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**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**ENVIRONMENT**  
Batu Uprety



**ARTICLE**  
Hemang Dixit

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Feb 12, 2021

FORTNIGHTLY

KATHMANDU VALLEY

## Pollution Proportion

INSIDE



**POLITICS**  
No Return



**PRITHVI BAHADUR PANDE**  
Committed For Cause



**NATIONAL SECURITY**  
National Priority

# लैङ्गिक हिंसाको अन्त्य; मेरो जीवनको गन्तव्य



नेपाल सरकार  
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय  
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**Notes From The Editor**



The hearing on the dissolution of House of Representatives is continuing in the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court. Factions of Nepal Communist Party (NCP), Nepali Congress and other fringe parties are organizing the political rallies terming the decision as unconstitutional. Given the way the court is conducting hearing and its procedures, it is unlikely that it will make any decision before the second week of March. Even after the court's verdict, it is unlikely that parties accept it easily, particularly the faction in ruling NCP. It is likely for us to see more chaotic and unstable political course in the coming days in Nepal. Although we also look at various dimensions of political crisis and its way out as the lead story, we have decided to report on the air pollution of Kathmandu Valley as our cover story. For the last many years, the growing air pollution of Kathmandu Valley has raised a global concern, for all different stakeholders. However, nothing has materialized to bring down the level of pollution. With the weakness in the execution of Environment Act and failing to regulate the pollution related industries, including brick kilns and vehicles, Kathmandu valley's air pollution is likely to increase further. Worse, the growing level of dust in the air is another issue. Given the current state, Clean Energy Nepal, a NGO working in environmental sector, has been taking the initiative with the support from World Health Organization. We discuss various issues related to air pollution in Nepal. We also express happy Valentine Day with this issue.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor



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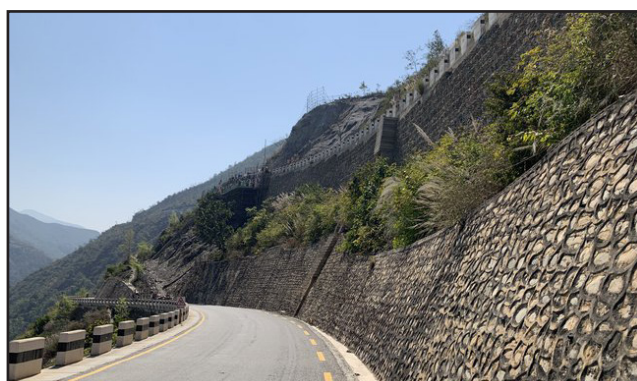
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## REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

# In Educational Settings

*Empowering people to reflect on the root causes and repercussions of hate crimes is essential*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every year on January 27, the United Nations honours the victims of the Holocaust by reaffirming its unwavering commitment to counter anti-Semitic, racist and other forms of intolerance.

This year also UN observed the International Day of Commemoration In Memory Of The Victims Of The Holocaust in UN building reminding the world horror and inhuman act against humanity.

Although almost over seven decades have passed, horror and terror committed against human beings still haunts the minds of people. Over five million people of a particular community were killed in a horrific manner.

With the support of Higher Institutions and Secondary Schools' Association Nepal (HISSAN) and V4Action Volunteers – the online volunteering network of youth established by the UN in Nepal, the virtual outreach program on Holocaust has set a target to reach out to more than 35 hundred youth from 7 provinces of Nepal within a week's time.

On the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, the United Nations Nepal together with the Embassy of Germany, the Embassy of Israel, the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal (EU) and Higher Institutions and Secondary Schools' Association Nepal (HISSAN) initiated a week-long educational outreach program on Holocaust with the youth of seven provinces in Nepal.

The outreach program began with a memorial ceremony hosted by the United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, at the UN House. The ceremony- organized following COVID-19 safety protocols -was attended by their excellencies the Ambassadors of Germany and Israel and the Head of the EU in Nepal.

Speaking at the memorial ceremony, the United Nations Resident Coor-

dinator, Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti said "remembering accurately and teaching about the Holocaust is vital in countering hatred. This has never been more important than today, a time when antisemitism, bigotry and racism are rising with devastating and violent consequences for people and communities.

"Through our week-long virtual outreach program, I call on all generations especially youth to use your voice to stand up for human rights, challenge discrimination and antisemitism by remembering the need to foster tolerance, solidarity and empathy," Ms Nyanti added.

This year's International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust is being celebrated under the theme, "Facing the Aftermath: Recovery and Reconstitution after the Holocaust." It focuses on the measures taken by people in the aftermath of the Holocaust to begin the process of recovery and reconstitution of individuals, community, and systems of justice. The theme encourages a discussion of how measures taken in the past could contribute in how we rebuild societies today.

Resonating with the global theme, the outreach program will highlight the significance of standing up for justice to stop the rise of antisemitism and racism, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which we have seen a rise in hate speech and stigmatization against the COVID-19 patients and their family members. It will emphasize our collective need to stand up against injustice and say "never again".

After reciting the Yizkor prayer in honor of all those who suffered during the Shoah, the Ambassador for Israel, Hanan Goder said, "Today we remember



the victims of the Holocaust. Six million Jews were murdered by Hitler and his collaborators because of ideology that could not respect the other and could not appreciate tolerance."

He also said, "The message for us today is that we all must denounce all forms of Racism and Antisemitism and most important: we must remember! Remember the victims and all those that courageously stood against the evil of the Nazi ideology."

During the memorial ceremony, six candles representing the six million victims of the Holocaust were lit followed by an observance of one-minute of silence.

On the occasion, German Ambassador to Nepal Roland Schäfer said, "As a German, I am still haunted by the faces of my missing Jewish brothers and sisters. Those who are not there, who could not finish their lives, have children and continue, are as important to us as those who survived. No family, no country, no society can live while forgetting the ones who are missing. That's why this week is so important, also in Nepal."

