



OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



ARTICLE
Hemang Dixit



GLOBAL VIEW
Abijit Sharma

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Dec. 25 - 2020
FORTNIGHTLY

POLITICS OF DISSULTION

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Kathmandu DAO Regd. No.

148/11/063/64

Central Region Postal Regd.

No. 36/067/068

US Library of Congress Catalogue

No. 91-905060, ISSN : 2091-0711

(Print), ISSN: 2091-0754 (Online)

Printing

Megha Offset Printing Press P. Ltd.,

Dhapasi, Kathmandu

Tel. : 977-1-4363624

Dissolving the House of Representatives, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has established himself as the leader of the party. Following the dissolution of the House, Nepali politics has been polarized against PM Oli. This will politically benefit him in the long and short runs. Holding periodical elections and mid-term polls is a regular phenomenon in the democratic process. In a parliamentary democracy, the prime minister has certain prerogatives to test his popularity, calling the fresh election whenever he feels it appropriate. However, Nepalese political parties have rarely taken the decisions to go for fresh mandate as the right process. Since 1990, sitting prime ministers have dissolved the House and called for fresh polls and the decisions have landed in the court seeking House revival. This time is no exception. With the decision of President Vidhya Devi Bhandari to dissolve the House of Representatives upon the recommendation of prime minister Oli, Nepal has entered into a new phase of political polarization, PM Oli Vs Rest. With the decision of Nepali Congress and Maoist leader Prachanda-led faction of NCP to challenge the dissolution in the court, it has created an uncertainty whether to hold the elections or not. Although there are many likes and dislikes, seeking fresh mandate from people is a democratic exercise and political parties need to accept the challenge to go to the people. Divided on the basis of ideology, more than 12 petitions have already been filed in the court against dissolution order and main political parties have also decided to challenge it.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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Power Cooperation

Despite agreement to develop modality to purchase Nepal's surplus power, nothing has moved ahead to clear the bottleneck of major issues including Nepal's energy export to Bangladesh

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Having taken part in Nepal-India energy trade negotiations for a long time, Secretary of Energy Dinesh Ghimire knows the art of making deals with India on power.

Although the virtual meeting concluded without achieving a major breakthrough on Nepal's export of surplus energy to India and Bangladesh through Indian grid, secretary Ghimire was able to convince India that they need to purchase Nepal's surplus energy from next year. After a day-long discussion, Nepal and India agreed to finalize the Regulatory Modality to Export Nepal's Surplus Power.

"We concluded our bilateral trade meeting with an agreement to form a committee to develop modalities. This is good news for us. From next year, we will need the market for our over 1000 MW surplus energy during the season."

According to a press release issued by Indian side, Nepal and India are close to finalizing the regulatory modality for allowing Nepali power producers access to Indian power market which will provide an outlet for Nepal's surplus power in the coming months.

This agreement was reached during a meeting of Power/Energy Secretaries of Nepal and India, co-chairs of the 8th meeting of Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on Cooperation in Power sector, which was held through a video conferencing.

Both sides discussed, inter alia, development of suitable rules and guidelines for allowing access to Nepali

power producers to Indian markets, development of energy banking mechanism, development of cross border high voltage transmission lines as well as reviewing the progress of the SJVN Limited- developed 900 MW Arun-III Hydro Electric Project in Nepal and agreeing to further facilitate its expeditious implementation.

Dinesh Kumar Ghimire, Energy Secretary of Nepal was assisted by representatives of various Ministries and Departments of Government of Nepal. The Joint Working Group meeting at the level of Joint Secretaries was held in preparation of this meeting.

Both governments have been coordinating closely with each other in this sector. Consequently, progress made in the last five years in this sector has been exemplary.

This includes completion of South Asia's first cross border 400 KV transmission line at Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar, agreement on funding modality for Gorakhpur-Butwal 400 KV line for which the construction will commence soon, and the brisk progress on the 900 MW Arun-III Hydro Electric Project.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the power sector cooperation between the



Similarly, Sanjiv Nandan Sahai, Power Secretary, Government of India was accompanied by Ambassador of India to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra and a 17 member delegation drawn from various Ministries and public sector undertakings of Government of India including NHPC Limited, NTPC Limited and the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu.

According to a press release issued by The Embassy of India Kathmandu, the JSC is the apex bilateral mechanism for enhancing and coordinating various Government-to-Government led initiatives in power sector. The meeting reviewed the progress made on bilateral processes and initiatives in this sector.

two countries, including development of an integrated grid, building of more cross border transmission lines, as required, as well as investing in Nepal's hydro and solar power projects. The positive and wide-ranging discussions are expected to further support the expansion in power sector cooperation between India and Nepal.

Agreeing to continue further negotiations in coming meeting, Nepal-India energy trade talk revived the hope of Nepalese energy officials that India will manage the a way for Nepal to send its surplus energy to India from coming year.

NEWSNOTES

Nepal Ready For Role To Advance SAARC Process: Foreign Secretary Paudyal



Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary of Nepal and Chairman of the SAARC Standing Committee, underscored the need to forge early consensus for holding the stalled Nineteenth SAARC Summit and its preceding meetings.

Stating that regional cooperation is one of the priorities of Nepal's foreign policy, he expressed the unwavering faith of the Government of Nepal in the ideals, principles and objectives of SAARC. He also expressed Nepal's readiness to play a constructive role to advance the SAARC process.

Addressing the Inaugural Session of the fifty-eighth Session of the Programming Committee of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that had commenced in a virtual mode, foreign secretary highlighted the importance of the Programming Committee's Sessions in taking forward the SAARC process.

Recognizing SAARC as the collective aspiration of the people of South Asia for peace and prosperity through regional cooperation, he said that the Association had taken some important steps for promoting regional integration through trade, finance, transport, power, connectivity as well as people-to-people contacts.

Secretary Paudyal said, "Blessed with abundant natural and human resources, South Asia holds a high potential for development and prosperity. Enhanced regional cooperation and deeper economic integration is a must to realize this potential."

Esala Ruwan Weerakoon, Secretary General of SAARC, also addressed the Inaugural Session. In his remarks, the Secretary General of SAARC thanked the Foreign Secretary of Nepal and Chairman of the SAARC Standing Committee for his presence in the Inaugural Session. He conveyed condolences to the people and Governments of the Member States of SAARC over loss of life caused by the pandemic.

Presenting a synopsis of developments in regional cooperation since the last Session of the Programming Committee, he referred to the high-level meetings of the SAARC Leaders and Health Ministers during the ongoing pandemic as well as other Ministerial Meetings on Education and Planning.

Bharat Kumar Regmi, Joint Secretary, Regional Organization Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, chaired the meeting. In his opening remarks, Regmi welcomed the delegates to the meeting. He appreciated the excellent documentation and technical arrangements made by the SAARC Secretariat in facilitating the meeting.

The Programming Committee is a Charter Body of SAARC, comprising Heads of SAARC Divisions (Joint Secretary/Director General) from the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs or National Focal Points of the Member States of SAARC.

Shakya Wins SC Bar Elections

Senior advocate Purna Man Shakya has been elected as the new chair of the Supreme Court Bar Association Executive Committee. He was elected in the election held on Saturday for the 33th executive committee of the Bar.



Shakya won with 295 votes against his nearest rival senior advocate Rabi Narayan

Khanal who got 250 votes. Shakya had represented the greater democratic inclusive group in the election while Khanal represented the progressive and professional group.

Likewise, Mukunda Prasad Poudel has been elected the vice-chair, Rishi Ram Ghimire the secretary, Sharmila Shrestha the joint-secretary, Binod Kumar Karki the treasurer of the new committee.

Amita Gautam Poudel was elected the women member and Ananta Raj Luintel, Tilak Bikram Pandey, Dip Narayan Shah, Bikash Bhattarai, Rajendra Prasad Shah, Miraj Shrestha, Dr Ramhari Tripathi and Nirmala Bhandari the members.

Nepalese Peacekeepers Praised For Work In South Sudan

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan is planning to extend the stay of Nepalese peacekeepers in Cueibet County in Lakes State. Their presence has been credited for the current reduction of tensions between the frequently fighting Waat and Ayier communities.

The Nepalese peacekeepers, who have spent a month in the area, recently received information about both the rival communities planning to attack each other, with both presumably seeking "justice" for earlier cattle raids and killings. The Nepalese battalion acted on the early warnings, and so far, they have managed to deter further inter-communal violence.

"Our troops have been deployed here to protect civilians and bring peace, together with government officials and the national army. We shall keep them here if the community still wants them," said Lieutenant General Shailesh Tinaikar, the peacekeeping mission's Force Commander, while on a brief visit to the area.

Women have suffered badly from the recent outbreaks of violence. "We don't really understand what is happening here anymore. During our liberation and independence struggle, women and children were never targeted, but that has changed. We are now being specifically targeted and abused," said Allen Ajak, a female resident of Cueibet.

John Chiec Dut, a youth leader in the area, believes that impunity is the biggest challenge, as it makes the vicious circle of violence endless.

Nepal, the UN's 4th largest contributor of peacekeepers, currently deploys more than 2,000 military and police personnel to the UN Mission in South Sudan.



Germany Sends 10M Euro In COVID-19 Support To Nepal

German Development Bank has disbursed 10 million Euro for COVID-19 immediate support to the Government of Nepal (GoN).

In his tweet Ambassador Roland Schäfer, Ambassador of the Federal Republic Of Germany writes, these funds can be used as per the current priorities of the GoN in the health sector to fight against the pandemic.



Nepal Army's Second Lieutenant Receives Sword Of Honor In UK

Peter Thapa, Second Lieutenant of Nepal Army, is the first Nepali Army Personnel to secure International Sword of Honour by Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, UK.

He was awarded with prestigious 'International Sword of Honour' in the presence of Nepalese ambassador to the United Kingdom Durga Bahadur Chhetri who attended the Sovereign's Parade organized by the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

He is the first Nepal trainer to win this medal in the last 20 years.

In his tweet industrialist Binod Chaudhary congratulated Thapa for his historic achievement saying, "Proud of you!"



World Vision Commits US\$500M To Fight Global Malnutrition

World Vision will commit \$500 million of private funding to tackle malnutrition over the next five years and will also allocate an additional \$700m in nutrition grant-funded programs.

The aid agency's investment will mean that more than 1 million children will avoid malnutrition.

On 14th December, 2020 World Vision International's President and Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Morley, committed US\$500 million to fight malnutrition, and told global nutrition leaders that eliminating malnutrition – especially for women and girls – is a top priority for the organization.

Morley made the announcement as part of the Nutrition 4 Growth Year of Action launch hosted by the Governments of Canada and Bangladesh, attended by and featuring key aid sector leaders such as Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"As a child-focused organisation, World Vision refuses to accept the current status quo of child malnutrition globally," Morley said. "Good nutrition is an essential foundation for health and development, yet malnutrition is still the

Geography, Civilization, Culture And Religion Connects India Nepal Closer: General Rawat

General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defense Staff of the Indian army, said that Nepal's relations and connections with India are incomparable to China. General Bipin Rawat added that Nepal's border with India is open. He said that all these are critical.

Addressing a webinar organized by the New Delhi-based Center for Land Warfare Studies and Nepal Institute of International Cooperation and Engagement; General Rawat said that Nepal's border with India is geographically easier compared to its border with North, which is geographically hostile.

He lauded the bravery, honesty and integrity of Nepali working in the Indian Army saying that they are the great solder of the world. He said that 42000 Nepalis are currently working in the Indian Army.

General Rawat, who also served in Gorkha Regiment, said that Nepal needs to strengthen its relations with India because of its geography, religious and civilization closeness.

General Rawat also defended Nepal India Friendship Treaty 1950 and the current Gorkha

Recruitment treaty between Nepal and India saying they are still relevant as it was in the past. The treaties also guide the relations between the two countries.

"In the present day, Nepal is also opening up other nations including China based on its independent foreign policy. Nepal is free to exercise her choices in international affairs. But it should be vigilant and learn from some cases of Sri Lanka and other nations that have also signed agreements with other international countries in the region," said Rawat

"It is necessary to further strengthen the existing relationship between Nepal and India for the peace and prosperity of the people of both countries who are already inseparable in every way life," said

"Land of Nepal borders with India and China a rarely comparable. The critical fact is the geographical terrain. The northern front with China is obstructed by the Himalayas while the southern periphery opens into the Indo Genetic plains of India. Topography between India and Nepal is an ecological continuity rather than demarcation as resulted in a history of social-cultural continuity," said General Rawat.

"We have also wide-ranging relations in the defense sector. India has been supporting the modernization of the army, military training, exercises," said General Rawat.



single-biggest contributor to under-five child mortality. World Vision is determined to work towards a future in which children dying of malnutrition is a thing of the past. If we join together, we will succeed. This, I promise you"

"We know from bitter experience in 100 countries that malnutrition steals so many young children's lives, and diminishes lifelong potential for hundreds of millions more, with a disproportionate impact on girls. We can and must do more to ensure children achieve their God-given potential."

