by secretary Belbase of the Ministry of Water Supply, will start filling water only after thorough inspections of tunnel and repair of damage.

Railway Connection

Nepal-India agree to strengthen cooperation in the railways sector

By A CORRESPONENT

As Nepal is in the process to expand railways to different parts seeking India's support, in a recent meeting, officials from Nepal and India agreed to strengthen cooperation in the railways sector.

Connecting Nepal from different parts of India and Nepal requires a huge financial and technical expertise. India's international expertise is highly important to Nepal.

During the 4th India-Nepal Joint Working Group meeting on Railway Cooperation, officials from both the countries agreed to remain engaged closely to strengthen cooperation in the railways sector.

Along with providing support to other parts of Nepal, India is also supporting preparation of a technical feasibility study of Raxaul-Kathmandu Railway connection. The project was agreed during the visit of Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi to Nepal.

The JWG reviewed the cross border rail link projects that are between Jaynagar-Bijalpura-Bardibas and Jogbani-Biratnagar under advanced implementation. Both sides discussed the technical preparedness of the completed 34-km long section

of the railway line between Jaynagar in India and Kurtha in Nepal for the purpose of running passenger train services, including the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that need to be put in place for resumption of passenger train services by Nepal Railway Company (NRC).

The section, originally a narrow gauge built by British India, was upgraded by Government of India to broad gauge at a cost of over INR 380 cr (NR 6080 million). Government of Nepal has recently procured two DEMU train sets from India for running on this railway link. Both sides also discussed the mutual facilitation and coordination required for completion of the work on remaining sections from Kurtha to Bilajpura, currently under construction by Government of India at a cost of INR 200 cr (NR 3200 million).

In a video-conference held recently, the Indian side was led by



Dr Manoj Singh, Executive Director (Traffic Transportation-F), Ministry of Railways, Government of India and Nepali side was led by Gopal Prasad Sigdel, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Government of Nepal.

Both sides further agreed to expedite the work for completion of the other ongoing cross-border railway project between Jogbani in India and Biratnagar in Nepal under a grant assistance of INR 374 cr (NR 5884 million). The JWG Co-Chairs agreed to extend cooperation in the railways sector, including in the capacity building and training of Nepali railway personnel in India and in Nepal as per the requirements of Nepal.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, other stakeholders who participated from both sides included senior officials from Indian Railway, Ministry of External Affairs, Embassy of India in Kathmandu, Konkan Railways and IRCON on the Indian side and Director General, Department of Railway (DoRw), General Manager of Nepal Railway Company (NRC), officials from Ministry of Home and Foreign Affairs of Government of Nepal from Nepali side.



Two Peas In A POD



With the onset of election season around the world, two closely watched elections from Nepal would be the United States presidential elections and the Bihar Assembly elections. Although the impact of both the elections cannot be quantified on a purely political profit and loss basis, the qualitative impact of the above-mentioned elections is yet to be decoded.

Bihar and Nepal are like two peas in a pod, territories which were united by geography and divided by history, due to which the ethnicity, language, culture and cuisine in this region are inseparable and one might not even realise when one steps across the border. The regime in Bihar always has yielded some influence in Nepalese politics from the first Chief Minister S.K Sinha allowing the transport of ammunition through Bihar to Nepal in the war against the Ranas to the so-called influx of criminals in Nepal from Bihar during the maiden days of CM Nitish Kumar. The outcomes of these actions are for history to judge in the future.

With the conclusion of Bihar elections on the 7th of November 2020, I have tried to present a few instances of the past where a regime change in Bihar has affected the politics of Nepal and vice versa.

Dawn of Democracy

The independence of India was shortly followed by the dawn of democracy in Nepal. The early independence era in Bihar saw an unchallenged Indian National Congress (INC) winning 6 consecutive elections since 1952 till 1972. This period in Nepal saw the reign of three kings, eight nominated Prime Ministers

and one democratically elected Prime Minister. At a time, our neighbour sailed the stable seas to institutionalise and deepen democracy, our nation set out on a journey of wilderness and uncertainty. At a time where our neighbouring state was able to abolish Zamindaari system, revolutionise agriculture through Green Revolution and industrialise the infertile plains, our nation was occupied with inter-familial and intrafamilial clashes.