EU Ambassador to Nepal Nona Deprez said, "Today millions in Nepal and all around the world remember those millions who lost their lives in the most horrible event of history. Ensuring this genocide is not forgotten, and educating new generations on the responsibilities of citizenship, care and engagement, are crucial for preventing such atrocity from happening again in the future.

## NEWSNOTES

### China To Deliver 500000 Doses Of COVID-19 Vaccine



Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi has announced that China will provide 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Nepal on a grant basis and stated that China would accord priority to Nepal in vaccine cooperation.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi held a telephonic conversation and discussed this and matters of mutual interest.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Gyawali thanked the Chinese Government for the support of COVID-19 vaccine and appreciated China's stance to make it global public good.

### Japanese Assistance For DRR Project In Chitwan



The Government of Japan has extended US dollars 707,953 (about NRs 82.6 million), to SHAPLA NEER - Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support, under the Grant As-

sistance for Japanese NGO Projects Schemes.

Shapla Neer, an international NGO based in Japan, will work with a Nepali partner NGO, Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), to implement the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Strengthening Project in Chitwan District.

A grant contract relating to the project was signed and exchanged on 5 February 2021 by Saigo Masamichi, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Ms. Katsui Hiromi, Country Representative, Shapla Neer Nepal Office at the Embassy of Japan in Nepal.

The grant assistance will be used to strengthen community resilience to disasters in Madi Municipality, a flood prone area in Chitwan District.

The project will coordinate closely with local government, stakeholders and community members to achieve the following major elements:

**Establishment and maintenance of infrastructure:** The project will support construction of river widening, gabions, and embankments, as well as retention walls and drainage systems. CDMCs will establish the maintenance

system to keep the structures functional.

### Pakistan Embassy Reception For Nepali Winter K2 Ascent Team

The Embassy of Pakistan in Nepal hosted a reception in the honour of Nepali Winter K2 Ascent Team, who recently scaled K2.

It is for the first time in history that the "Savage Mountain" has been successfully scaled in winter, setting a new world record.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador-designate Syed Haider Shah congratulated the Nepalese climbers and praised their extraordinary success, a press release of the embassy of Pakistan read.

Recalling the history, Ambassador Shah said that the previous six attempts to scale the world's second highest peak in winter had unfortunately ended in failure. He commended the exemplary courage, tenacity and teamwork of the Indigenous Himalayan climbers in overcoming the odds and setting a new world record, according to the embassy press release.

Ambassador Shah presented souvenirs to the teams' leaders Nirmal Purja and Mingma Gyalje Sherpa.



### U.S Ambassador Berry Calls On COAS General Thapa

U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Randy W. Berry has paid a courtesy call to Chief of Army Staff General Purna Chandra Thapa at Nepal Army Headquarters.

During the meeting COAS General Thapa and ambassador Berry discussed the issue related to bilateral interest and relations between the two countries. Nepal Army expressed the hope that this type of a regular meeting will help to further strengthen the relations between the two countries.



### Israeli Embassy In Kathmandu Celebrates Tu Bishvat Planting Tree

Israeli Holiday, Tu Bishvat (The New Year for the Trees) Was Marked at the Embassy With Happy Birthday Trees

The Embassy of Israel celebrated the Jewish festival, "Tu Bishvat (The New Year for the Trees)" on 28 Jan 2021 at the Embassy garden. Marking the importance of nature in our lives and its conservation, a Swami Tree was planted, as a symbolic act of celebrating nature, goodness





and promoting ecological awareness. Each tree is considered to have its birthday on Tu B'Shvat.

On this day, trees are planted all around Israel. It is also an educational day for children as it is custom-

ary to take children on tree-planting outings. There is a custom to eat fruit like figs, dates, grapes and also nuts. This custom is a carry-over from Jewish life in the Diaspora - when fresh fruits from Israel were not available.

Forests and Environment Minister Prem Bahadur Ale graced the tree plantation ceremony. He was accompanied by Dr. Bishwa Nath Oli, Secretary at the Ministry of Forests and Environment.

Expressing views on the importance of plantation, the Minister said, "Survival is not possible without plants. What Israel is doing in agriculture and forestry is exemplary. We are thankful to the Government of Israel for its expertise shared and support in the field of agriculture."

### KOICA Provides \$ 4.7M For Empowerment Of Rural Communities

KOICA has initiated a project to Empower Rural Communities in Nepal through an Integrated Approach to Health and Income Growth.

Park Chong-suk, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Nepal, and Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project "Empowering Rural Communities in Nepal through an Integrated Approach to Health and Income Growth.

According to a press release issued by KOICA, the total budget of the project is US\$ 4.7 million and it will be for a period of five years.

The Record of Discussion (RoD) for the project was signed between the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) on 24th of July, 2020.

The main goal of this project is to improve the living standard of community people through enhanced access to outreach centers, participatory health and rural development programs, and income generation opportunities. The project has set 3 outputs i.e. increased income, improved health and increased community capacity of communities of project areas.

In the partnership with the Dhulikhel Hospital -

Kathmandu University Hospital (DH-KUH) the project will be implemented in its outreach centers namely; Manekharka and Hindi



in Sindhupalchowk District, Salambu in Kavre District and Puttar in Tanahun District. Similarly, a consortium of Korea Institute for Development Strategy (KDS) and Yonsei University has been selected as the Project Management Consultancy (PMC) during September 2020.

### Embassy Of India Celebrates 72nd Republic Day

Embassy of India Kathmandu celebrated the 72nd Republic Day of India organizing various programs. The celebrations began with hoisting of the national flag by Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra who then read out the message of the President of India on the occasion.

The Ambassador felicitated Veer Nari, war widows and next of kins of deceased soldiers by disbursing their dues worth NRs. 3.68 crore and a blanket to each. The Embassy also gifted books to 50 libraries and educational institutions spread across all the provinces of Nepal.