Women and girls are most affected by poor nutrition globally, "empowering them is a game-changing solution for eliminating malnutrition," he added.

BUSINESS BRIEF

KOICA And KU NTIC Share Outcomes Of The 1st Phase Of IRDP



In the presence of Park, Chong-suk Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju Shrestha, Vice Chancellor of KU and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) organized a completion ceremony of 1st phase under the Integrated Rural Development

Project (IRDP). The project was started in 2016 with the total budget of USD 10 million.

The project is being implemented with a goal to improve lives of rural people through strengthening research and development capacity of KU. Due to the COVID-19, some activities were implemented on an online basis this year. In this ceremony, STEPI (Science and Technology Policies Institute) & Jeonbuk National University shared the achievements and the progress of the 1st phase of pilot project, and the operation/management of NTIC by KU was also followed with some video clips. The achievements of 1st phase includes establishment of IRDP/NTIC Master Plan, early establishment of NTIC based on the master plan, and reinforcement of management capabilities of NTIC through 7 pilot projects. The 2nd phase of the project will start from next year.

Currently, KOICA is constructing a state of art Nepal Technology Innovation Centre (NTIC) building from September 2020 followed by equipment support for Agriculture and Regional Development (A&RD), Alternative and Renewable Energy (ARE) and Public Health related Livelihood (PHL) by May 2021. Furthermore, additional equipment will be supported by the end of 2022 after NTIC building construction is completed. The 2nd phase of the project will be implemented by NTIC with 7 main projects; R&BD, Equipment & Testing support, Smart Health Technology, School-based Enterprise, Start-up & Incubation, Training & Education, Technology DB& Networking

In the program ambassador Park, Chong-suk emphasized on the ownership of the project and assured that KU will receive continuous support from Korean Government to complete all these activities on time.

Previously, the Korean Government has supported in the establishment of Technical Training Center in KU. The key objective of establishing the training center was to provide skill-orientation quality training to the under-privileged and unemployed youth so as to produce skilled and technical workforce in Nepal.

Global IME Bank, TU Exams Office Ink Agreement

Global IME Bank has signed an agreement with



Tribhuvan University Controller of Examinations to provide necessary banking services to students and em-

ployees through its branches. Examination controller Pushpa Raj Joshi and Kirtipur Branch manager of Global IME Bank Sobha Neupane inked the agreement.

Under the agreement, all TU affiliated campuses can deposit the examination and other fees related to TU Examination Controller's Office through the branches of Global IME Bank all over the country and its banking counter in Balkhu.

As per the agreement, the bank's Balkhu counter will also provide banking facilities to the employees of TU's Examination Control Office opening saving accounts for them.

Global Bank Limited has been providing banking services to over 30 government officers, opening revenue collection counters all over Nepal. Those include Ministry of Industry, Transport Management, Internal Revenue Department, Land Management and other offices.

Russia To Invest In Nepal's Hydropower Sector

Russia has expressed its desire to invest in a large hydropower project in Nepal.

Russian Ambassador to Nepal Aleksei Novikov said Russia's two largest banks, Lanta and Moscow Industrial Bank are interested to invest in Nepal's hydropower project.



A team led by Russian Ambassador to Nepal Aleksei Novikov met Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barshaman Pun at the Ministry on Tuesday and expressed interest to bring investment in hydropower.

The delegation has said that they want to make such investment in government-to-government agreement, according to a press statement of Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation.

The representatives of the delegation have shown their interest to know about the scenario of power generation, distribution, market potential and the legal provisions related to hydropower sector.

"Initially, we will invest in a 'pilot project' and both the public and private sectors will be encouraged to invest in Nepal by understanding the market situation," said Novikov.

Christmas Tree Lighting At Hyatt Regency Kathmandu

To continue the tradition of Christmas, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu organised a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on 14 December 2020.

In light of the current situation with COVID-19 and to safeguard the guests' and patrons' well-being, the event involved the tree being lit by Alina Novikova, the wife of the Russian Ambassador to Nepal, in the presence of a few hotel colleagues.

The General Manager of



the hotel, Rajesh Ramdas, thanked Mrs. Novikova for gracing the occasion and said, "Light symbolizes hope and positivity, and we all look forward to next year being better, post-COVID."

HBL Forms Merger Sub-Committee Headed By Thapa

The Board of Directors of Himalayan Bank Limited has formed a Merger/Acquisition Sub-committee with Sunil Bahadur Thapa as the coordinator.



In line with Nepal Rastra Bank's policy to promote Merger and Acquisition among banks and financial institutions to create stronger banking industry, the Bank has initiated the process for exploring the possibility of merger and identifying probable merger partners.

"We would like to inform all the valued stakeholders that any concrete decision is yet to be finalized on the issue irrespective of media reporting in the recent times," a press release issued by CEO Ashoke Rana said.

France Shows Interest To Provide Technical Support To NAC

Ambassador of France to Nepal François-Xavier Leger, in a recent meeting, has shown the French government's interest in providing technical support to facilitate the flights of Airbus aircraft with the national flag-carrier, Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC).



According to a press release issued by Nepal Airlines Corporation, during the meeting with NAC General Manager Dim Prasad Poudel, ambassador François-Xavier Leger discussed the exchange of technical support required for the operation of systematic flights of Airbus aircraft of the NAC.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on mutual cooperation and coordination as well as technical cooperation in the civil aviation sector. The French ambassador pledged the required technical cooperation for the smooth operation of flights by the Airbus aircraft as these aircraft were manufactured by the Airbus Company of France.

Nepal, Canada Exchange Views On Bilateral Trade And Investment

The second meeting of Nepal-Canada Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) agreed to work closely towards further deepening and widening cooperation and engagements in these sectors for mutual benefit.

The respective Ministries exchanged views on bilateral trade and investment, educational and cultural cooperation, tourism and people-to-people contacts.

The meeting was held virtually with Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bharat Raj Paudyal and Assistant Deputy Minister of Global Affairs Canada Paul Thoppil leading their respective delegations.

A wide range of matters relating to bilateral relations and cooperation were discussed in a cordial atmosphere during the consultations. The delegations also reviewed the progress made since the first meeting of the BCM held in Ottawa in October 2018.

Developments on political and economic fronts in both the countries as well as their national experiences in the context of COVID-19 were also shared during the meeting. Nepal noted with appreciation the commitment expressed by Canada to equitable access of vaccines to all. The two sides would continue to exchange cooperation through various mechanisms in the collective fight against the pandemic.

On matters of global importance, the two sides renewed their commitment to collaborating at various multilateral forums towards addressing impacts of climate change, protecting and promoting human rights, and supporting multilateralism, UN peacekeeping and rules-based trading system, among others.

The Nepali delegation comprised ambassador of Nepal to Canada Bhriugu Dhungana and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Officials of relevant agencies were present in the Canadian delegation.



Global IME Bank Opens 6 Branchless Banking Services

Global IME Bank Ltd has started six Branchless banking services in six areas, including Phodpa Rural Municipality in Teharathum, Kaflu of Rain Municipality, Dully Municipality and Rabi Rural Municipality of Dailekh, and Badigad Rural Municipality of Baglung district.

Following this, the count of branchless sections of the bank reached 238. The bank also appointed various individuals from those areas as representatives to provide the service.

Local people and local levels can get the services from the installations. The people living in the areas depend upon agriculture, remittances and tourism for livelihood. These branchless counters will end their difficulty of having to travel far for banking transactions.

Global IME Bank has been providing banking services to more than 2.1 million customers through 264 branches, 239 ATM 47 Extension counters, 238 Branchless Branches in 73 districts and 3 international representatives.



Requiem For A Dysfunctional Dispensation



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

This Loktantrick (dis)order did not even wait for the Monarchists to bring it down: its own Bhashmasurs – the demon that received a boon from Shiva but used it to destroy himself – were themselves more than capable of the task. The fratricidal war within the ruling Marxist-Leninist-Maoist double-headed party finally resulted in its split on Tuesday. Despite enjoying a practically two-third majority in parliament, despite a comatose opposition Kangress, and despite a constitution cobbled by themselves in their favour barely five years ago, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks tore apart the two parties, erstwhile UML and Cash Maoists, allegedly united to sweep the elections three years back. In the process, they have exposed the unworkable hollowness of this political order.

Culturally, Nepal, especially the country's politicians have always been fascinated by astrological predictions, often making them self-fulfilling prophecies. The solar eclipse of 26th December 2019 that repeated a year later on 14 December 2020, Saturn and Jupiter going retrograde and finally powerfully conjunct this winter solstice have added to mass worries compounded by the Covid pandemic. Nepali astrologers have said these unique planetary configurations herald epochal changes. Indeed, the last time this occurred was in the 13th Century which saw Genghis Khan's victory, the sputtering of the Crusades to a finish, the Russians defeating the Swedes and the signing of the Magna Carta. A less powerful but similar configuration in the 17th Century saw the English Civil War, Cardinal Richelieu centralizing French power, the rise of the Qing Dynasty in China and the Great Plague of Seville that wiped out a quarter of the population.

Nepal's Bickram calendar year ending in '7' has

In the recent visits of spooks, generals and apparatchiks from the south, there was one message that Nepalis are still trying to figure out if it is for real: the emphasis on traditional ties between two countries. While welcome, it would be a hard sell, primarily because India itself destroyed the pillars of those traditional ties, viz., monarchy and Hindu kingdom.

also fascinated Nepalis as a significant numerology indicator. Bickram 2007 (1951 AD) saw the end of Rana rule; 2017 saw King Mahendra disbanding the parliament and introducing the Panchayat system; a year after 2027, King Mahendra passed away; 2037 saw the National Referendum heralding the decline of the Panchayat; 2047 saw its actual end; a year past 2057

saw the Royal Massacre; and 2067 saw the First Constituent Assembly, elected with such hope and fanfare, fizzle out. That led to unholy compromises and eventually a new but dysfunctional constitution. The public mind is fearful of what 2077 will herald, more so with bad planetary configurations.

What Oli seems to have unwittingly done is to tear apart the veil of deceptions since 2005 that kept this dispensation lingering along, and confirmed the worst numerological fears of all for 2077. His address to the nation explained why he had to opt for dissolution of parliament and why the people themselves have to be the final judge through elections. Essentially, senior oligarchs of his own party were bent on exercising power without responsibility,

extracting financial benefits for friends and family (but letting the blame rest on the PM), and not really letting the government move forward with plans and programs.

Under this Westminster parliamentary model, this kind of malfeasance seems to be the norm in Nepal. Girija Koirala had to revolt against both the street politics of the main opposition UML as well as Kangress party Ganesh Man faction's milking of contract awards that forced him to dissolve the parliament in 1994. KP Bhattarai succumbed to Girija Koirala's similar machinations in 2000, and Sher Bahadur Deuba too had to dissolve the parliament because of Koirala's conspiracies in 2002. What is worse this time around with Oli is that an independent referee in the form of a monarch above

competitive party politics is absent; and the office of the president has been misused as a rubber stamp by the Oli faction of the ruling party.

The country now awaits the supreme court to give its verdict; but there is an inherent problem in trying to find a legal solution to political problems. If the dissolved parliament is resurrected, it may provide a fig-leaf for the victorious side to hide behind, but it won't erase either the underlying unbridgeable political acrimony nor the structural flaws in the constitution that encourages this kind of irresponsible party culture. The court doing so in the mid-1990s, denying the PM the one instrument he has to keep the members under discipline in a Westminster model, led to the corruption and loss of image of multi-party democracy that contributed, in no small measure, to the rise of Maoist insurgency. Assume this "parliament of whipped sheep" is restored: will it function politically, especially when Kangress will have lost its position as leading opposition to one of the fratricidal communist factions? And for how long, that too before impending local and general elections? This fratricidal warfare has also seeped down to the provinces where serious bloodletting is in the offing.

More serious are the noises emanating from our southern neighbours that is contributing to vitiating an already poisoned atmosphere rife with suspicions and distrust. An ex-Mughlani "viceroy" of 2005 regime change has written an op-ed piece in the Economic Times that can be read in interesting ways between the lines: India's flurry of high-level recent visits was to counter Chinese influence within the ruling party and its attempt to keep it intact for stability and to woo Oli away, he admits. As a result, one could read it and see India's hand in destabilizing Nepali politics to counter the Chinese. The bottom-line message that Nepalis might be hearing is that China is interested in Nepal's stability and builds it relations with institutions, while India invests in individual politicians while destabilizing institutions, including the 2005 dispensation it midwived.

In the recent visits of spooks, generals and apparatchiks from the south, there was one message that Nepalis are still trying to figure out if it is for real: the emphasis on traditional ties between two countries. While wel-

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come, it would be a hard sell, primarily because India itself destroyed the pillars of those traditional ties, viz., monarchy and Hindu kingdom. To make matters worse, it ignored Nepal's multi-faceted relations with India that ranges from family ones across 124 ethnic groups of the country ranging from Kumaon and Gadhwal in the west to Assam, Darjeeling and Sikkim in the east, to say nothing of elite links with almost all the royal houses, Nepali priests in all major temples, and academic as well as business partners across India.