To elaborate, the first few years of democracy saw a clash between the two Koirala brothers, on issues of monarchy, democratic institutions and of course, power. The brothers who were expected to work like Sri Krishna Sinha and his Deputy Anugraha Narayan Singh were seen fighting for the top post like Pandit Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The fighting did not end at just the Koirala Niwas, in Narayanhiti Palace saw animosity between the ailing king and the young prince, the most alarming one being the issues of King Mahendra's second marriage. The intrafamily feud was the one

2015 was an important year for both Nepal and Bihar. While the Nepalese were ready to promulgate the most awaited Magna Carta, the people of Bihar faced the perplexity of elections. This election was different from any other given election as the alliance they had elected in 2005, the NDA which comprised of the BJP and JD(U) had broken down.

between B.P Koirala and King Mahendra, the reason for which is very similar to Coulomb's law (as the Greeks put it "likes repel and opposites attract").[1] The two statesmen had similar traits which made it difficult for them to collaborate and cooperate. These series of clashes, diverse ideologies and a lack of a prudent system to mediate these clashes led Nepal to miss out on its formative years in modern history.

Penance of Panchayat

Nepal's tryst with democracy was short-lived as in essence, the only democratically elected government lasted for merely eighteen months. One cannot help but notice that the oust of B.P Koirala in December

1960 was at a time when Bihar CM Sri Krishna Sinha was critically ill. Although the coup d'état was supposedly supported by the Indian establishment at the centre, it is highly unlikely that a similar decision would have been taken if Sri Krishna Sinha was active, as he had always been a propounder of a democratic Nepal and had affectionate and cordial relations with B.P Koirala.

Another important event in modern history was the student protest of 1979, during this time Bihar had its first non-congress and Dalit CM Karpoori Thakur. Unlike most of the other states ruled by the INC, the government in Bihar had been very sympathetic regarding the pro-democratic protests in Nepal. Thus, when the student protests broke out on the 6th of April the government across the border was sympathetic and supportive and provided a refuge for the political outlaws. The small student protests spread like a wildfire in Nepal affecting 35-40 of the 75 districts of Nepal.[2] As the protest strengthened the CM of Bihar was changed due to the manipulations by the upper-caste lobby of Bihar.

The primary reason for the same is that CM Thakur was going to implement backward castes reservation as per the recommendation of the Mungeri Lal Commission. [3] The same upper-caste lobby was against the very idea of challenging monarchy in Nepal as they identified monarchy as a unifying and stabilising force of the nation. Moreover, as they belonged to the upper two varnas they had their dogmatic and superstitious beliefs which favoured the reign of the monarchy. But, despite the change in leadership in Bihar the protests in Nepal had already led the monarch to announce a referendum in a year. Ram Sundar Das's reign in Bihar was short-lived and in February 1980 he was ousted and Bihar went under Governor's rule, this was when Indira Gandhi was the PM. During this period, while, leaders in India were sympathetic to the democratic cause in Nepal, the establishment was not, unlike the early years where the pro-democracy activists received pa-

tronage and support from the Indian establishment, this time it was the monarchy receiving these assistances.

Murder of Monarchy

The changing global political scenario had its impact on both Nepal and India. In 1990, Bihar saw the rise of Janta Dal and its leader Lalu Yadav, at this time V.P Singh was the Pm of India, both these factors were favourable for the Nepalese democratic struggle. Janta Dal had always been in favour of a democratically governed Nepal. The leaders of Janta Party particularly in Bihar grew up under the tutelage of Lok Nayak Jay Prakash Narayan and had cultural and social ties with the people of Nepal. This was well represented in the support of the Bihari diaspora in Janandolan I. Political organisations were allowed to work from across the border in Bihar, parties received assistances which were both tangible and intangible and there was empathy in the hearts of the people across the border they had just been victorious in a war against tyranny.[4]

With the foundation of democracy in the political governance in Nepal, Bihar saw the rise of a Subaltern Saheb.[5] As Nepal saw a move from absolute monarchy to multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy, Bihar was witnessing the rise of a despot unfortunately elected through democratic means. Nepal's entanglement with democracy was again attacked by the rise of the Maoists, who believed that this system of governance did not provide for the means to transform the nation.