Later in the day, the Ambassador hosted a reception at India House. Foreign Minister of Nepal, Pradeep Kumar Gyawali graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

On the occasion India-Nepal Alumni Network 'Sampark' along with website [www.samparkbharatnepal.com](http://www.samparkbharatnepal.com) was launched by former President of Nepal Ram Baran Yadav in the presence of other distinguished alumni.

The event was attended by prominent leaders, officials, artists, journalists and public personalities who have studied in India. They were felicitated for their significant contribution to strengthening people-to-people links between India and Nepal.



### Japanese Assistance For New Classrooms In Jhapa

The Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Nepal. Yoshioka Yuzo signed a grant contract with Khagendra Bahadur Lamjel, Principal of Shree Laxmi Narayan Secondary School, for building classrooms at the Shree Laxmi Narayan Secondary School in Jhapa District.

The project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of about NPR 13.8 million.

At the signing ceremony, Yoshioka said he hoped that the project would contribute to improve the educational environment in Shivasatakshi Municipality where the school is located.

The Shree Laxmi Narayan Secondary School, a public school, was established in 1967 and offers schooling from early child development level to the 12th grade. The project is expected to support improvements in education for children of communities that do not currently have enough educational facilities.





## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Hitendra Dev Shakya Appointed As The MD Of NEA



For every NEA employees, everyone aspires to be managing director, However, only a few gets such opportunity to lead Nepal's largest public utility. Hitendra Dev Shakya is one of the few NEA's cadet get opportunity to lead the organisation.

Although his predecessor Kul Man Ghishing was also a groomed in NEA, there was generally trend to make political appointment as well. By appointing Shakya as MD, the government gives continuity to promote NEA's employee at top.

As a person who knows ins and out of NEA, Shakya can make a lot of difference to the organization taking the decision at the right time. However, it is not easy to for him given a lot of vested interested around NEA.

The Cabinet meeting held on Monday appointed Hitendra Dev Shakya as the chief of the Authority.

Before appointment as acting MD, Shakya leading NEA Engineering Company. Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation appointed his as the acting chief of the NEA on November 9, last year.

The top post at the authority has been vacant since the retirement of Ghising, who is largely credited for bringing decades-long load-shedding in the country to an end. Ghising was appointed to the top post of NEA in 2016.

### UK Committed To Continue Support To Nepal

Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali held a virtual meeting with the Lord Ahmad, State Minister of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, today. During the meeting, various matters relating to Nepal-UK bilateral relations and cooperation were discussed.



While appreciating the British cooperation to the COVAX facility through which developing countries including Nepal are benefited, Minister Gyawali stressed on the importance of concerted efforts at the bilateral and multilateral levels to address common challenge faced by humanity. Minister Lord Ahmad expressed commitment to continued development partnership with Nepal in various sectors, including the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two sides also exchanged views on the pressing issue of climate change. Minister Gyawali reiterated Nepal's desire to work with the United Kingdom and other partner countries towards preserving mountain ecosystem and reducing impacts of climate change.

During the meeting, the two Ministers agreed to further strengthening and widening the multidimensional Nepal-UK relations.

### Nepal And France Second Bilateral Consultation Mechanism Meet Concluded

The second meeting of the Nepal-France Bilateral Consultation Meeting (BCM) took place virtually with France as the host. The Nepali delegation was led by Nirmal Raj Kafle, Joint Secretary and Head of Europe and the Americas division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the French delegation was led by Bertrand Lortholary, head of Asia and Oceania division at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.



Besides the bilateral issues, regional and multilateral cooperation were also part of the BCM. Focus was on the regional processes (SAARC, BIMSTEC, French strategy in the Indo-Pacific region) among others. As Nepal and France have been collaborating together on various international forums with many shared agendas and positions, matters related to climate change and the upcoming Sagarmatha Sambaad, UN Peacekeeping operations, future of multilateralism and the upcoming Generation Equality Forum in Paris etc. also figured prominently in the discussions.

The French delegation also comprised of François-Xavier Léger (French Ambassador to Nepal), and Leela Devaradjalou (Deputy Chief of Mission) whereas the Nepali delegation comprised of senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Finance, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal etc.

### Nepal Top Recipient Of India Aid

The Indian government through its union budget for fiscal year 2021-22 allocated IRs9.92 billion [Rs15.87 billion] to Nepal.

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget in Parliament. The grant pledged by the Indian government for Nepal is the second



highest among South Asian countries. It is, however, lower than what India had provided to Nepal in 2019-20.

Bhutan stood at the top of countries receiving Indian grants. According to grants and loans to foreign governments under the Finance Ministry expenditure profile for 2021-22, Bhutan has been allocated financial assistance of IRs30.04 billion.

Of the total financial assistance portfolio to Bhutan, IRs21.24 billion has been allocated as grant and IRs8.80 billion as loan.

## HBL Enables Govt Revenue Payment From Its Mobile Banking App

Himalayan Bank Limited has become the first bank to use National Payments Interface (NPI) for Government revenue collection from Mobile Banking by enabling the feature of revenue payments to Government of Nepal from February 01, 2021. This allows the bank's customers to initiate Government revenue and tax payments with the convenience of Mobile Banking App. The Bank has extended the channel of NCHL's NPI to integrate and process such transactions.

Himalayan Bank has been providing real-time online fund transfer through its Mobile Banking channel using the underlying system of Connect IPS. This Government revenue payment has now been extended as additional services, which is expected to help customers and GoN for enhancing the service delivery for revenue collection. The customer can use the revenue related EBP No. in the Mobile Banking to initiate such payment and the payment will be made from the Bank's account and processed through NPI for necessary connection

with Government Revenue system. Apart from the Mobile Banking App of Connect IPS, the online revenue payments can now be initiated from the Mobile Banking App of HBL, HI-MB.



## Nepal, World Bank Launch Nepal Urban Governance Project

Government of Nepal and the World Bank have Launched a \$150 million Nepal Urban Governance and Infrastructure Project.