India excluded those rich ties from consideration, and emphasized only the family links of a few Nepal Tarai families between Bagmati and Kosi with Bihar, to the extent of imposing an economic blockade on the rest of Nepal and that too in the aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake. That damage, which also provided the Chinese a diplomatic lottery win for no investments, would normally take generations to repair. And the efforts from Delhi of the last few weeks were a good start. However, if India's spook-led (and not spook-fed)

neighbourhood policy is back in its old games of micro-management and regime change, of investing in easily purchasable political clients rather than acquiring long-term friends, then Nepal can expect more instability in the days ahead, and a repeat of crass opportunistic politics of the late 1990s and post-2005!

Repairing Nepal's governance through political reforms is a difficult enough process without the meddling of neighbours. A parasitic federal system has been imposed on the country that soaks up all the taxed revenue to feed political cadres with little to show for development. Insulting the majority by erasing their cultural identity to benefit Abrahamic proselytizers is inviting a dangerous backlash that cannot be controlled by morally corrupt party politicians, as the recent pro-monarchy street demonstrations have shown. Imposing a neo-feudal party-hegemonic rule on the country without commensurate party discipline, inner-party democracy or accountability across major political parties is leading to the alienation of the citizens from the state, a state of affairs that promises more, and not less, anarchy in the days ahead.

The country is ripe for a rethinking – and remaking – of democracy and governance led, not by the failed leaders and their foreign handlers, but by the youth whose future is at stake!

For Deeper Engagement

Nepal And U.S. Commit To Deepening Their Engagement

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal and the United States are far away geographically. However, U.S. is Nepal's fourth largest trade partner, after two neighbors India and China. Most important part is that trade between the two countries is in Nepal's favor.

Although COVID-19 has badly affected Nepal's tourism sector, U.S. is the third highest country to send the tourists in Nepal. Given such an important role as a trade partner, trade talks between Nepal and U.S. are highly important.

Last week, Nepal and U.S. concluded their trade talks expressing commitment to deepen their engagement. Led by Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, secretary at Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply, Nepal has expressed the hope that U.S. will continue to provide duty free access to U.S. Market.

The United States affirmed its engagement with Nepal on its efforts to foster innovation and investment through improvements in intellectual property protection and enforcement. Nepal provided an update on its initiatives to increase intellectual property protection through legislative changes. The United States welcomes the opportunity for further updates and engagement on these changes. Recognizing the important role of digital trade in fostering economic growth, Nepal and the United States agreed to explore ways to deepen engagement on policy developments affecting the digital economy.

The United States welcomed Nepal's efforts to promote internationally recognized worker rights and the implementation of Nepal's labor laws. Nepal affirmed the importance it attaches to worker rights and both countries agreed to engage in constructive discussions on these issues. The United States also welcomed confirmation that there is no restriction on the import of US pork and poultry in Nepali market, and Nepal's Department of Food Technology and Quality Control (DFTQC) Nepal recognizes the food certificates of the National

Competent Authority of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Both countries agreed to remain engaged on market access issues of mutual interest.

The United States-Nepal Council on Trade and Investment, under the United States-Nepal Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), held its fifth meeting virtually on December 15, 2020 to promote expanded bilateral trade and investment in both goods and services.

The meeting was co-chaired by Christopher Wilson, Assistant United States Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, and Baikuntha Aryal, Secretary of Commerce and Supplies, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies, Government of Nepal. Both delegations included officials from trade, finance, labor, and other regulatory agencies.

According to a press release issued by US Embassy in Nepal, during the meeting, representatives discussed a range of bilateral trade and investment-related issues covered under the TIFA, including, among others, customs and trade facilitation, intellectual property, digital trade and e-commerce, labor, financial services, investment promotion, trade in agriculture products, and utilization of the Nepal Trade Preference Program.

Nepal and the United States discussed the importance of fully utilizing U.S. preferential trade benefits for select products from Nepal, available through December 31, 2025 as a result of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015. Taking note of Nepal's interest in expanding utilization of the trade preference program and reviewing Nepal's concept note, the United States expressed willingness to provide further technical assistance to Nepal to increase trade and investment.



Nepal provided an update on recent investment policy reform initiatives taken to improve its investment climate, and emphasized its interest in attracting additional foreign investment from the United States. The United States took note of this interest and suggested ways in which Nepal could further enhance the business climate to attract investment.

Both governments pledged their commitment to deepen their engagement in these issue areas over the coming months in intersessional meetings and to hold the 6th TIFA Council Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal as soon as travel conditions permit.

Background:

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Nepal (TIFA) entered into force on April 15, 2011. Objectives of the agreement include the expansion of trade, investment and technical cooperation, and strengthening economic relations between the two countries.

Following the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal, the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 established a new country-specific preference program to grant duty-free treatment to Nepal for products covered by 77 Harmonized Tariff Schedule lines (including handicrafts, shawls, and travel goods).

Nepal and the United States had \$213.4 million in total (two-way) goods trade during 2019, a 38 percent increase compared to 2018.

Indian Politics

Whither Democracy?

Despite facing criticism against a number of his decisions, Modi has remained indifferent to the voice of protests.

As with every year, heavy fog started descending the Indian capital last month as winter set in. But the fog was not the only thing to descend. The chilly Indian capital also saw swathes of angry turban clad farmers from neighboring Punjab and Haryana swarming the capital to vent their frustration at the incumbent Modi government.



BY: ABIJIT SHARMA

The farmers from Haryana and Punjab are protesting against three of the government's laws passed in September which supports the market and Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) but puts them in jeopardy. Taken together, the laws will loosen the rules around sale, pricing and storage of farmers' produce that have protected them for decades. While the government claims that the move is necessary to modernize the agriculture sector, the farmers are not buying the argument. They allege that the move will simply strengthen the position of private businesses who will step on the law to exploit them by driving down crop prices in the long term.

But despite almost two months of protest from one of his biggest vote blocs and two rounds of talks, the Modi government has not budged much. This has been a standard approach that the government has used to tackle dissenting voices. The Indian PM is not new to protests. Ever since his re-election last year, the right-wing leader has seen a number of demonstrations – be it against his decision to revoke the constitutional autonomy of Kashmir or against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which experts claim was overtly biased against Muslims. His decision to impose lockdown in the face of COVID-19 pandemic giving people just four hours to travel back home also invited harsh condemnation. Similar was the response to his demonetization move in his first term.

In all these instances, Modi and his government have remained utterly indifferent to the voice of the protests. When the PM was denounced for his decision on Kashmir, not only did he stick to it but he went further and retorted to authoritarian moves such as putting opposition leaders under house arrest and cutting of internet in the state for almost a year. During the protest against CAA, many of his government ministers were busy discrediting the protestors terming them 'anti-nationals' and 'Pakistan-sponsored'. When thousands of poor laborers started walking back home in the absence of transportation facilities during the lockdown, the government simply brushed off the issue. There was no show of empathy or support from the government for the laborers, many of whom made the travel battling hunger, cold and even death.

While in any democratic system, such repeated criticism would have mounted huge pressure on the government and forced it to tread carefully, this has not been the case with Modi government. Thanks to his party's majority in the parliament and his 'nationalist appeals', his staple approach has, unfortunately, worked. What this has done is

severely undermine the democratic process in the world's largest democracy. Take for instance the very farm laws that the farmers are protesting against. The three laws were hastily passed in the midst of the pandemic, without following due process in the parliament and most importantly, without consultations with the farmers' associations or their leaders. The process bore striking resemblance to what happened when the law on Kashmir was being passed. More worryingly, the authoritarian rhetoric shown by the PM has injected a sense of superiority amongst his cadres who have been brazenly practicing violence as was evidenced earlier this year in the Delhi riots.



Farmers from Punjab and Haryana have been protesting against the government for almost 2 months now.

But little will change with the current guard in place. Thanks to the support the PM enjoys amongst the middle class, his populist rhetoric and an overtly biased media, the government's actions will continue to go unchecked. The absence of strong opposition has also lent a hand. Noted historian Ramachandra Guha recently wrote in one of his columns that the only way to dislodge the authoritarian Modi-Shah regime electorally would be for Congress to get rid of Gandhis and bring capable faces in leadership. Until then, one can expect to see democracy further eroding in the country.

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

POLITICS OF DISSULTION

Unresolved For Seven Decades

NCP leader K.P. Sharma Oli is not the first prime minister to dissolve the parliament calling mid-term elections to reply constitutionally to frequent interventions by Party President over popular authority of elected executive in exercising the power. Starting just after the political change in 1951, between Matrika Prasad Koirala and B.P Koirala, two revolutionaries and brothers, the question over who controls the government: Party President or Prime Minister has remained a major cause for creating political turmoil of one kind or another and bringing prolonged political instability. The seven-decade-old unsettled dispute remains at the crux of the political instability in the country

By KESHAB POUDEL

Had not NCP co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and other senior leaders Mahav Kumar Nepal and Jhalnath Khanal frequently intervened to limit the power of the executive, popularly elected prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli would not have recommended the dissolution of House of Representatives and fresh elections.

In an effort to defend his move to dissolve the House of Representatives, PM Oli said that the step is actually an outcome of response against selfishness of some power-hungry leaders within his party.

“It was neither my wish nor my personal whim. It was my compulsion to dissolve the house seeking a fresh mandate to govern

the country,” said Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli in his message to the nation.” Intervening all the times in state affairs including appointments and policy matters, Party co-chair and other leaders crossed their limit threatening me to expel from the party. Elected by the people, I have decided to go to people seeking justice rather than to surrender the people’s power,”



said Oli in his address to the nation.

PM Oli is not the first dissolving the parliament seeking fresh mandate and punishing those who tried to control executive nor he will be the last to do so as long as party and party president tried to curtail Prime Minister's authority.

Polarization Of Politics

Following the dissolution of the HoR, the politics of Nepal is now polarized establishing PM Oli as the sole leader on one side and the rest including Nepali Congress and factions of NCP on the other.

Despite vehement efforts to lure more MPs from PM Oli's camp, Prachanda, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhalnath Khanal were unable to do so. More than 50 percent of MPs are still with Oli.

According to Mahesh Basnet, member of the dissolved House of Representatives, 115 parliamentarians, nine from the National Assembly and 93 from the House of Representatives backed Oli.

With formidable support among overwhelming majority of former CPN-UML and a few from Maoist, PM Oli too controlled over 50 percent member in central committee, standing committee and parliamentary party.

Constitutional Hindrance

Written with one point agenda how to contain prime minister's authority and make President a rubber stamp, Constitution of Nepal 2015 virtually makes the President an authority of authenticating acts and other activities. Similarly, the framers of the constitution tied up the hands of prime minister putting so much of ifs and buts to control the authority.

As the chief executive, he cannot recommend head of any constitutional bodies nor can he recommend the name of ambassadors. Along with party order, prime minister's authority is controlled by Constitutional Council, Parliament Hearing Committee and Commit-

tees of Parliament.

With no direct authority to control the executive, the party chair used these committees intervening in the nitty-gritty of appointments. As prime minister Oli has been unable to move and decide on his own due to unconstitutional influence of the party president and party leaders, he has been in a power struggle in his party confronting the leadership.

With the backing from party co-chair Pushpa Kama Dahal Prachanda, even chief whip Deb Gurung has started to defy the order of leader of parliamentary party Oli.

Surrounded on all fronts by limiting authorities, Prime Minister Oli has recommended the dissolution and called a fresh call on 20 December. Had not PM Oli recommended the dissolution, his opponents would have punished him, removing even his general membership of the party.

Promulgated in haste and



drafted by politicians with diverse interests, the constitution is a document of contradictions and political document rather than based on fundamental of constitutionalism.

Surya Thapa, press advisor to the Prime Minister, said that scrums and gatherings held against the party's statute and rules could not remove the PM. "In the meeting, PM Oli said that these gatherings were just an ugly joke to make the world laugh," added Thapa.

Remembering an incident of 2028 BS when some people had expelled him from their group during the Jhapa movement, PM Oli said, "Again, coincidentally Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda's group has been declaring to remove me from NCP. This is nothing but a political drama before the whole world."

Prime Minister Oli also has made an effort to compromise visiting Prachanda and Bam Dev Gautam's residence on 19 December. However, Prachanda and the groups did not show any sign to budge. As he was helpless and had

limited time to prevent major political actions against him, the prime minister called the emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers had recommended to the President to dissolve the parliament.

Following the government's decision, parties in opposition as well as the dissenting side within the ruling party have been engag-

ing in many political and legal discussions to consider the steps ahead.

History Party President Vs Prime Minister

Since the political changes of 1951, several political crises occurred due to the dispute between Party President and Prime Minister over controlling and exercising the executive power.