With the growth of violence in both Nepal and Bihar, where one was against the state and the other was by the state, it was only the people who suffered. Poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment and natural calamities crippled both Nepal and Bihar. During this period there was a tragic moment which changed the fate of Nepal forever, this was the royal massacre. The delivery of justice in the massacre was so feeble that it eroded the confidence of the people on the rulers. Moreover, the conjecture and speculations painted one of members of the royal family as the delinquent, the



delinquent subsequently succeeded to the throne. In these tumultuous times when people had lost all hopes, the monarch tried to wrestle power was successful in overthrowing a legitimately elected Prime Minister. In Bihar, the Subaltern Saheb was involved in wide-spread corruption, promotion of nepotism through the rank and file of the party and state and establishment of caste hegemony.[6]The end of both the despot was near and in 2005 Lalu Yadav was wrested out of power in Bihar by his friend turned foe Nitish Kumar. In Nepal, King Gyanendra was forced to pave way for a national consensus government formed by the Seven Party Alliance in 2006. The exodus of Yadavs in Bihar was a turning point for Madhesis in Nepal, as Nitish's reign meant that the other backward castes in Bihar excluding the Yadavs were able to consolidate political power, in Nepal this lead to a rise in Madhesi consciousness and the idea of organization and consolidation was incepted in the minds of the people of Madhesh, which eventually lead to Madhesh uprisings in 2007.

During this time while Nepal was highly volatile, Bihar had embarked on its journey towards prosperity through development. The government of Nitish Kumar had consolidated rule of law, built critical infrastructure, begun to deliver services, increased revenues and expenditures, improved bureaucratic functionality, and generated an important sense of citizenship among many of the state's communities.[7]

Compromise of Constitution

2015 was an important year for both Nepal and Bihar. While the Nepalese were ready to promulgate the most awaited Magna Carta, the people of Bihar faced the perplexity of elections. This election was different from any other given election as the alliance they had elected in 2005, the NDA which comprised of the BJP and JD(U) had broken down. Now a new alliance called the Mahagathbandhan (MGB) constituted by JD(U) and its arch-rival RJD with the INC was contesting against the bully of Indian politics, the BJP. The BJP to capitalize on the emotions of the Biharis imposed an unofficial blockage preventing the supply of essentials. This measure proved to be counterproductive to the BJP, which due to its political miscalculations and hegemonic practices was reduced to a distant third in the 2015 Bihar elections. It would be safe to assume that the blockade on Nepal was of inconvenience to the neighboring Indian region too. Moreover, Biharis could

not accept their kith and kin beyond the border suffering through such hardships. The blockade was subsequently lifted and affairs gradually returned to the status quo.

The period after this witnessed a tear in the MGB, and Nitish Kumar retained his premiership by aligning with the BJP and earning the title PaltuChacha. [8]The years that followed crippled Bihar with unemployment, the decay of urban centres, perennial flooding and a rise in crimes. Further, the loyal nature which is intertwined with the DNA of the Biharis could not accept the betrayal by Nitish Kumar, even though it was

against their Subaltern Saheb. Only the results of the election would tell us that has this animosity translated to votes in the elections. With the Bihar election results being announced on the 10th of November, one should contemplate on the effects it would have on Nepal,

whether a regime change would result in a political alteration in Nepal or will the incumbency thrive and status quo would be maintained.

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The changing global political scenario had its impact on both Nepal and India. In 1990, Bihar saw the rise of Janta Dal and its leader Lalu Yadav, at this time V.P Singh was the Pm of India, both these factors were favourable for the Nepalese democratic struggle.

ADB

Support To Airports

ADB Approves Loan For The Extension of Parallel Taxiway At TIA And Terminal Building In GBA

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the international and domestic air transport services have drastically increased in Nepal over the years, Nepal's existing infrastructure is unable to meet the growing demand.

With one run-way and short taxi way, Tribhuvan International Airport is highly congested for air traffic. Although the pressure of the runway can be eased with the construction of north-south parallel taxi way, it has been overdue for years due to various reasons.