The Project was jointly launched by the Secretary of Ministry of Urban Development, Dr. Ramesh Prasad Singh, and Lada Strelkova, World Bank Operations Manager for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

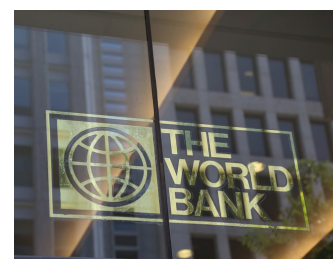
The four-year project is financed by the World Bank to promote sustainable urban development and to support post-COVID-19 economic recovery in strategic secondary cities. Aligned with Nepal's federalism principles and the National Urban Development Strategy, the \$150 million project puts the municipalities at the forefront of project implementation with a focus on strengthening service delivery and institutional capacities in strategic secondary cities and supporting post-COVID-19 economic recovery through labor intensive public works.

"In the context of rapid urbanization, federalism, and the pandemic, delivering better urban services and responding to the needs of the population are critical. Given the urgent needs, result-oriented implementation of the project is required at all levels of government," stated Dr.

Ramesh Prasad Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development. "The project complements the Government of Nepal's existing programs and deepens the engagement on urban development through the establishment of dedicated funding for strategic urban infrastructure in the targeted cities."

The 17 project municipalities are located in two strategic urban clusters in the eastern region (Provinces 1 and 2) and western region (Gandaki and Lumbini Provinces). The selected municipalities are critical to Nepal's economic development and are centers for commercial and administrative activities in those regions. The project will also support 12 additional municipalities across Nepal's seven provinces for labor intensive public works activities, as well as supporting four municipalities for capacity building. Of the total credit, about 95 percent is allocated to the local levels.

"As part of the World Bank's COVID-19 response, the project will support over 20,000 of the most vulnerable and unemployed people at the local level to earn at least 50 days of wages through the creation of temporary employment opportunities in the maintenance and upgrading of public infrastructure," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "Working together with the government, development partners, and the private sector, the World Bank will aim to deliver results to strengthen federalism and capacity of the targeted municipalities to the benefit of the local population."

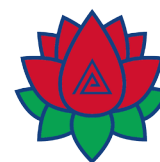


## NIBL Ace Capital Launches New Service

NIBL Ace Capital Ltd has launched an online demat account opening service along with online Meroshare registration for its valued customers.

A wholly owned subsidiary of Nepal Investment Bank Ltd, NIBL Ace Capital Ltd, believes that this digitalised platform will be user-friendly and helps customers to connect with the service of demat and Meroshare at their own convenience, as per a media release.

Earlier the company had also launched the online purchase service of NIBL Sahabhagita Fund - an open ended mutual fund.



**NIBL ACE CAPITAL**  
Managing shares. Managing investments.

# Whither, Climate Change?



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

In seeing the Biden administration returning the US to the Paris Accords and the appointment of John Kerry as the US climate czar, is the heaving of a sigh of relief by the global climate change community not premature? There is a distinct danger, in view of the incorrigible wickedness of the climate problem and the bitter politics all proposed solutions are sure to be enmeshed in, that the complacency such a sense of relief might generate within the environmental civic movements will militate against the urgency of meaningful solutions!

While a belated righting of a wrong that should never have happened – and which (with other such unilateralism of the Trump regime) has severely dented America's image as a reliable rules-based player – is welcome, the state of global climate action at the UNFCCC bureaucratic level is hardly sufficient to undo the planetary damage that is unfolding. Its measures are insufficient to arrest the inexorable global warming heading to 3°C or even 4°C, let alone remain limited to even 2°C or get us to 1.5°C. And the rowdy Trumpian forces who maintain climate change is a “hoax” meant to damage their fossil fuel-addicted economy will politically continue to shackle any Green initiatives the US can take.

Against this sombre backdrop, the Nepal chapter of Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA) and its Delhi-based secretariat met in Kathmandu on 1<sup>st</sup> February to take stock of climate action in Nepal as well as more generally. The picture is not pretty. As co-chair of CANSA (my other co-chair is Abid Suleri of SDPI/Pakistan), I had to bring to notice the fact that, since the path-breaking publication “*Global Warming in an Unequal World*” in 1991 by Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, South Asia has lagged behind in creative initiatives of both ideas and actions. Its governments' lacklustre participation in climate forums almost smack of mere junketeering and its many environmental NGOs only follow Western donor leads. What Southern environmental NGOs need to do is to put our signature imprint on our collective initiatives and not just rubber-stamp agendas handed down from the North. This was discussed at the last CANSA annual general meeting in Nagarkot; and Nepal did produce its own (rather damning) assessment of the [State of Climate Action in Nepal 2018](#) but other countries have yet to show such independent efforts.

Take two examples, the first being climate migration which has overtones of security paranoia for the

Industrialized North which funds such studies in the Global South. We instead suffer from insecure economic migration and political refugee deluge. Compared to their scale and trauma, climate migration (if it is happening at all) is a sideshow drop in the bucket, impossible (as most studies on it admit) to untangle it from economic, political and

disaster-related migrations. While the other victims require political action against concrete protagonists (abusive businesses or brutal states), climate “refugees” must file primary case against Mother Nature and then secondarily against nature-destroying industrial capitalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. This is too tall a task and the unanswered question remains: in light of all the myriad, horrendous problems of governance faced by the Global South, is climate migration even an issue worth the time and effort?

The other example is Nepal's recent submission of its Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC2) to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions completed at the penultimate moment through INGO funding support in December 2020 while the country was under COVID-19 standstill. Its breath-taking banality can be seen glaringly in four areas. First, NDC1 of October 2016 failed rather dramatically, with the commitments to increase electric vehicles (EVs) on Nepali roads to 20% by 2020. Not only was the actual achievement hovering around near zero in 2020, this government, to add insult to injury, slapped massive taxes on them, thus essentially pricing them out of the market. It also promised to reduce fossil fuel dependency by 50% in 2050 but indications of the last five years since the 2016 commitments are that its consumption has near doubled as has imported coal-generated electricity over nationally produced hydro that is allowed to be spilled and wasted. No review of this failure, let alone lessons learnt, extracted and appropriate corrective measures instituted, was done in NDC2!