Started in 1952 between Nepali Congress leaders BP Koirala and Matrika Prasad Koirala, two brothers and leaders of revolution, the dispute between party president and prime minister over controlling power has spilt political parties several times. Those who lead the party hold the view that the prime minister should abide party directions and decision while taking executive decisions.

In 1952, Nepali Congress president B.P Koirala expelled Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala charging him for not abiding by the party. Similarly, Girija Prasad Koirala dissolved the House in 1994 following growing disputes



with President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh.

Bhattarai even filed a petition in the Supreme Court along with main opposition CPN-UML demanding to restore the House of Representatives. In 2002, Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved the House of Representative following his disputes with then president Girija Prasad Koirala.

When Koirala expelled Prime Minister Deuba, he split the party and registered Nepali Congress Democratic. Knowing

the first elections, he shared party presidentship with Maoist leader Prachanda following the merger between the two parties in 2017.

Prachanda, as a party chairman, started to pressure prime minister in power sharing. Taking support from Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, former colleagues of Oli, Prachanda moved to contain the powers of PM.

Dramatic Turn

In a dramatic turn of events, PM Oli, who has been mired in an intra-party feud with the rival fac-

taken by the Council of Ministers in accordance with Article 76 (1) (7) and Article 85 of the constitution.

The PM's move comes in the backdrop of the rival faction of the NCP pressuring him to step down either as PM or party co-chair. The PM had fallen into minority in all the key bodies of the party — the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Central Committee — and his opponents were threatening to take action against him on the basis of majority.

A few days ago, 83 NCP



the political consequences, later Koirala continued to lead party and parliamentary committee. He became prime minister in 2006 through revived House of Representative but he held both the positions. Sushil Koirala followed senior Koirala.

Although K.P. Sharma Oli also held party president and parliamentary leader positions in

tion of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), recommended dissolution of the House of Representatives. With no authority in hand, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari approved it within hours announcing that general elections will be held on April 30 and May 10.

A press release issued by the President's Office stated that the decision to dissolve the House was

lawmakers had signed a petition seeking special session of Parliament, indicating that the PM might not hold majority in the party's parliamentary party, which has 173 members.

The Prime Minister further alleged that attempts were made time and again to making the national politics anomalous and unstable after the election itself.



“Some leaders were constantly making efforts to head towards instability even though the government had started working as per public’s aspirations,” Oli said.

He also claimed that some leaders in the party were entirely focused on occupying post rather than working to deliver as per people’s mandate.

Oli also accused the ‘other faction’ of plotting against him, time and again, which ultimately compelled him to take the decision which he says was not what he intended to do in the first place.

Constitutional expert Dinesh Tripathy said that the PM’s move was unconstitutional and the president should not have endorsed it. “The present constitution does not have a provision that allows a majority government to dissolve the House”

Constitutional expert Bhimarjun Acharya claimed that the PM’s action is unconstitutional. “The constitution does not have any provision that allows prime

minister to dissolve the house,” said Acharya.

Former President of Nepal Bar Association Shambhu Thapa said the government could recommend dissolution of HoR only if it didn’t have the numbers. Actions of the PM and the president have no constitutional validity, as Oli was heading a majority government, he added.

Nepali Congress lawmaker Radhe Shyam Adhikari, who is also a senior advocate, said if all the parties agreed to go to the polls, HoR polls could take place, but if they decided to challenge the move in the court and protests broke out on the streets, the constitutional bench would have to test the constitution-

ality of the PM’s recommendation.

The House of Representatives can be dissolved under Article 76 (1) (7) of the constitution.

It clearly states that the House can only be dissolved when no party has a clear majority and the leader chosen as prime minister by coalition partners fails to prove majority within 30 days of his/her appointment.

However, Prime Minister Oli’s supporters hold the view that Prime Minister can dissolve the house as it is his special prerogative. “Constitution has clearly said that Prime Minister can dissolve the House of Representatives and go for fresh elections,” said lawyer and MP Sher Bahadur Tamang.



Dissolution In Court

Although the dissolution is a political decision taken by citing the constitution, constitutional and legal experts in Nepal have already taken the issue of dissolution in Supreme Court.

Opponents of prime minister led by NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, ruling Party NCP leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Madhav Kumar Nepal have decided to move a petition to the Supreme Court challenging dissolution of parliament and the calling of an election term-

ers, told Reuters.

"It's a constitutional coup. I'm seeking a stay order from the court," Tripathy said, adding that under the constitution, the prime minister should allow the formation of an alternate government to ensure stability in a country that has seen 26 prime ministers in 30 years.

If the court registers the petitions, it could take about two weeks for a decision, legal experts say.

Contradiction of NC

Under the leadership of Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress

junior partner.

This is the same with rightist RPP. Instead of taking political mileage out of current polarization, RPP leaders also decided to back one communist faction and against the other.

Whether there will be elections or revival, Nepali Congress will be a major loser in the politics of Nepal.

External Concerns

Situated between two big powers China and India, Nepal has a long history of political instability. As a small country with modern institutions in the process of institutionalization, Nepal has already seen seven constitutions in the last seventy years.

From autocratic Rana Regime, Constitutional monarchy, party less panchayat with unitary forms of government to present secular, federal republic, Nepal has experimented several forms of governments. Despite seeing a government appointed by King to a government with thumping majority in the parliament and two thirds majority government, Nepal is yet see any political stability.

With growing regional tensions, China and India, which jostle for influence in Nepal, have not publicly commented on the upheaval. However, they have the natural concern over Nepal's instability.

The seven decades of unsettled dispute between party president and prime minister over controlling the power continues to cause the political instability in the country.

Until Nepal clearly sets precedence on party president and prime minister, nothing can prevent the power clashes in the country resulting in political instability.



ing the move as unconstitutional. Out of 275 members of House, 138 have reportedly signed the petition.

Earlier, lawyers have already filed 12 petitions challenging the dissolution including one by senior advocate Dinesh Tripathy. According to the constitution, five members Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court will start the hearing.

Supreme Court Spokesman Bhadrakali Pokharel said 12 petitions against the dissolution were "in the process of being registered".

"Under the constitution, the prime minister has no prerogative to dissolve parliament," lawyer Dinesh Tripathi, who is one of the petition-

has shown a major contradiction joining a political front against PM Oli to make Prachanda next prime minister in case of revival of HoR.

Interestingly, Nepali Congress which launched a nationwide protest against the rule of authoritarian communist is now following another leader of same party which was in power till a few days ago.

Although this is a good opportunity for Nepali Congress to correct its posture of ideologically communist leaning to centrist liberal democratic party contesting elections to defeat divided communist, NC leadership chose to back one communist against other as a

NEA

Smartening Staff

As Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has been implementing programs and projects on transforming its operation, management and distribution modalities to match the new system of digital transmission and distribution, it requires employees, including senior managers, to deliver and improve the utility's performance and efficiency in operation in line with new system. Keeping pace with NEA's construction work, various levels of training and exercise related with governance and management principles, as well as technical knowhow, are going onto facilitate the transition to a new structure

BY MADAN POUDEL

While walking along Maharajgunj and Chabahil, two most busy roads of Kathmandu Valley, everyone can notice workers laying the underground cables of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

NEA started its first phase of underground electricity distribution system by laying down the power wires in Kathmandu in 2019. Some 250-km, 11,000-voltage underground lines and 400-km, 400-voltage underground lines are now being laid down in Baluwatar, Panipokhari, Budhanilkantha, Tokha, Gongabu, Samakhushi and Maharajgunj that fall under the purview of Maharajgunj distribution center.

Likewise 200-km long 11,000-voltage underground lines and about 400-km 400-voltage underground lines are being laid in some places including Ratnapark and Bagbazar.

This is not the only one aspect of transformation. NEA has also started installation of smart meters in Kathmandu Valley. Starting from

Budhanilkanth Municipality, NEA has entered the digital meter era.

Under its first phase program, NEA has already changed 8222 Time off Day Meters to smart devices. Under the second phase, over 125,000 meters will be replaced by smart meters. Some 18,000 have already been installed and other 60,000 are under the process. The project will replace 400,000 old meters by smart meters in Kathmandu Valley; the tender process has already proceeded.

The constructions of 220 kV Marsyangdi Transmission linking Kathmandu and distribution system to 132 kV and other transmission lines and distribution systems, which are currently going on, indicate that a major transformation is taking place in NEA's Power Transmission and Distribution centers aimed at enhancement of efficiency.

With financial Assistance of over \$555 million by the Asian Development Bank, NEA has been modernizing its entire system in the Kathmandu Valley and other parts of

the country.

The power utility has stated that it has advanced the smart grid system to modernize the power sector of Nepal by introducing the latest technology that has been adopted globally to make power generation, transmission lines and distribution system reliable and timely.

Speaking at a webinar recently, NEA Acting Managing Director, Hitendra Dev Shakya, said that work has already started by promoting the concept of smart grid system for quality and reliable energy.

According to Shakya, the authority has moved ahead by digitizing its infrastructure and services. "As soon as we install the smart grid system, we will be able to provide quality electricity service to consumers and NEA's system will also be strengthened. We are modernizing the entire system of NEA, including, transmission lines, distribution and load dispatch centers and power generation," he said.

With the new technology installed, consumers have also started



to complain about NEA's failure to repair and maintain the systems. In the last two months, NEA's Maharagunj Distribution System received a lot of complaints related to smart meters.

The solution is simple. But in the absence of adequate technicians with skills, there happens to be a delay in maintenance work.

"If there is no technician to fix the smart meters, return the old meters to the customers," said Bal Krishna Shrestha, chairperson of ward 3 of Budhanilkantha Municipality. This indicated the need for upgrade of NEA's technical capacity.

NEA's Capacity Building

With the completion of underground cabling and introduction of new smart technology and expansion of distribution and transmission system, NEA will have to operate in an entirely new way. However, successfully handling these systems depends on the capacity of NEA's employees.

For all this, there is need to up-skill managers, deputy managers, engineers and heads of distribution centers, and other technical and

non-technical staffs at NEA who are involved in day-to-day operations and project implementation. There is the need of knowledge and expertise on modern utility management practices and tools at the bottom and new skills at the top.

From carrying ladder in the maintenance of old systems, the new system will be governed by a smart mobile phone. Similarly, smart meters mean smart payment without meter readers.

Having worked for decades in the old technology, based on semi-mechanical systems, and managing the small load with limited electricity grid with around 800 MW generation capacities, NEA will have to manage over 2000 MW power by next year.

NEA's transmission and distribution system is 133 kV, 66 kV, 33 kV and 11 kV, with single phase and double phase, for distribution. They have now to handle 220 kV. With all these, there is the need of orientation for the staff from the top to the bottom rung for communication of all these changes.

Training and other exercises

that enhance the capacity of NEA staff to operate the new system inclusively, effectively and efficiently are prerequisite.

Conducted by highly qualified and experienced national and international consultants, NEA's employees have been currently taking training exercises on technical, managerial and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion issues.

Administered by ADB with support from Japan Fund For Poverty Reduction in close coordination with NEA, Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries (Hivos), Netherlands along with its consortium Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N), Nepal, Practical Action Consulting (PAC Pvt), Nepal, and Ricardo-AEA Ltd (R-AEA), UK have been selected as consulting firms to provide services for the TA. Ricardo's team of international experts, with support from CRT/N delivered the technical and managerial training for NEA. National Association of Community Electricity Users Nepal (NACEUN) is the strategic partner for the project.

ENERGY

As the training is in the initial stage, it is yet to make a bigger impact in NEA's employees, particularly on institutional development and digitalization of the systems.

Experiences of NEA



Madan Timsina, the spokesperson of NEA, holds the view that the recent efforts of Asian Development Bank and NEA to provide the training to enhance capacity of employees are the key to a successful transformation. "The ongoing short term training and exercise with high-level experts from different parts of the world is a good beginning to prepare our employees for operation of the new system and work in the changing global scenario," said Timsina, who also participated in a senior executive A exercise last year.

"The high-level exercise helped us learn the contemporary management procedures of public utility and service delivery around the world and technical knowhow of smart systems. NEA's employees need to understand the technology to work in the new system."

As the main objective of NEA as a power sector utility is to satisfy its consumers with continuous, reliable and quality supply of electricity as well as to maintain reasonable

financial returns for further development, the employees also need to be prepared for this.

"We emphasize the fast deployment of automation and digitization in our businesses. The use of automation system to monitor, control and man-

Power Trade Department and former spokesperson, said that sharing the global experiences with experts enhanced capacities to address the new challenges. He said that NEA is in the process of modernization and transformation of infrastructure.

Lila Aryal, deputy director at Bagmati Province expressed that the training exercise helped her to understand the new technology and managerial skill. Aryal, who participated in the week-long executive training course, said the modern technology and smart devices will bring about a different scenario.

age the power system from Nepal Electricity Authority generation to distribution network shall be our priority at the door step for facilitating the reduction of operational cost and providing better services to our valued customers. We strongly feel that some policy measures are to be introduced on an urgent basis in this regard so that our journey from digitization to digitalization would prove beneficial in several ways including saving through operational efficiency and transparency across the value chain to all players in the power ecosystem," writes outgoing MD Kul Man Ghising in his message given to NEA's Annual Report of 2020 published in August.