Even Nepal's second international airport, Gautam Buddha Airport, which is in the last stage of completion, requires further extension of its terminal building to increase the capacity.

As Nepal's air transport sector is facing such a crisis, the recent decision of Asian Development Bank in approving \$150 million concessional loan to Nepal has given a sigh of relief to the officials.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$150 million concessional loan to improve the capacity of Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) and Gautam Buddha Airport (GBA) in Nepal.

Tourism is a major source of economic activity in Nepal. In 2019, tourism generated an estimated \$2.05 billion, which accounted for 6.7% of gross domestic product.

TIA in Kathmandu is the country's only international airport and a major hub for domestic air transport. GBA in Lumbini will serve as an alternate international air transport facility for Nepal. Lumbini is the birthplace of the Buddha and is a pilgrimage

the country's tourism industry and address the long-term negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic."

The loan will support the construction of a parallel taxiway extension and hangar aprons at TIA, and a new in-



and major tourist destination.

"ADB's support will improve TIA's safety, capacity, and operational efficiency. In addition, the new GBA international terminal will play a key role in boosting regional tourism in and around Lumbini," said ADB Senior Transport Specialist for South Asia Kai Wei Yeo. "The project will help revive

international terminal building at GBA to increase capacity.

Another key component of the project is minimizing climate change impacts. This will be carried out by using clean energy materials, such as the solar panels and energy-efficient lighting to be installed at the new GBA terminal building.

A Nexus Perspective To Koshi Region

Studies predict that by 2050 AD, the Koshi region, which is the largest Himalayan river basin, will have devastating and recurring flood events and lower lean season flows as a result of climate change. Climate change is going to have a major impact on the water, energy and food requirements of the countries relying on Himalayan river basin. The Koshi River is one of those rivers, which is going to be massively hit by the climate change related risks and will impact around 30 million impoverished people. Most of the places around Koshi river basin (in India and Nepal) are the most overcrowded and poor places on earth.

A team from ICIMOD conducted household surveys in various parts of Koshi basin (including Bihar region). The result revealed that nearly half of the respondents in the study areas of Nepal reported changes in cropping pattern. In the case of Bihar, a large majority of respondents reported changes in cropping pattern in the last 20 years. A major shift in cropping pattern was replaced by



BY: PRATIK POUDEL

power potential but also meeting the agricultural and environmental need of the region, then it may have a major impact on the frustrated youths.

A nexus perspective study found out that significant economic benefit could be achieved if the development of the Koshi basin is thought from a water, energy and food nexus. The result showed that the increased benefit from the hydropower generation, increased agricultural production and flood damage control could yield up to US\$2.3 billion under a baseline scenario and US\$2.4 billion under a future scenario, compared to an estimated annual investment of around US\$0.7 billion. The greatest contribution will be coming out from hydropower which is around 60%. The combined contribution from the flood regulation and irrigation benefit will be 40%. The estimated flood control benefits from flood control will be largely accrued to the impoverished state of Bihar, where the Koshi flood creates havoc every year during the monsoon. However, the flood regulation is only possible through significant aquifer storage and development of technologies to store aquifer through the flood water.

Various reports have stated that agriculture provides one third contribution to the entire GDP of the entire Ganges region, of which the Koshi Basin is a significant component. Furthermore, if considered as a zero emission source, the Koshi Hydropower projects (various hydropower projects in the Koshi basin) could save around 2.9 million tons of CO₂ emissions per year. Based on an average carbon price of USD 15 per ton of CO₂ and the assumption that 50% of the hydroelectricity generated would replace non-renewable (coal-based) electricity, the potential emission reduction benefits would be around USD 21.5 million per year, increasing the aggregated benefits to USD 2.30 billion per year.

Another important aspect apart from hydropower, agriculture and flood control benefits is the navigation aspect of Koshi river. Various studies have proved that Koshi river has the potentiality to make it navigable and provides access to sea to a landlocked country like Nepal. Having done a research in the possible navigation benefits in the Koshi river, AB Thapa said, "Koshi waterway along with the downstream waterways of the Ganges river, and Hoogly river can provide direct linkage with industrial and commercial centers at Kolkata and Haldia."