Second, with all this actual fossil dependency on the increase, NDC2 promises to increase the “sales” of EV by 25% in 2025 with no plan to replace or phase out petrol and diesel vehicles, or to promote electric ropeways in the hills to prevent “bulldozer terrorism” of landslides from badly constructed roads. Third, in a blatant display of meaningless tokenism, it promises action plan for gender inclusiveness GESI – by 2030! What could possibly be preventing Nepal government from coming out with a GESI action plan in a month? It certainly should be less difficult than building two hydropower plants back to back which



can be done in this time period!

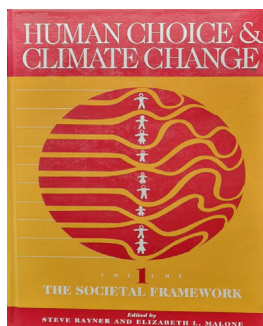
Finally, the most damning indictment is a sentence at the start of its list of targets. In a blatant display of the lack of any sense of commitment to the urgency of meeting the climate change challenge, it states that Nepal's NDC targets are "conditional upon international support", i.e., we need about \$25 billion to do these things but will only spend \$3.4 billion ourselves and you international folks better cough up the rest if you want us to do anything meaningful! What a shameless display of fund-raising blackmail to say nothing of a lack of seriousness. Indeed, one hears that core ministries such as those of transport stayed away from these consultations, putting a question mark on the relevance of such an NDC2 document.

If disasters are mostly from social shortcomings, it is the social sciences that should be looking at climate change more seriously. Such an effort happened seriously for the first (and sadly almost last) time a quarter of a century ago, with the US Department of Energy funded and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory conducted 4-volume 1998 study Human Choice and Climate Change. I was one of the advisory board members together with eminent folks such as former US defence secretary and World Bank president Robert McNamara as well as Thomas Schelling who much later in 2005 won the Nobel Prize in economics.

The study described climate change as a "wicked problem", multidisciplinary and exceedingly complex where let alone solutions, there is little agreement on even the definition of the problem by social solidarities such as bureaucratic hierarchism, market individualism or activist civic egalitarianism. All of them are partly right and partly wrong in their own specific ways. Targets and timetables, however, are too top-down and hierarchic (and inconsiderate of other ways of thinking and defining the problem) to do justice to the plurality of local experiences and adaptive capabilities. As a result, social and institutional limits to global sustainability in climate action will have been reached long before natural/physical limits will have been arrived at.

I remember my long coffee conversations in Oxford with the main investigator of this study, the late Steve Rayner in mid-November 2019. He was worried that the

whole climate movement was taking a wrong turn, that average global temperature rise really tells us very little, that we need to worry more about the increase in energy content of the atmosphere to understand extremes such as



cloudburst and polar vortex swings. The climate problem, after all, was created by the energy sector but it is the water sector through which humanity is going to feel the impact and where solutions have to be found. But sadly, the water sector has not come up with its definition of the climate problem and what should be done about it.

It is with such qualms that I look at South Asia's climate community that is currently unable to come up with a unique signature South Asian response and where sadly there is an unthinking knee-jerk response to attribute even normal weather and other anomalies to climate change. Where would such a rethinking of climate change policy have to emerge from, including from a water perspective? It is my hunch that the concept of water and energy footprints as well as the nexus approach are going to be foundational to new environmentalism in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

And that is also where traditional storage/harvesting technologies of water, food and energy will have to be re-visited. They range from *quanats*, stone water spouts and brushwood dams in the mountains to ponds and *baudis* in the plains; low water consuming food and their preservation techniques, which are being lost to modern bland 'McDonaldization'; and unique building and clothing styles that either preserve heat or help dissipate them. They have all evolved within our hydro-ecology as technologies with lower water/energy footprints and nexused with other critical societal endeavours. It is in rediscovering them and improving upon them that we may find our salvation in the face of the unfolding climate pollution disaster.

## POLITICS

# No Return

*With the division of Nepal Communist Party deeply intensifying, it seems that the crisis is heading towards a point of no return*

By KESHAB POUDEL

**N**CP-Prachanda-Nepal faction leader Pushpakamal Dahal has threatened that forthcoming elections are unacceptable for him and stressed the revival of the dissolved House of Representatives as the only way out.

Despite facing a defamation case in the apex court for his statement against a sub-judice case, Prachanda has been harping on the refrain that he will accept the verdict of revival of dissolved house.

“Given the current situation, it is impossible to hold the elections in May and the House of Representatives can still provide alternative government, verdict in favor of the dissolution will be politically disastrous,” said Prachanda in his recent public rally.

However, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who is also facing a defamation charge for speaking against a sub-judice case, has already made clear that the election is the only way out to settle the political crisis.

“Since the recommendation of the dissolution of House of Representative is made by a prime minister with two thirds of majority and there is no possibility to form other alternative government from the existing House of Representatives, there will be elec-

tions in May,” said PM Oli.

Since the dissolution of House of Representatives and filing the petition in the apex court, two factions of ruling NCP have been holding big rallies across the country and conducting the orientation training for their cadres.

As both the factions are claiming that their faction represents genuine NCP and Elections Commission has declined to recognize either of the faction as legitimate, ruling NCP is still a unified party in legal terms.

Prime Minister Oli said Prachanda-Nepal led NCP is merely a bunch of anti-communist movement group claiming his faction is original

NCP with the Sun symbol. “They are a bunch of bad people who are interested in power rather than in serving the interest of party workers and the country,” said Oli, who controls the party office used by unified NCP.

In his statements, Prachanda has been accusing PM Oli as a fake communist and his faction as merely a group of splinter. “All original communist leaders are with us and we are genuine representatives of original NCP,” thundered Prachada in his recent meeting in Kathmandu.