Having worked at NEA for long, Manoj Silwal, Deputy Managing Director, Project Management Directorate, said that ADB's overall support including for the training and interactions, bringing high-level experts from different parts of the world, is highly relevant and helpful in the present context.

Prabal Adhikari, Director of

"Initially, we had confusions about the courses. However, I found it was very useful to acquire new managerial skills applicable to the public utility like our organization."

With the intervention aimed at building the capacity of top executive officers to middle level of managerial and junior engineers and other administrative staff of distribution centers, formidable numbers of employees have already been trained.

"To date, we have trained-102 staff at level 9 and above as a part of the managerial training program and another 106 staff from 53 distribution centres trained in new and emerging energy technologies pertinent to NEA," said Mohammad Arbaaz Nayeem, Associate Director, Energy Practice, Ricardo Energy & Environment.

"Developed on the basis of needs assessment for both the management and technical staff, the training courses addressed the key knowledge gaps and issues identified by NEA managers and technical staff."

Although it has just started, the training program looks like it is going to deliver necessary sensitization, awareness, capacity building and up-scaling skills for the staff to handle the technologies currently in the process of installation.

Training Course

The training is divided into two parts.

The first was the Management Training, for managers and employees of 10 and 11 levels and above. It started on 21 August and concluded on 6 September 2019. The content of training included Negotiations and Public Communications, Key Performance Indicators, Finance and Tariffs.

Under unbundling sectors, the participants were briefed on international experiences; financial management; HR management, organizational change and financial instruments.

The management training aimed to develop institutional governance and utility management practices at NEA with a view to facilitating improved business planning, investment management and sector policy formulation. This also included NEA in operational and management performance improvement to deliver better services to customers and support economic development of Nepal. "The course was intensive as it covered broadly," said spokesperson Timsina.

"The training program has been designed by Ricardo's energy sector experts to meet Nepal Electricity Authority's ambitions for development of the sector, including improving operational capacity to enable utilization of smart-grid technology. The comprehensive training program draws on international best practices and includes respected keynote speakers. The courses started in August and ran through to September 2019," said Mohammad Arbaaz Nayeem, Associate Director, Energy Practice, and Ricardo Energy & Environment.

The second technical training concluded in February 2020. This was divided into modules: Module A and Module B. This training included 10 level and 9 level and lower engineers. The training content included Modern Network Planning and Design, Distribution and Transmission System Planning, Undergrounding of

actions with the employees and their needs, some participants went to the training with some confusion. Frankly speaking, I was very confused on the first day. My other colleagues also had similar views," said deputy director Aryal.

"Every sector in the world is now progressing to new methods and



NEA: Acting MD, Hitendra Dev Shakya

Utilities and Power and Distribution Transformers in Module A.

Likewise, Module B taught Smart Grid Technologies, Smart Grids, Smart Metering, Technologies and Applications, Geographic Information Systems and Variable Renewable Energy. Technology Experts Trevor Fry and John Snow from Ricardo conducted the training for 106 NEA's technical staffs.

Deputy Managing Directors (DMD), directors, assistant directors and managers and deputy managers, joint directors, junior directors, heads of distribution centers and project managers, engineers, sociologists, environmentalists, and engineers from NEA's various directorate attended the program.

"Although the training courses were designed on the basis of inter-

ideas daily. Even for existence, every sector should confront, adapt and exercise new approaches to solving new problem, with new technology in new situations. We also need to move in a new direction. This kind of capacity building training is timely," said Deepa Subedi, Engineer, and PMD. "We have to prepare ourselves to work in the whole new smart systems. This training gave us some hope."

"Following my participation in the training, I came to believe that, adopting digital systems on the existing infrastructure, changing ways of working, adding talented and skillful employees, and modernizing IT systems will hasten transformation. The smart system helps to increase the observability and controllability of the power generation system from an operator point of view," said

ENERGY

Yam Kumari Gurung, DCS Lamjung. “With the new technology and infrastructures coming, there need to train manpower,” Gurung said.

“At a time when NEA has been transforming its structures, transmission and distribution systems with new technologies, only up skilled and

not enough. Only secure and efficient supply of electricity can bring the change in the livelihood of the people. “With the installation of smart technologies and new system within NEA, the time has come for organization and its employees to encourage women in rural areas to use electricity to improve

With the declaration of Nepal government to realize universal coverage of electricity for all by 2023, everything will have to change in NEA.

In the process of this major transformation in NEA’s generation, operation and distribution systems, enhance

managerial skills as well as new skills at maintenance, distribution and customers’ level will be necessary.

Gyanu Bist, Communications Officer, CRT/N, holds the view that the training has given an up-skilling and capacity building opportunity to enhance the NEA’s employees in GESI, operation, consumer services and other sector as well.

“This program and the training needs assessment highlighted a significant num-

ber of areas where up skilling, training and capacity development would contribute to improved utility management and operations,” said Mohammad Arbaaz Nayeem, Associate Director, Energy Practice, Ricardo Energy & Environment.

As NEA has been going through a major transformation and expansion of its transmission and distribution services while introducing the new technologies and constructing new infrastructures in generation, transmission and distribution, everyone can notice the ongoing efforts.

However, the training aimed at building NEA capacity in new and emerging energy technologies and applications and NEA capacity in utility management to operate and maintain Kathmandu valley is going on quietly. This is a small but key part of making NEA efficient, inclusive and adaptive, to run the underground cable, smart transmission, distribution and meter system.



trained NEA employees can help make it viable for electricity to improve the livelihood of women in the rural parts of Nepal,” said Dr. Purushottam Shrestha, Project Supervisor and Micro Finance Advisor, CRT/N in an interaction with media.

NEA’s system is modernizing its operating systems with digitalization. However, it will make no sense to the consumer until the employees of NEA start to deal with the consumers efficiently and effectively and NEA does not make itself inclusive.

“Despite making digitalization and adopting new technology, NEA’s employees and its systems remain there to operate with an old mindset. This training, which includes various components related to protection of consumer interest and service delivery, aims to change it,” said Narayan Gyawali, Chairperson, NACEUN. “We are reaching to all the level of NEA’s structures to improve governance and delivery.”

Availability of energy in the grid and digitalization of systems alone is

livelihood,” said Manjari Shrestha, Renewable Energy professional, Practical Action Consulting (PAC Pvt), Nepal,

With the completion of the training activities for NEA, it is expected that NEA’s institutional capacity will go up with employees enhancing their capacity.

“We greatly appreciated the overall enthusiasm and commitment from the senior management and leadership teams at NEA that was displayed throughout the training programs to enhance capacity and make the institution inclusive and GESI friendly,” said Dr. Indira Shakya, Nepal GESI Expert, CRT/N.

According to NEA’s annual report 2020/021, NEA has been providing services to consumers through its 129 Distribution Centers (DC) spread all over the country to total 42, 17,710 consumers and increase of 7.88% over the last fiscal year.

From operating at annual costs of merely a few billion rupees, NEA’s annual turnover is likely to cross over 50 billion rupees in the coming years.

VIJAYA KUMAR SHAH

Highest Individual Income Tax Payer

Nepal Government Felicitates Vijaya Kumar Shah As Highest Individual Income Tax Payer

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Working quietly promoting Nepalese industries and contributing to Nepal's treasury by paying the tax, Vijaya Kumar Shah, chairman of Jawalakhel Group of Industries, has rarely boasted about his contributions.

Running one of the most transparent industries in the country, Shah has made his name and fame in the industrial sector. His contribution to the nation has proven his worth.

Industrialist Shah's group of industry is also helping to reduce the import of foreign made beverages producing high quality beverages in the country.

CNI has felicitated Shah and other business persons for their contributions to the nation as largest tax payers to the country.

At a time when a number of alcohol and beverage companies are coming in the market amid growing completion from imported beer and beverage, Shah, a renowned industrialist, has not only fairly and transparently been paying taxes to the country but is maintaining the quality of his products.

For paying the highest income tax among the individual taxpayers in FY 2018/019, Jawalakhel Group of Industries' Chairman Vijay Kumar Shah has received the government accolades.

Although the COVID-19 has badly shaken the industrial sector, Jawalakhel Group of Industries, a business conglomerate managing multiple companies that manufacture and distribute alcoholic beverages, has been

able to maintain its production and place its chairman on top of the income tax paying individuals in FY 2018/19.

Amid a program, Shah was felicitated by Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel as the largest individual tax payer for fiscal year 2018/19 on behalf of the Government of Nepal.

Surya Nepal Pvt Ltd has become the biggest income tax payer of the country for fiscal year 2018/19. Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel felicitated the Indo-Nepal-UK joint

income tax in 2018/19 and received the government accolade.

Annapurna Agro Industries Pvt Ltd (taxpayer paying highest tax among agro and livestock industries), Chhimek Laghubitta Bittaya Sanstha Ltd (taxpayer paying highest tax among cooperatives and microfinance companies), Nepal Reinsurance Company Ltd (among insurance companies), Manipal Education and Medical Group (among education service) and IME Ltd (among remittance companies) were also felicitated by the Inland Revenue Department.

Agni Incorporated Pvt Ltd (taxpayer paying highest tax among trading businesses) and Taragaon Regency Hotel Limited (among tourism businesses) also received the government felicitation.

Kamana Bikas Bank Ltd was honored by Finance Minister Paudel for paying the highest income tax in

fiscal year 2018/19 from among the taxpayers that are under the Medium Level Taxpayers Office while VFS received the government felicitation for paying the highest tax from taxpayers across the inland revenue offices in the country.

Ghorahi Cement Industries Pvt Ltd was felicitated for paying the highest Value Added Tax in the same fiscal year.



venture along with 14 other taxpayers for paying highest income taxes to the country amid a ceremony to mark the 9th National Tax Day.

Among exporters, Dabur Nepal Pvt Ltd was honored for being the largest taxpayer. Himal Power Ltd was felicitated for being the largest taxpayer among special industries. In terms of banks and financial institutions, Nabil Bank Ltd paid the highest

Drying Springs: A Threat To Human Survival



BY: MADHAV DHAKAL , CHIRANJIBI BHATTARAI, BHUMIKATHAPA AND SUSHMA TIWARI

Background

Springs are the main source of water for millions of people in the mountains of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). They are critical to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. But springs are drying up rapidly, threatening human survival throughout the HKH region. The drying up of springs has adversely impacted local communities, especially women, who are mostly responsible for collecting water for the household. A recent countrywide study by Nepal Water Conservation Foundation (NWCF) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) found that springs are drying up in 74 percent of the 300 municipalities and rural municipalities it looked into. In some places, shortage of water has forced people to migrate from their birthplace.

Despite the urgency, this water-induced disaster has received little attention. Far from trying to solve the problem, local governments have been promoting water-lifting projects that harm the environment and cause springs to dry up. The so-called development model that prioritizes careless, haphazard infrastructure extension has aggravated the problem.

Current situation

Over 10 million people in both rural, peri urban and urban settlements of Nepal depend on spring sources to meet their water needs. Many springs of the Churia (Sivalik), middle hills and mountains are drying up or have already dried. Studies show that the problem is becoming more severe throughout the HKH. Consequently, communities are facing unprecedented water shortage. People have only two options: either to migrate or find alternative sources of water. Both options are expensive and merely shift the water stress from one place to another.

The recent NWCF and ICIMOD study was built around a survey conducted in 300 municipalities in Nepal, and covered the Churia, mid-hills and mountains region. Respondents included top-level officials – mostly mayors/ chairpersons, some deputy mayors/vice chairpersons, and

chief administrative officers.

While springs have dried in 74 percent of the municipalities studied (Figure 1), in about 58 percent of the study area, springs have shifted from one site to another – a phenomenon caused primarily by the 2015 earthquake, according to local informants.

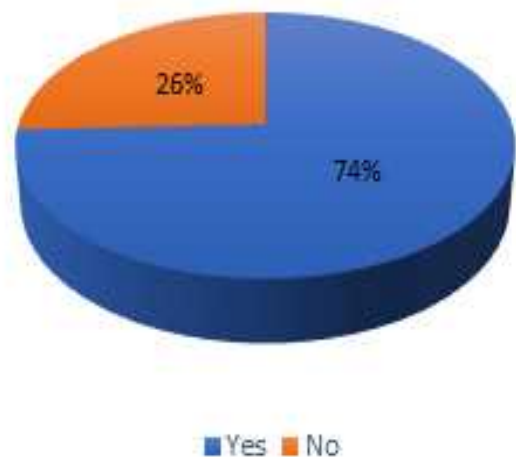


Figure 1: Only 26% of the municipalities involved in the study reported no loss or drying up of springs

People across Nepal – from Ilam district in the east to Darchula in the west – are facing severe water scarcity. Local government representatives from the municipalities studied suggest the drying of springs has different levels of impact on different sectors: 76 percent on drinking water, 36 percent on sanitation and hygiene, 35 percent on livestock feeding, and 50 percent on irrigation and other domestic uses (Figure 2).