In fact, not only Nepal, it will also provide benefit to the entire Northern region of India. In fact, river navigation also falls on the priority list of the government of In-



adopting nonagricultural professions in order to diversify their livelihood portfolio. The ICIMOD study also revealed that around 90% of the interviewed household reported being worried about availability of food or proper food. Their worries extended for around three months in a year. Due to this phenomenon, an individual had to cope with various nonagricultural activities to maintain their livelihood. The seasonal nature of agricultural activities in the region has prompted lots of youths to go abroad in search of job opportunities. If we develop this region from a nexus perspective, which means not only harnessing the hydro-

dia. Government of India had declared Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system as National waterway (NW1) in 1986. The India government has allocated IRs. 2000 crore for the development of waterway to connect Varanasi and Kolkata.

However these benefits can only be realized when there is proper evaluation done regarding the progress so far. Many believe that the Koshi Treaty have not improved the livelihoods of the people living in the Koshi basin area. Surya Nath Upadhyaya in his book stated that the Koshi Pump Irrigation project which was supposed to be made from the Indian government based on the irrigation canal of the western side of the barrage is almost nonfunctional due to heavy electricity cost for its operation. This has a massive negative impact on the agricultural productivity of either side of the region. The Koshi barrage has done enough damage to the Indian side as well. Many Indian villages have lost productive agricultural land due to development malpractices of building river embankment in a hazardous way. Therefore, if we want to develop the region and its settlements, we have to think from a nexus perspective.

WORLD BANK

Lifting Rural Enterprise

World Bank Approves \$80 Million Rural Enterprise and Economic Development Project

By A CORRESPONDENT

As COVID-19 is drastically affecting small and medium scale entrepreneurs throughout the country, the approval of \$80 Million Rural Enterprise and Economic Development Project by the World Bank can make a difference in their business.

As the loan is to boost Nepal's agricultural sector and support post-pandemic recovery, people living in the rural areas will benefit a lot. The loan will also bolster the agricultural sector by strengthening the rural market linkages and promoting entrepreneurship while creating jobs to support post-COVID-19 recovery.

The Rural Enterprise and Economic Development (REED) Project will promote market linkages to support the growth of rural enterprises, especially those that are women-led. A key focus would be productive partnerships that help add value, create jobs and foster sustainable linkages between small-holder producers and institutional buyers. The project will facilitate improvements in quality and meeting requirements of new destination markets to boost exports.

"The project is an opportunity for the government and the private sector to work together in building the 'Nepal' brand in the agricultural sector and leverage the country's global recognition," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. "In doing so, the project can stimulate many niche sectors such as coffee, tea, fruit and medicinal products, among others, to help them grow and to support post-COVID-19 recovery."

The project focuses on five economic corridors covering Provinces 1, 2, Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini and Sudurpashchim that offer opportunities for successful linkages of the rural entrepreneurs to be supported by the project. REED will work with provincial and local governments, intermediary organizations and small and medium enterprises to build capacity in the agriculture sector and strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem.



The project will also help improve production through investments in municipal agriculture centers and value chain infrastructures to ensure the availability of inputs for farming as recovery actions from COVID-19. The project will use labor-intensive Cash for Work mechanism, to the extent possible, in short-term public works.

"In the context of Nepal's agriculture sector transformation and COVID-19, improving agribusiness competitiveness and creating rural jobs are critical to accelerate recovery of the sector and the economy from the pandemic's impacts," stated Loraine Ronchi, World Bank Practice Manager for the Agriculture Global Practice.

The project supports the Government of Nepal's Agriculture Development Strategy 2015–2035 that aims to create a sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient agricultural sector that drives economic growth with the private sector's participation.

The World Bank is supporting Nepal's development through a portfolio of 24 projects with net commitments of over US\$3 billion. The World Bank-supported projects aim at strengthening public institutions for economic management, service delivery and public investment; generating more and better jobs through private sector-driven growth; and building inclusion for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups, with increased resilience against climate change, natural disasters and other exogenous shocks.

Anything Goes



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

‘Anything Goes’ first appeared as a book by PG Wodehouse and Guy Bolton and after being adapted was made into a Musical in Broadway in 1934 by Cole Potter. Over the course of the last eighty-six years it has had many revivals as plays or cinema in the USA, UK and even Australia. Its last presentation to the public was just four years ago in the UK. This catchword phrase, ‘Anything Goes’ is however highly prevalent in politics in almost countries of the world.