Despite their claim as original party, the Election Commission has not recognized either of them. In its recent decision, the EC said that







none of the groups applied to split the party, there is only one NCP now. The commission has also made it clear that election commission cannot split the party.

Encouraged by the decision of Election Commission, PM Oli's group holds the view that EC favors them. In legal terms, PM Oli is elected chairman of the party and only a general convention can replace his leadership.

Although both the parties hold the view that the dissolution of House of Representatives is unconstitutional, Nepali Congress and Janata Samajbadi Party have declined to launch a joint struggle against Oli-led government and side with Prachanda and Nepal faction.

#### **Coming Scenario**

As the hearing of the constitution in the five member constitutional bench of apex court continues for almost a month, it is unlikely that the court will deliver the verdict before first week of March given the lengthy procedure and complexity of constitutional issue involved in it.

Although there is a constitutional provision under which prime minister can recommend the dissolution following two months, there is a wide opposition against the constitutional moves.

Except Nepali Congress and Janta Samajbadi Party, which have publicly said that they will accept the verdict of the court, NCP factions and a group of civil society members, who were part of the current change under 12 points agreement, have reservations over the court's decision.

Even four former Chief Justices of Supreme Court, who are now facing a defamation case in the court are speaking on a petition which is in the hearing of the court, have openly challenged the dissolution order.

Given the stand taken by Prachanda-Nepal led factions, civil society and others, any decision, whether to restore the house or accept the election, will likely face resistance.

Following the dissolution of the House of Representatives, there is a vertical split in the NCP. This has also divided the top ranks as well. Speak-

er of House of Representatives and vice president back Prachanda-Nepal faction and they regard chairman of National Assembly and President are pro-Oli.

Speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota, a staunch Maoist, who filed a case against the recently appointed heads and members of Constitutional bodies, has already indicated that he even does not bother to call the session of the dissolved house to oust PM Oli.

In his petition to Supreme Court, Speaker Sapkota has said that all the actions of prime minister and president are against the spirit of the constitution and mandate of the people.

Vice President Nanda Kishore Pun has already expressed his displeasure over president absenting the public functions held in President's Office recently. All these indicate that the scenario looks bleak.

#### **The possible outlook**

Various scenarios are likely to occur following the court verdict. However, the future will be directed by politics rather than justice and ju-





dicial procedures. After the verdict of the court, the court will have to bear all the shock.

If the constitutional bench interprets the constitution favoring dissolution, a big bunch of civil society members, part of the political of change of 2006-07 and Prachanda-Nepal led NCP, will likely rebel with agitation to overthrow PM KP. Sharma Oli, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari and others.

Dr. Govinda K.C led civil society group which includes former finance minister Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, former speaker Daman Nath

Dhungana and others, will call for agitation along lines of Nepal Communist Party Prachanda and Nepal faction.

Former speaker Dhungana is also facing a defamation case in the Supreme Court for his recent controversial statement that people will reject the decision of the court in favor of elections.

Although Nepali Congress and Janata Samajbadi Party officially said that they will abide by the verdict of the court, they will also face a dilemma. At a time when a faction in NC and Janata Samajbadi Party are calling for people's movement against Oli

led faction, they will likely see a split. Dr Baburam Bhattarai is currently against the decision of establishment not to join Prachanda-Nepal faction. Ram Chandra Poudel and Krishna Prasad Sitaula are pressing NC to side with Prachanda-Nepal.

If what speaker Sapkota has already indicated in saying that he will not mind to summon the Dissolved House of Representatives to oust PM Oli happens, Sapkota-chaired House of Representatives can take any decision including removing President and installing Vice President as acting president. This way there will be a major constitutional breakdown.

#### Second scenario

If the court revives the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Oli will still be the leader of the party and he is responsible to summon the house. Until other factions oust him from parliamentary leadership and party chair, Oli will be the legitimate leader.

In case PM Oli delays the session, it is likely, Sapkota will use his unconstitutional power of summoning the house and removing Prime Minister Oli. "Parliament is a sovereign body and represents the collective sovereignty of people. The Prime Minister cannot dissolve it without its consent. This House of Representatives is different from the previous one," said speaker Sapkota.

In this case, PM Oli's supporters will definitely call a stir as Pra-





chanda and Nepal group would do in case of elections. Given the current resentment expressed against president and Chief Justice, Prachanda-Nepal faction may register impeachment motion against them. To prevent this situation, PM Oli will take his decision.

The current tripartite struggle among two factions of Nepal Communist Party backed by a section of civil society with a tacit support from a section of leaders of Nepali Congress and Janata Samajbadi Nepal Party will further create constitutional chaos and disorder.

### Safe Landing

The division in ruling Nepal Communist Party-NCP has already intensified up to the province and grass root level and it looks the unity is impossible. However, politics is a game of possibility and nothing can be ruled out.

CPN-UML unified following almost five years of split. CPN-UML and Maoist Party, die-hard rivals of the communist movement in Nepal, merged to become one and secured two thirds majority defeating Nepali Congress badly in the last elections. Nepali Congress split and later unified

and became one party.

Nepal's political history is full of strange and unbelievable alliances and rivalries. Starting from BP Koirala and Matrika Koirala, two brothers, current bitter rivalry between Oli and Prachanda-Nepal is not new. In a similar way, one cannot rule out the possibility of unity of two factions again, blaming the outside forces or regressive group, for their disunity.

Such a unity of the two factions will be a better way out to avoid a major breakdown of the constitution and political order. In case, it goes out of hand and civil society and internal political forces are taking one side against the other, Nepal will need to seek a neutral force from outside to mediate the stalemate.



Former minister and Prachanda-Nepal faction leader Ghanashyam Bhusal has already predicted the future political scenario with possibility of involvement of a neutral third party in mediation.

“Coming few weeks are very dangerous in Nepali politics. Our future will be more difficult in case PM Oli continues in power,” said Bhusal addressing the party meeting in Jhapa.

Under the present scenario, every coming move looks dangerous and the politics will likely see a hard landing. In that situation, everything is possible including the breakdown of constitutional order.