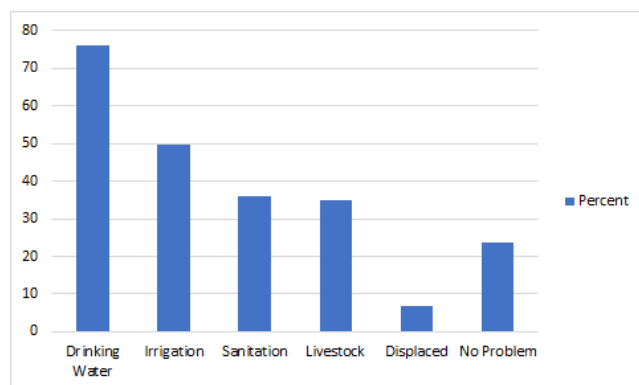


Figure 2: Problems caused by drying up of springs

In extreme cases of water shortage, people had no choice but to leave their ancestral villages. According to an article in *The Himalayan Times*, about 7 percent of the municipalities covered by the study faced such incidents. Some villages of Ram Prasad Rai Rural Municipality (RM) of Bhojpur, Sahidbhumi RM and Mahalaxmi Municipality of Dhankuta, Dalome RM of Mustang and Chhatreshowri RM of Salyan were displaced due to lack of water sources.

Why springs are drying up

The drying up of springs can be attributed to three major factors – anthropogenic activities, climate change, and seismic events (see Figure 3).

Anthropogenic activities include infrastructure development such as construction of roads, hydropower tunnels, and cemented irrigation canals; and land use changes such as deforestation and over-exploitation of natural resources. Unplanned urbanization and population growth, which leads to higher consumption and dependency on springs and other water sources, is also causing water scarcity.

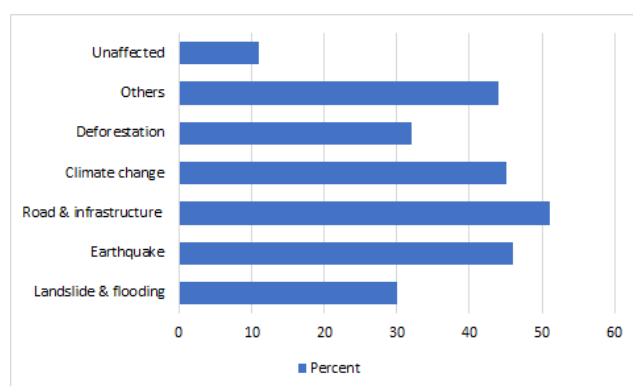


Figure 3: Causes of drying up of springs

In Nepal, infrastructure projects are often carried out without a rigorous environmental assessment, which leads to depletion of water sources. Local government leaders cited haphazard road and infrastructure construction as the major cause of drying springs (51%) followed by earthquakes (46%), climate change (45%), deforestation (32%), landslide (30%), and other causes like hydropower tunnels, forest fires, destruction of old ponds and *aahals* (wallows), and concretization of traditional irrigation channels. An alarming finding from the survey is that only 11 percent of the springs are intact and unaffected.

The natural causes are associated with global warming and climate change. Erratic rainfalls have caused drying of both surface water and groundwater. Rainfalls of high intensity and short duration have intensified water-induced hazards like floods and landslides, causing springs to disappear. Locals say they have not experienced *jhari* (rainfall of low intensity and long duration) in recent decades. In addition, Nepal lies in a seismically active region and experiences earthquakes of various magnitudes. These earthquakes disturb underground aquifers and alter the direction of groundwater flows, causing springs to dry up.

Another reason why springs are drying is that wallows and ponds that were traditionally used to provide water to livestock and as wallowing grounds for livestock are no longer maintained and have fallen into disuse. These ponds, which with rainwater during the monsoon, were an integral part of agrarian life in the past, not only provided water for animals and plants, but also helped recharge aquifers. Although locals still build and manage these ponds using knowledge passed down through generations in some places, traditional customs are increasingly being abandoned, and new wallows are no longer being dug.

Old and sacred rituals associated with water bodies have been disappearing as well. They include festivals like Sithi Nakha, Chhat, and Nadiparwa, during which people not only take holy baths but also clean rivers, lakes and ponds.

Short-sighted solutions

As springs across the country are drying, the practice of lifting groundwater using electric pumps has become rampant. Several municipalities have declared themselves 'drought-prone areas' and allocated budget for drilling tube-wells, deep boring and lifting. Groundwater lifting using deep-boring technology is now on every local government's agenda, even though few people knew about it until recently. It is one of the major causes for the drying of springs, as springs

VIEWPOINT

and water-lifting schemes share the same aquifers. Provincial and local governments allocate considerable budget for such activities, without taking into account that groundwater extraction might be ineffective and unsustainable in the long run.

Exemplary but insufficient

The silver lining is that a number of local governments are concerned about the drying of springs and realize this is a serious issue. Some local governments have started thinking about spring revival but are unable to put a stop to destructive practices such as haphazard infrastructure development.

Some municipalities have rehabilitated traditional ponds, established rain-water-harvesting systems, and launched programmes to augment spring flow. Physical interventions such as construction of trenches, ponds, ditches, swamps, reforestation, etc. are also being carried out. About 50 percent of local governments covered by the NWCF-ICIMOD study have incorporated water source protection and spring revival activities in municipal plans and programmes, but they admit they lack the required technical expertise.

To help address this gap, NWCF and ICIMOD organized a policy dialogue called '*PaniSatsang*' on 16 October 2020. The event focused on ways to mainstream spring revival in policy making and implementation at the local government level. Local policymakers and stakeholders shared their views on water resource management and conservation policies, practices, and alternatives. They highlighted innovative spring revival efforts such as construction of recharge ponds, trenches and bunds, planting of trees, shrubs and grasses, building of temples, etc.

For example, Durga Devi Bhattarai, Deputy Mayor of Suryodaya Municipality, Ilam, talked about the 'one ward-one pond' programme, birthday tree plantation campaign, restrictions imposed on heavy equipment used in infrastructure development, and the prohibition on pesticide and chemical fertilizer use around springs. Harka Bahadur Saud, Chairperson of Chaurpati Rural Municipality (RM), Achham, said the RM has already constructed 2000 recharge ponds and carried out tree plantation programmes. Nanu Ghatane, a spring conserva-



tion activist from Namobuddha Municipality of Kavre district, shared how the dried up spring in her municipality revived a year or two after her conservation group built a pond in the recharge zone. Their stories offer valuable lessons on spring revival and their efforts should be supported and replicated widely.

A way forward

To mitigate the crisis of drying springs, local governments, community groups and technicians/experts should make concerted efforts for spring revival. An effective spring revival programme requires the participation and coordination of multiple actors at the local, provincial and federal level. Spring revival measures and related capacity building programmes should be incorporated in municipal plans, taking into account gender equity and social inclusion. There is a need to enhance local capacity in hydrogeological assessment so that locals can identify recharge areas. A spring conservation network, locally referred to as Pani Heralu (Water Watchers), has been initiated in some municipalities, and it should be expanded to promote good practices. Incorporating spring revival in school and college curriculums would also be useful. It is equally important to use available water efficiently, assess groundwater availability and use, and monitor and improve water quality.

Authors : Madhav Dhakal works at ICIMOD. Chiranjibi Bhattarai, Bhumika Thapa and Sushma Tiwari work at NWCF.

TU CONVOCATION

Limited By COVID-19

At this year's TU convocation, attended by a limited number of participants, journalist Sharad Chandra Bhandary was awarded for topping his batch at the master's level in journalism

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Taking part in the university convocation is a dream for many students. However, only a few graduates were allowed to physically take part in this year's convocation at the Tribhuvan University (TU).

Deputy Chief Correspondent of Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS) Sharad Chandra Bhandary was among the hundred plus participants attending the 46th TU convocation.

Pursuing his study alongside work, Bhandary had secured the top position in his batch for an MA in Journalism and showed that if there is a will, there indeed is a way.

Bhandary stood first in his class and emerged on top of the list in MA-Journalism batch of 2074 under the TU Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Central Campus, Kirtipur.

Bhandary, a self-made man and hardworking journalist, had also worked as a news reader with Radio Nepal for over 15 years. He also produced contemporary programs, Ghatna Ra Bichar and Paribesh.

Bhandary was there to receive two medals for his feat, including the TU graduate medal and Narayan Shanti Mishra medal.

"It was a moment of pride and

joy for me as I have completed my master's while performing my duty in RSS," said Bhandary. "Pursuing education is a never ending process and I have a mission to pursue Ph.D in journalism."

Having worked for 22 years in RSS, Bhandary has travelled extensively in different parts of the country as well as abroad.

TU decided to downsize the number of participants due to the fear of coronavirus.

Out of 7,057 graduates who had filled the form and paid the due amounts to participate in the convocation, TU will award only 86 students physically and the remaining will be addressed by a virtual program.

Lila Prasad Bagale, who came first in Master's Degree from TU Central Campus, won the Chancellor medal with 4.0 GPA. Chairperson of the main function committee Dr Ghanashyam Thakur, who is also the joint controller of the TU Office of the Examinations Controller, said various 31 medals and prizes will be presented. Other toppers include Pratiksya Rijal from School of Management, Swarnim Raj Lamsal from Central Department of English, Narendra Raj Paneru of Central Department of Economics, Ram Lal Bhusal of Central Department of Chem-

istry, Puja Bhattarai from Central Department of Management and Chakra Bam of Central Department



of Political Science.

The medal winners and those completing M.Phil, and Ph.D, and guests totaling 200 attend the function, Thakur said. A total of 7,087 students have graduated this year from the University. The convocation was held on December 21.

Although the number of participation is small, Tribhuvan University, Nepal's largest and oldest varsity, has fulfilled one of its most important functions by holding the convocation.

Nepal's Progress

In the newly released Human Development Report 2020, Nepal has made some gains

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali recently launched the Human Development Report 2020 in the presence of representatives from the government, development partners, civil society organizations, private sector and the media.

Although Nepal has made progress in Human Development Index (HDI), with 0.587 in 2019, the risk remains given the COVID-19 pandemic. Nepal improved the position up from the index of 0.579 in 2018.

Published by National Planning Commission, the report shows that in the past three decades, Nepal gained from 0.378 in 1990 to the present status of the HDI.

The reports pointed out that it still failed to achieve a notable growth in per capita income, hindering the country from getting promoted from its current status of least development, reads the report with the theme 'Beyond Graduation: Productive Transformation and Prosperity.'

The report commends Nepal for making 'notable progress in human development' but also warns that the COVID-19 crisis could reverse the achievement if not responded effectively. The report recommends implementing a comprehensive relief package accompanied by a medium to long term strategic plan to mitigate the crisis and build resilience.

According to the report, persisting inequality in human development in various regions of the country remains higher. The report shows that HDI status in urban areas stands at 0.487, it is 0.431 in rural areas. Bag-

mati Province is at the highest level with a HDI of 0.502. Karnali Province has the lowest HDI of 0.375.

"For three decades, Human Development Reports have fundamentally shaped the ideas and policy discourse on alternative assessment of development and wellbeing. The criteria used for measuring human development have been the basis for advancing social development agenda, including in Nepal. The contents of the HDR reports have served as useful policy resources for many countries," said minister for foreign affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali while launching the report.

"Successive human development reports since 1990 have highlighted critical dimensions of human progress and sustainable development, thereby informing, encouraging and assisting the Governments and stakeholders to address the impediments in the way of enlarging choices. They have also widened the conceptual foundation of human development as a capability to lead life one values the most."

Over the years, the very concept of human development has evolved and adapted considerably to encompass newer elements and dimensions that expand human wellbeing, freedoms, and choices. This year, the report heralds an epoch-making transformation that has taken place in the inter-relationship between humans and nature, and signals humans' entry into an uncharted territory of Anthropocene- where humans shape the future of the planet, not the other way round.

Conceptually, it develops a new planetary-pressure-adjusted-human-development-index (PHDI) and gives HDI a new dimension of accounting the impact a country makes to the planet.

Member of National Planning Commission Krishna Prasad Oli, former Finance Minister Dr. Yuba Raj Khatriwada, Executive Director of Global Climate Fund Yannick Glemarec, EU Ambassador Nona Deprez, UNDP Resident Representative Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Bernardo Cocco, Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Chair of Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal Bharati Pathak, Social Worker and youth leader Sapana Roka Magar joined the function and spoke at the live cast from Facebook.

The report was also launched in all seven provinces by the chief ministers of the respective provincial governments. Addressed by over 40 speakers, these eight events were attended by over 1000 people from across the country virtually.