It has always been said that politicians make strange bed fellows and that no one is a permanent friend or foe. To alter a current phrase, one may say that the hues / colours of any politician changes as per the political situation that exists!

During this Dasain / Tihar break in this Covid – 19 era, a post by an ex-MP politician of a party in the opposition appeared in FB deploring the fact that undue influence was being exerted from the Northern Magnetic Pole on the PM of our land. It was a great surprise to see such a statement from someone of a political party that has always been subjected to magnetic pulls from the South!

The fact is that political influence in Nepal has always been from a definite route. I write this for it was the Colonial rulers of the South who started exerting their influence from over two centuries ago. In the same spirit came the end of the Rana Era, followed by the Panchayat one, (though such a Raj is embodied in the constitution of Down South) and exists there. The latest thrust as the coup de grace was the 12-Point Accord engineered from the Southern pole. So, what is so amiss in the prevailing situation in our land?

It had been and still is customary for Nepalis to go to Muglan or the land of the Moguls / Angrez and / or to be Lahures in the army of Ranjeet Singh at Lahore. Those were glorious days when we were looked up to. Even late PM of India – Indira Gandhi was in the initial stages of her reign protected by Nepali sons in the Gurkha Regiments of the Indian Army. It was later when the Brown Sahib Syndrome set in and seeing the reality of the Bahadurs and Kanchas in the surroundings of Delhi that the superiority complex of South Block took over in the affairs of Nepal and the Nepalis. It was simply a case of whether the Babudoms of South Block or the Mandarins of Beijing in the North had the ears of the Nepali PM!

Look at the current debacle that is occurring in the US. As per the norms, being a nation that is called the ‘Father of Democracy’, one expects everything to be done as per the democratic norms. This is what we have been brought up to think or is it that we have been brainwashed to believe as a democratic norm? There we see a Head of State who has lost the election, refusing to concede that he

has been rejected by the people. When the nation has decided that he must go then why is he acting in an obstreperous manner and creating obstacles in the way of his successor? Is he any different from those who he has been labelling as ‘Tin Pot’ dictators of Shit Hole countries such as presumably Nipple!

This from a Nation, said to be a Beacon of Democracy with a history going almost 250 years, though not without acts of gruesome cruelty and ethnic cleansing, is literally shameful. But it is perhaps wrong to categorise it in such fashion. Surprisingly, in such an enlightened society as the USA, even words such as socialist and socialism are taboo! I had been once told that the US was so democratic that one could say, “Mr. President, I think you are wrong”. It doesn’t seem so anymore!

It was these enlightened countries of the Western world which started the custom of slavery for their own improvements and upliftment. They ruled over their colonies with an iron fist, taking the raw materials back to their lands and then selling the finished products to those whom they governed. The developments of the last seventy years after the end of World War II and Colonialism have shown that these same primitive countries around the world can make progress if left alone. It shows that what the great Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire said and taught as the Practice of Freedom were certainly true. Sadly political leaders of many lands have shown their true colours in that they are presently like the emperor in his new clothes. After all, democracy, although introduced with pious intent is difficult to put into practice.

We in Nepal had a 2/3rd government which was nipped in the bud some sixty years ago. This present one with an existence of thirty months does not seem to be thriving well. The two main leaders are at loggerheads at this time of Covid-19. An option seems to be sudden helicopter flights to distant sites to get away from the current issues at hand! Leaders infected with Corona spend time with their families at luxury hotels whilst the homeless or unemployed cannot ever be served free food on the green grass of the Tundikhel but are rather shunted to the dusty Bagmati River bank at Thapathali. What the future holds for us is unclear. Lacks of local Melamchi water or fertiliser from foreign lands are just two of the issues. As an afterthought one wonders if it is a genetic trait that exists in all our Nepali leaders. Such netas le je garenì bho. We too, are just dumb spectators in this land.

The author is a retired medical doctor and writes fiction under the pen name of Mani Dixit also. Website: www.hdixit.org.np. Twitter: @manidixithd



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