# Committed For Cause

By A CORRESPONDENT

Felicitating and honoring the world's record holders, the ten members of Mt. K2 Nepali climbing team, Nepal Investment Bank Ltd chairman Prithvi Bahadur Pande has once again shown his commitment to encourage Nepalese who contribute for the cause of Nepal.

Whenever identity and prestige of Nepal is attached, NIBL Chairperson Pande jumps to the forefront. This is the reason NIBL has made enormous financial contributions in preservation of heritage, culture and religious sites of Nepal.

In a similar way, chairperson Pande and NIBL have also been contributing to protect the mountains and persons involved in mountaineering. Felicitating and honoring 10 K2 mountaineers, Pande has shown his interest in promoting such activities.

Earlier, NIBL also supported the Everest Cleanup campaign. In conservation of Patan Durbar Square, Pande personally and NIBL donated large portions of financial support. Similarly, NIBL has also been supporting preservation of various cultural and religious sites in Pashupati and other temples.

NIBL has provided big financial support in the reconstruction of Bhimsen Temple in Patan, which was damaged by earthquake.

Continuing its tradition, Nepal Investment Bank Ltd felicitated and honored the ten Nepali climbers, who successfully scaled K2, the second highest mountain in the world, and presented them with a cheque of NPR 10,0000.00 (Ten lakhs).

In line with CSR strategy, Chairman of Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. (NIBL), Prithvi Bahadur Pandé alongside members of the board and



senior managers held a felicitation program in honor of the ten Nepali climbers.

The bank thanked the team for making Nepal proud and hoped that the contribution will act as a motivation for further fantastic conquests.

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. (NIBL) conducted an event at its head office premises in honor of the Nepalese team that successfully summited K2. A team of 10 Nepalese climbers led by Nirmal Purja set a new world record by becoming the first to reach the summit of K2, the world's second highest mountain, in winter.

With their 'impossible' summit of the world's second-tallest mountain, the ten Nepali climbers sent the national pride surging in the Himalayas. Located in Pakistan and nicknamed "the savage mountain", K2 is considered the most demanding mountain to conquer and was until now thought to be impossible in win-

ter. Our Nepali climbers achieved that feat on the 16th of January 2021 17:00 local time (12:00 GMT).

Offering cash rewards and facilitating all the brave successful Nepali mountaineers, NIBL and its chairman Pande have shown that the pride of nation is very much a matter of love for them.

NIBL has been catering to its customers from 83 branches, 128 ATMs, 20 extension counters, 10 revenue collection counters and 59 branchless banking counters. The bank, being the recipient of five Banks of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euromoney awards for "Best Bank 2018" from the international publication - Euromoney. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A.



# Commitment Towards GHGs Emission Reduction



BY: BATU UPRETY

One hundred and ninety Parties to the Paris Agreement have submitted their first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC1). Of them, several Parties have submitted updated NDC1 by the end of 2020. Eight Parties (Argentina, Grenada, Marshall Island, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Tonga and United Arab Emirates) submitted second NDC (<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDC-Staging/Pages/All.aspx>). Of the 47 LDCs, five Parties (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zambia) have submitted updated NDC1 while Angola and Senegal submitted NDC1, indicating only 8 LDCs responded on decision 1/CP.21. In December 2020, the Prime Minister informed Nepal's move 'towards a zero-carbon economy' and to 'extend protected area from 23% to 30% by 2030'.

Bhutan - the chair of the LDC Coordination Group to UNFCCC for 2019 and 2020 - submitted its NDC1 on 19/09/2017. China and India have not submitted their updated NDC1 by 2020. The new US administration has ordered to update and submit its NDC. The LDCs have insignificant GHGs emissions. The NDC may contribute to promote low carbon economic development pathway, clean and renewable energy, and climate-resilient development. The 'C' of the NDC stands for 'contribution' and in recent years it has turned to 'commitment' and 'compliance' to reduce GHGs emissions.

The GHGs emissions scenario in 1992 (adoption of UNFCCC) and 2016 (entry into force of the Paris Agreement) has changed. In 1992, about one-fourth of the total global GHGs emission was from US and now China has taken this position. In recent years, many countries have declared to be 'carbon-neutral by 2050 or 2060' which requires to reduce GHGs emissions significantly.

An IPCC Special Report (2018) informs that 'global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate'. Accelerated use of 'carbon-intensive fossil fuel' and CO<sub>2</sub> & non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will likely increase temperature rise with corresponding adverse impacts on people, livelihood and life-supporting systems. Those countries

lacking coping capacities and financial resources such as LDCs will continue to be adversely affected from climate change. LDCs are 'low or non-emitters of GHGs' but they need to adapt and build resilience to climate change impacts.

The Adaptation Gap Report (2020) informs adoption of effective adaptation planning, stakeholder engagement and horizontal integration along with significant gaps on adaptation finances. Since 2006, multilateral funding from Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility is provided to nearly 400 adaptation projects (half of which began after 2015). Many projects targeted to climate vulnerable populations but there is 'very limited evidence of climate risk reduction', urging for effective interventions to address climate crisis.

Climate change has progressively been a national and international 'political agenda'. It was an 'election agenda in USA'. The Trump Administration notified the Depository (UN Secretary-General) on its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and it was effective from November 2020. On 20 January 2021, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to re-enter the Paris Agreement and USA deposited its instrument of acceptance to the Paris Agreement with its Depository on 20 January 2021. The Paris Agreement will enter into force for USA on 19 February 2021 as per the Article 21.3 (entry into force on 30<sup>th</sup> day after the date of deposit) of the Agreement. It means, USA was not a Party to



## ENVIRONMENT

the Paris Agreement for about 3.5 months and clearly indicates how a leader can change the situation. As USA is a second largest GHGs emitter, this re-entry offers greater hope to effectively implement the Paris Agreement. The following few paras focus on recent initiatives of the US President to address climate crisis.