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the first Human Development Report and of the introduction of the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI was published to steer discussions about development progress away from GDP towards a measure that genuinely "counts" for people's lives. Introduced by the Human Development Report Office (HDRO) thirty years ago to provide a simple measure of human progress –



built around people's freedoms to live the lives they want to - the HDI has gained popularity with its simple yet comprehensive formula that assesses a population's average longevity, education, and income.

Over the years, however, there has been a growing interest in providing a more comprehensive set of measurements that capture other critical dimensions of human development. To respond to this call, new measures of aspects of human development were introduced to complement the HDI and capture some of the "missing dimensions" of development such as poverty, inequality and gender gaps. Since 2010, HDRO has published the Inequality-adjusted HDI, which adjusts a nation's HDI value for inequality within each of its components (life expectancy, education and income) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index that measures people's deprivations directly.

Similarly, HDRO's efforts to measure gender inequalities began in the 1995 Human Development Report on gender, and recent reports have included two indices on gender, one accounting for differences between men and women in the HDI dimensions,

the other a composite of inequalities in empowerment and well-being. This briefing note is organized into six sections. The first section presents information on the country coverage and methodology for the 2020 Human Development Report.

The next five sections provide information about key composite indices of human development: the HDI, the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Gender Inequality Index (GII), and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The tables presented in this note depict the state of human development before the COVID-19 pandemic based on available data for 2019 and earlier years.

Data reflecting changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic fallout in 2020 will be available in 2021 and will be presented in tables and related analyses of the 2021 Human Development Report. It is important to note that national and international data can differ because international agencies standardize national data to allow comparability across countries and in some cases may not have access to the

most recent national data.

The 2020 Human Development Report presents the 2019 HDI (values and ranks) for 189 countries and UN-recognized territories, along with the IHDI for 152 countries, the GDI for 167 countries, the GII for 162 countries, and the MPI for 107 countries.

It is misleading to compare values and rankings with those of previously published reports, because of revisions and updates of the underlying data and adjustments to goalposts.

Small changes in values should be interpreted with caution as they may not be statistically significant due to sampling variation, the report cautions. "Generally speaking, changes at the level of the third decimal place in any of the composite indices are considered insignificant. Unless otherwise specified in the source, tables use data available to HDRO as of 15 July 2020."

All indices and indicators, along with technical notes on the calculation of composite indices, and additional source information are available online at the Global Human Development Report 2020, a flagship publication of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We Have Vaccines, Now Comes The Hard Part



BY: PATRICK OSEWE

Recent good news on vaccines for COVID-19 brings us closer to ending the acute phase of this terrible pandemic. But the sense of collective relief must be accompanied by a healthy dose of reality.

While the scientific community awaits detailed data from leading vaccine developers, several questions remain. Notably, it is still unclear how long immunity would last and whether it will prevent severe disease or prevent people from passing on the virus if already infected. This means that mitigation measures³/₄mask-wearing, social distancing, avoiding large crowds, and practicing good hygiene³/₄will likely be necessary for the foreseeable future.

Experts are urging the public to remain steadfast with precautionary measures for another reason. Even if the vaccine proved effective and was put on the market today, getting it to everyone who needs it will not happen overnight.

Billions of doses must reach billions of people—in every country. With competition for limited resources already impacting pandemic response, high-income countries have been accused of securing disproportionate amounts of limited vaccine supply for their own population—so-called “vaccine nationalism”.

All countries, especially those with fewer resources, must have rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Not only is it a moral imperative, global economic recovery depends on it. This is the motivation behind the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility, a \$9 billion initiative launched recently by the Asian Development Bank to help its developing members procure and deliver safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19.

Another initiative, the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC)³/₄co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and WHO³/₄is gearing up to provide 92 eligible low- and middle-income countries with access to successful vaccine candidates. It aims to deliver 2 billion doses of vaccine by the end of 2021.

Key and vulnerable populations, including health workers and the elderly, are slated to receive vaccines first through COVAX, and the AMC will provide doses for up to 20% of the population of participating countries.

But this doesn't account for how and when the rest of the population in eligible countries will access vaccines, or how other countries (mostly middle-income countries not participating in COVAX) will access them.

Perhaps more significantly, rolling-out the vaccine worldwide requires coordinated action within and across several complex systems—from manufacturing and storage, to shipping and distribution—and will require unprecedented global collaboration, including robust private-public sector partnerships.

Furthermore, health systems must adapt existing delivery strategies and information systems designed for child immunization to effectively distribute a vaccine to adults. The supply chains and health system capacity required to produce and distribute COVID-19 vaccine will be staggering.

We can draw useful lessons from how some parts of Asia and the Pacific have used robust public health systems and innovative approaches to push back on COVID-19.

The Republic of Korea's success with testing and digital contact tracing may enable it to quickly develop digital vaccine tracking systems, Viet Nam's targeted measures to maintain public confidence and prevent widespread COVID-19 outbreaks may help to engender public trust in the safety of a vaccine. Thailand's use of village health volunteers to support the tracing of active cases can be mobilized to support vaccination of rural populations.

The following actions can be taken now by countries to ensure they are prepared to prioritize, introduce, and deliver COVID-19 vaccines:

Adopt a whole-of-government approach to improve vaccine delivery planning. Every aspect of successful COVID-19 response in the region—from the development of test kits to the designation of treatment facilities—has involved partnerships across society. Delivery of vaccines is no exception. Countries should engage key stakeholders to plan scenarios, develop a national vaccine strategy, and organize operational aspects of vaccine introduction.

Agree on the vaccine priority line. Who should receive the first doses of the vaccine is a complex question. Countries should assess how to identify priority groups based on their country context and specific epidemiology. They should also model different scenarios for vaccinating the general population and set expectations accordingly.

Develop communication strategies to improve vaccine uptake. Widespread campaigns will be necessary to educate the public about the benefits of vaccination, especially given reported vaccine hesitancy in many communities. With vaccine coverage essential to achieving herd immunity, developing and implementing clear advocacy and communication strategies will be critical.

Strengthen vaccination infrastructure. Virtually every country in the world will have to strengthen and expand its existing vaccination infrastructure. For example, the Pfizer vaccine will require storage at temperatures as low as minus 80° Celsius (-112° Fahrenheit). Additionally, temperature-controlled logistics and point-of-care cold chain infrastructure are unreliable at many rural areas in low- and middle-income countries. Key issues include strengthening vaccine storage, distribution systems and facilities, safety monitoring systems, and ways to track every dose that has been administered.

Vaccines do not save lives; vaccinations save lives. But vaccination in select countries will not end the acute phase of the pandemic.

Only timely vaccination in all countries will do that. So all countries need to start preparing, now.

Patrick Osewe is Chief of the Asian Development Bank's Health Sector Group

Let's Change For Ourselves



BY: SUSHMITA ARYAN

Whether it is for hanging out with friends at 10 pm at night or before putting on some clothes to go somewhere, it is she, who often has to undergo tons of trials from her wardrobe before she finally gets the proper outlook. Putting on some clothes upon her comforts or dealing pressure to behave in a certain way isn't really a matter of choice anymore when people out there are already sketching the dubious lines on their head.

However, once she takes her feet out of comfort zone, then she gets inclined towards being conscious of herself, her look and how she projects. As stepping out, means getting herself tied up in her own fear. The fear that curls up her throughout isn't enough that she steps herself back somewhere down, and diving into her self-doubts, she is compelled to think, 'what if my clothes are too short, too small, or if my V necklines that are too tight, or if my lipstick that are too brighter, or if my way of behaving?'

Moreover, this can lead her into being more fearful than ever. Getting wrapped up herself into these thoughts and notions built around her, yet, she contrive for what the best suits her. She does everything in regard to what people demand, and yet, she gets tormented. She walks taking her own path in constructing herself as 'self-secured' but it is about the question of insecurity that is instilled by an outsider in her head that can just pull her apart.

Surprisingly, these are just the samples or lines of judgements drawn in their heads. Having been born into a society that holds different ideologies for both girls and boys is not a nature of wonderness. As long as one's way of behaving, one's way of speaking and one's way of wearing is fine with oneself, and doesn't do any harm on other parts, it itself becomes a matter of self-choice and not something that turns into a debatable topic for the outside people.

We know the fact that the society we live in, has a distinct gender binary. It is important how our society

teaches values to children as it can perpetuate gender inequality. At a very young age, when a girl grows up, she is scrutinized upon her every action about how politely she talks, how polite she behaves, and how polite she puts on clothes. But alas! These are things that can only limit her voice for the moment and not for the raging voice that is already inside her mind because the mindset that imposes on her own belief is self-destructing that she later ends up believing into it, confining herself somewhere behind the dubious sketches created on people's heads.

Hence, if we want our girls to get out of this, we must be the one to let go of them and not hold onto them that if girls are to be reminded of her way to put on clothes giving shape to a body then, it's for boys to be reminded of their way to shape their mental outlook. If girls are to be reminded of her way to speak, then it's for boys to be

reminded of their way to behave them. If girls are to be reminded of her self-respect, then it's for boys to be reminded of their sense of dignity. Having said so, values must be transmitted equally to both the genders.

Lastly, if the society can hold all children to the same tenets, of self-respect and kindness, then, society can promote a more inclusive understanding that children of all gender are capable enough to respect and celebrate individuality. So, to every mother, to every daughter, to every sister, and to every daughter-in-law, let them learn and embrace themselves as they are.

Not just that, let every boy, and every man learn that outlook appearance does not have much impact until you yourself create wrong illusions in your head. It is just the matter of self-choice, the values that they inhibit at a younger age, and the mindset they keep. In the end, what counts is your individuality; the contentment you derive.

However, once she takes her feet out of comfort zone, then she gets inclined towards being conscious of herself, her look and how she projects.

Growing Local Reach

Implemented by DCA and local NGOs in close coordination with the Local Governments (Palikas), through the financial support of Delegation of European Union in Nepal, GG School is a part of PARIWARTAN – Participation, Inclusion and Wider CSOs' Actions for Responsive, Transparent and Accountable local governance in Nepal Project

BY A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when there are growing concerns over how to increase access of poor and marginalized communities in the programs and projects and social welfare schemes launched by local levels, the concept of Good Governance School (GG School) has shown a promise to make a difference.

Implemented by DCA and local NGOs in close coordination with the Local Governments (Palikas), through the financial support of Delegation of European Union in Nepal, GG School is a part of PARIWARTAN – Participation, Inclusion and Wider CSOs' Actions for Responsive, Transparent and Accountable local governance in Nepal Project. Following its implementation, the project has brought drastic changes in the livelihood of poor and marginalized people through increasing their reach to the resources and services available in remote Palikas of Sudur Paschim Province.

The experiences of Indra Paligi, Harina Devi Khadayat and Tara Devi, who are the participants of GG School, of KI Singh Rural Municipality of Doti District, show how increasing awareness level about the services offered by the local level benefits marginalized and poor people.

Participants of GG School, Indra Paligi of KI Singh Rural Municipality said that the last month, she went to the ward office and asked them about the procedures to get her children's nutrition allowances. "I didn't even know about the allowances until I joined this school," she says.

"Now, I get Rs. 800 for my two kids, 400 each, every month. And I am

able to buy them nutritious food and milk." She further says this has been a crucial support. "I am from a poor family, always struggling to feed my kids, and until now they relied on whatever I used to eat, no such nutritious food."

Tara Devi's confidence has enhanced following attending the class. "I was hesitant even to say my name until I joined this Good Governance School," says Tara Devi of KI Singh Rural Municipality. "But now I can stand and tell about what I have learned - mainly the functions, duties and services of our local government, and what are the services that I am entitled to."

"My son is now enrolled in the course for Junior Technical Assistant (JTA) at the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) - a technical school. I didn't know anything about this course, but when I heard about the course from my facilitators (GG School Facilitator), my son applied for a seat and got it," Harina Devi Khadayat said with a nonstop smile and laugh. "This has helped me very much."

GG School provides different information about gender based violence and legal aid services. Dropati BK of Jorayal Rural Municipality, a member of GG School, has been able to get justice once she knew polygamy was a form of GBV and had to take a legal action for justice.

"GG School supported me to file the case and get justice. I won my property from my husband and also received regular monthly salary as per my rights," she shares her happiness.

Participants shared that they are now able to go to the ward offices

seeking information about the budget planning and ask the ward committee to ensure their presence so that their demands are heard. They have formed a women's group in every GG School.

Members of GG School are aware of harmful traditional practices and take action against such customs and practices. Mandhari BK, along with other 6 GG school members, organized a campaign against Chaupadi Custom in Jorayal RM 2, Melkhola, bringing a transformation in the community where 60 out of 85 Households have stopped practicing Chaupadhi and as women and girls remain at home during menstruation.

GG School is also linked with economic recovery activities. Under this project, the deprived communities have already been educated with the constitutional rights that have helped them to know the governance structure and through their initiations have started community projects and other income generation activities. So this will have both awareness component and income generation outcomes.

Not only aware of rights and entitlements, community people especially women are aware of local planning process and budget allocation system. With this knowledge GGS member of Chaurpati have registered in CSOs - "Samajkalyan CSOs of Chaurpati Ward No.3 Dungri tole"; participated in local government planning process and were able to receive NPR 400,000 from Local Government (Palika) and built multi-purpose community building to operate vaccination centre and separate space for CSOs meeting and safe space for women and girls.

Constitution of Nepal and Local Government Operation Act-2017 allocate enormous authority to Palikas (Rural Municipalities and Municipalities).

With a high prevalence of illiteracy and poverty, the people in remote areas of Sudur Paschim Province, especially are living in a miserable condition

process, and citizen's rights to participate in local governance process by raising awareness of citizens and their representative CSOs to constructively engage with LGs for improved transparency and accountability in local governance," said DCA. "In the process, it is targeting to reach 7,200 citizens and 72 representatives."

As the project is in the second year, the project helped empower citizens through knowledge and capacity building support. It has promoted participatory and inclusive decision making and planning processes, e-governance at the LG level for increased transparency and accountability. Besides that, the project has facilitated Local Government and Provincial Government interface for multiplier effect



From birth to death, social security benefits to migration certificate, implementation of development projects and judiciary, many issues related to day-to-day life fall under the responsibility of the local governments, which provide necessary certification, authentication and recommendation.

According to the act, the local levels are responsible to issue 36 different kinds of recommendations, registration and authentication. Those include recommendations for citizenship certificates, poor and marginalized, land transfers, marriage and birth registration, free medicine, social welfare benefits, registration of industry, distribution of poverty cards, disability certification and so on.

Under the judicial power, Palikas also look at many disputes like transaction, family dispute and violence against women. Vice-chairperson of Palikas chairs the judicial committee.

However, rural people were facing a lot of difficulties to get their things done, unknowing the procedures, laws, regulations and other functions of Palikas and ward members and other office bearers.

without interacting with local levels. Only a few people visit local offices for services.

Given such a scenario, GG School came as a savior for the local community and local levels to enhance interactions and connections. Satya Kumari Joshi, a facilitator of the GG School shared that it was difficult to convince women to come to the GG School, but after attending one session, they were excited to join the classes. "They even are asking that this should continue regularly."

The project implemented in six Rural Municipalities of Sudur Paschim Province which include Joraya, Shikhar, and K.I Singh Palikas in Doti; and Panchadewal Binayak, Mangalsen, and Chaurpati Palikas in Achham District has been greatly supporting the process to increase the level of understanding about the function, structures and programs of Palikas among the poor and marginalized communities of those areas.

"The project intends to address the barriers like poor awareness and knowledge of citizens on the functions of LGs, the changed local governance

and strengthened the multi-stakeholder engagement approach across the action.

After the implementation of the project, knowledge and capacity increased among citizens and CSOs to engage with and hold the Local Government (LG) accountable for improving governance. It also helped authorities to understand the needs and interests of citizens especially poor and marginalized citizens (women, Dalits and ethnic groups) as reflected in LG policies, plans and programs.

With increased awareness, inclusive and improved service delivery and monitoring mechanism has been established at Palika Level.

Nepal's new constitution gives sweeping executive, judicial and legislative power to the local level making it inclusive and accessible to poor, marginalized citizens including women, Dalits and ethnic groups, people with disability and others.

The spokesperson at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration Basanta Adhikary agreed that local people have little knowledge about what services the local level provides to them and what they need to

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do to seek such services. Giving his own experience of working at the local level, he said the majority of people are still unaware of the fact that local levels are given the authority to connect the beneficiaries of social welfare schemes and allowances.

With limited resources, the Ministry has been working to raise awareness through mobilizing local FM stations. Provincial governments said they do not have any program to raise the awareness level in the community regarding service delivery provided to the local people.

“Since we have limited budgets to run such programs, we are implementing some programs in partnership with local and international NGOs in our province,” said Govinda Pokharel, information officer of the Ministry of Social Development.

GG Schools

To increase the access of local people, there is the need to generate awareness and understanding about governance. As all three tiers of government have been spending virtually, no budget on advocacy campaigns and awareness raising activities is adequately available.

DCA's Involvement

Since its start three decades ago, DCA has been advocating for the rights of most marginalized communities; and more specifically since 2008 through its dedicated theme -“Inclusive Citizenship for Accountable Governance” has been supporting to fight against discrimination and exclusion of women, Dalits and marginalized communities in the social and institutional structure and encourage inclusion and justice for all.

With the changes in the federal governance structures in the country and devolution of power to local governments after the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal in 2015, DCA in Nepal has been working very closely with the local government in developing inclusive plans, policies and programs to improve the access to resources and effective delivery of



services to rights holders.

“If citizens understand and are aware of the governance system, it provides them the agency to hold the government accountable and ensure their rights are given with due diligence,” says Malati Maskey, Program Manager – Active Citizenship at DCA. “With the change in the government system, from central to the federal levels, it is important to empower local communities. This is only possible from the formal and informal education system.”

GG School is the informal education system for the adult literacy programs, Maskey added.

Local communities are provided informal and formal classes for half an hour, two days a week, where they are informed about the various aspects of the governance system. In the class, people are informed about the constitution, their rights and functions.

Teaching-governance

Ward Chairmen are also very much receptive and welcoming the activities. “This is something that we need to do, but in the lack of budget and other priorities, we haven’t been able to reach to the communities,” says ward chairman Harka Bahadur Bista of Ward 7, KI Singh Rural Municipality, Doti district, praising the ‘initiative taken by the PARIWARTAN project’. He added that the project is helping them to achieve success.

Ram Bahadur Saud, Ward 3 Chairman of Chaurpati Rural Municipality in Achham district, says, “We could only see men coming for vital registration or any other work, but women are also coming to ward office seeking services. This is a huge change.”

He added that earlier women were only kept in the committees or invited in programs just for the sake of their presence; however, they are now claiming their rights and raising their voices.

“This actually is making a difference and we as people’s representatives are finding it easier to deal with their demands,” says Saud. “Through this school, they have also learned about the process of ward development planning and the relevant persons to talk to.”

Although GG School is invisible at the broader national level, the project increases citizens’ meaningful participation in Sub-national-good governance in Nepal. It also empowers citizens and their organizations to effectively engage with local levels in promoting transparency and accountability in the governance processes in Province 7 of Nepal. The project has been generating the awareness of local people to get services offered by local levels as well as improving the governance level.

(With reporting from Ishwar Rauniyar)

Support For Enterprise

World Bank Provides \$80 Million To Nepal To Implement Rural Enterprise and Economic Development Project

BY A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal's rural enterprises have badly suffered due to lockdown and other market disruptions due to COVID-19 and are searching for some kinds of a support package to recover, World Bank has come out to help.

The recent agreement signed between the World Bank and Nepal government gives hope to Nepal's rural enterprises, which are currently facing a very hard time, to recover again.

Government of Nepal and World Bank signed an \$80 Million Rural Enterprise and Economic Development Project to strengthen Nepal's agriculture sector and boost post-pandemic recovery.

According to a press release issued by the World Bank, the Government of Nepal and the World Bank signed the NPR 9.3 billion project to bolster Nepal's agriculture sector by strengthening rural market linkages and promoting entrepreneurship while creating jobs to support post-COVID-19 recovery.

The Rural Enterprise and Economic Development Project (REED) project was 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 thank the World Bank Group



for providing crucial support with this project which will enhance the access of rural enterprises and small-hold producers to markets and institutional buyers," stated Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary, and Ministry of Finance. "Promoting agribusiness competitiveness with sustainable market linkages will be critical to boost Nepal's post-COVID recovery."

The project aims to facilitate productive partnerships between rural producer organizations and private-sector buyers to add value, create jobs and foster sustainable inclusion into, and development of, higher-value domestic and foreign value chains.

The project focuses on five economic corridors covering Provinces 1, 2, Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini and Sudurpashchim that offer opportunities for successful linkage activities 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 finance 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.

"The project brings a unique opportunity to transform Nepal's agriculture sector and spur economic recovery from the pandemic's fallout by bolstering rural enterprises and creating local jobs and opportunities," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. "By fostering meaningful collaboration among various actors, the project can promote Nepali agriculture products globally by stimulating many niche sectors such as coffee, tea, fruit and medicinal products, among others."

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 private sector participation.



The US And Us



BY HEMANG DIXIT

The United States of America, started with a core group of thirteen former colonies now consist of a total of fifty federal constituents functioning as an entity. US existence as a Federal Republic is now 244 years. Our 'Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal', proposed now to be referred to as simply Nepal has a history of just five years, and are having teething problems as to the functioning and rights of the Centre and the seven constituents.

Nepal's relationship with the USA started when Babbar Shumsher JB Rana led a mission to the USA and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in 1947. Following this Henry Grady was representative for two month in early 1948. Later in mid 1948 an American Mission led by Henderson arrived in Nepal and an exchange of Ambassadors between the two countries took place. Henderson, US Ambassador in India was concurrently credited to Nepal. Kaiser SJB Rana, the Representative to the Court of St. James in UK became also Nepal's representative to the USA. Following this, USOM's anti-Malarial Programme in Nepal started in Nov. 1952 leading to the resettlement of many hill people in the Terai.

A major event in the winter of 1963 was when some porters of the American expedition to Mt. Everest were infected with smallpox and subsequently carried it to their villages. A potential smallpox epidemic was quickly brought under control by the supply of vaccines availed to Nepal and a vaccination programme by US personnel.

In mid 1960s, Henry Stebbins who was then ambassador inaugurated the Surgical Block of Bir Hospital, built with US aid. At that time the American Women Organisation Nepal (AWON) was involved in helping Nepali children in orphanages. Every Friday I used to be picked up from Bir Hospital and taken by some AWON the members to Tripushewar and Shifal where orphan children were housed. Later most were shifted to Balmandir. Another contribution of AWON is the library, initially housed at Rabi Bhawan and after various shifts now located at the Rotary Compound at Tripureswar. This facility has over the last fifty years been of immense value to young Nepali boys and girls to further their quest for knowledge.

A recent bone of contention between US and Nepal is the Millennium Challenge Corporation, established in 2010 for what has been termed a 'Threshold Program' and proposed for acceptance by Nepal. Currently it is suspended in mid-air and one is not in a position to say whether it will be accepted or not by the present Oli government.

Recently whilst going through the third book by former 44th President of US Barack Obama, I was very surprised and felt that it was 'Tell all' book in which he narrated events that had occurred or taken place during his early life, his tenure as Senator of Illinois and the first four years of his presidency. Retelling of the almost ever occurring campaigns, the activities of innumerable helpers

and the subsequent establishment of offices in the White House. All this confirmed my belief that 'politicking' as an activity everywhere is a serious matter and very costly in the usual long run.

In this respect therefore there is no doubt that Federalism is a very appropriate concept to subscribe to and implement to any nation comprising of multi ethnicity. Our politicians are said to

have been influenced by seeing the working of such a system in Switzerland and its benefits to the people of different ethnicities. Visions of life as conducted in the Nordic countries have also been a magnetic draw to our politicians. The financial support from the well wishers in distant lands has helped so far, but it certainly is not going to be like this for ever. The implementation and the retention of Federalism is a costly affair and the question is who is going to foot the bills. Our last election was conducted with outside finance but we cannot expect this every time. Our politicians too will have to spend plenty of money to canvas and stay in power and so have to have eternal sources of finance.

We in Nepal have started with a Federal structure and to say that it is not functioning after just five years of attempt is not proper. There is no doubt that the giving of powers to the seven different Pradesh elected representatives will certainly achieve better results in the long run. The question is as to what the period of trial should be. We have barely been at it for five years whilst the US has been at it for almost 250 years. Look what is happening there. A quarrel between the incumbent and newly elected President and Vice President has been a matter of discussions and worry whilst the rest of the world looks on. Is this a matter of 3Ms – men, money and materials being unmanageable? If such a state of affairs can take place in a country with such a long political heritage, what can we in Nepal expect?

What surprises me too about President Obama's account of the first four years was also about the passage of various Bills such as the Affordable Care Act, that pertaining to DADT, DREAMERS and finally the killing of Osama bin Laden. It is usual in Nepal that government servants, army plus police personnel should not write about their experiences for some period after leaving that post. Politicians seem to be immune from that rule considering that former Presidents of USA and India, or Premiers of UK have been doing so. With the introduction of Ghost Writing in Nepal, politicians, army personnel in Nepal have done so. In fact, the government has questioned two of our former COAS regarding this and forbidden others contemplating such actions. This I think is a detrimental action for I believe that in this modern age of Internet and communicability there should be no restriction in telling what has taken place or occurred, provided it is the truth.

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



बनौ आदर्श ii नागरिक

बाझ बाझ

जसले अरुको भलाईमा आफ्नो खुशी खोज्दछन्
उसलाई वाझ वाझ सलाम गर्दछ ।



अम ऐन २०७४ को पालना गरौं,
अमिक, अमिक आपुतिकर्ता र
रोजगारदाता सजक बनौं ।



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