On 27 January 2021, US President Joe Biden has ordered to 'put the climate crisis at the centre of US foreign policy and national security' and this signifies the urgency of reducing GHG emissions and ensuring net-zero global emissions by mid-century or before. The Presidential Order aims to 'exercise its leadership to promote a significant increase in ambition to the climate challenge'. The President has committed to: (i) host Leaders' Climate Summit (probably on Earth Day, 22 April 2021) to raise climate ambition and make positive contribution to the CoP26 and beyond; (ii) reconvene Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate to pursue, *inter alia*, green recovery efforts, advance clean energy and sectoral decarbonisation, and align financial flows with the objectives of the Paris Agreement; (iii) appoint the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate; (iv) enhance climate ambition and integration of climate considerations across international fora; (v) develop NDC under the Paris Agreement; and (vi) develop climate finance plan to assist developing countries in implementing ambitious emissions reduction measures, protecting critical ecosystems, and building climate resilience (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>).

The US has promised for clean energy future and put the US on a path to achieve net-zero emissions, by no later than 2050. The in-country policy states to 'listen to science - and act, strengthen clean air and water protection, hold polluters accountable for their actions, and deliver environmental justice'. The White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy within the Executive Office of the President is established to coordinate policy-making process, ensure consistency and monitor policy implementation. A Na-

tional Climate Task Force is also established to, *inter alia*, prioritise action on climate change. The President has directed agencies to make 'evidence-based decisions' guided by best available science and data.

The executive orders will freeze new oil and gas leases on public lands and water, double offshore wind energy by 2030, commit to 'lead' a global response to the climate crisis, including conservation of at least 30 percent of the federal lands and oceans. Several additional commitments are made on climate change. This sounds a very strong presidential commitment, on behalf of the US people and hence, 20 and 27 January 2021 are big days for US commitment on climate change.

Importantly, the US President has designated former Secretary of State John Kerry, as presidential climate envoy. On 9 December 2015, Mr. Kerry said, millions of jobs would be created by investing on renewable energy to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Mr. Kerry, one of the architects of the Paris Agreement in 2015, signed the Agreement, on behalf of the US Government, on 22 April 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York. His 'belongingness' to the Paris Agreement would direct for global mobilisation for its effective implementation.

The US Ambassador to Nepal Mr. Randy Berry informed US policies and priorities on climate change to the Prime Minister Mr. K. P. Oli, leader of the Opposition Party Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and NCP chair Mr. Puspa Kamal Dahal. As US President's executive order instructs to develop climate finance plan to assist developing countries to fight against climate change impacts, it is most likely that Nepal will receive additional financial resources to tackle climate change challenges. The US initiatives on climate change will encourage it to reduce GHGs emissions.

LDCs' GHGs emission reduction commitments would have negligible impacts on limiting temperature rise. Concerted efforts of major GHGs emitting Parties to the Paris Agreement will limit temperature rise to below 1.5°C and protect climate vulnerable communities and re-

sources from the adverse impacts of climate change. Nepal will benefit from such initiatives and it will contribute to minimise turning of snow-capped mountains into 'black stony mountains' and to reduce adverse impacts of climate change on people, livelihood, ecosystems and resources.

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Former US Secretary of State John Kerry, with his grand-daughter, signed the Paris Agreement in April 2016 at UN HQ, NY

## Book Review: The Backfire In Nepal: How India Lost Plot To China



BY: RISHI GUPTA

In 2005, India facilitated the historic Peace Agreement between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance in Nepal, ending a decade-long war waged against Nepal's centuries-old monarchy. A decade and a half later, Nepal and India hit the lowest point despite the two countries share close socio-cultural, political, economic, and strategic ties. Similarly, Karan Singh, who had successfully convinced King Gyanendra to accept the people's demand and pave the way for democracy in 2006; visit by the Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar to Kathmandu at the eleventh hour to convince the Nepal Government to accommodate the demands of *Madhesi*, was termed as the 'wrong advice.' What led Nepal to shift from 'special relations' with India to 'conditional relations' and forge strategic ties with China?

Many such questions seek an answer as one begins to unfurl the *Roti-Beti* relations between India and Nepal amidst ongoing India-Nepal fiasco.

The book entitled *The Backfire in Nepal: How India Lost Plot to China* by US-based Nepali journalist Sanjay Upadhyaya helps find these answers. The book provides a detailed account of Nepal-India relations in the last fifteen years. In his previous books, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry Between China and India* from Routledge in 2012, and *The Raj Lives: India in Nepal* from Vista in 2008, Upadhyaya had carried ground-breaking works on India's colonial past and its impact on Nepal, and Nepal's geo-strategic location between two Asian giants. Unlike his previous research works, *The Backfire in Nepal* is a journalistic account of Nepal-India relations focusing on China's diplomatic and strategic success in Nepal in recent years.

Divided into seven chapters, the book provides a timeline of events in India-Nepal relations beginning with the 2006 peace-building process in Nepal which was officially overlooked by the United Nations Mis-

sion in Nepal to facilitate inclusion of the former Maoist fighters into the Nepal Army, their arms surrender and peaceful conduct of first Constituent Assembly elections in 2008. In the second chapter *Provisional Posturing*, the author has beautifully portrayed the free-Tibet movement of 2008, which got China worried as it hosted world athletes for the Beijing Olympics. The unconditional support from a new Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamala Dahal alias Prachanda in cracking down on the protesters and arrest of Tibetan refugees amidst global criticism was a beneficial 'New Nepal' China.

Between 2005 to 2020, Nepal has forged new transit, trade, security and strategic ties including Belt and Road Initiative and first-ever Joint-Military exercises with China. Chinese investment in Nepal accounts for more than sixty per cent of the total Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal, which was once topped by India until 2014. China's annual aid to Nepal had also reached USD 128 from a meagre USD 20-24 million in the past decade. The number of high-level visits from China to Nepal

including President Xi's in October 2019 amidst border row between India and Nepal over Kalapani and Lipulekh, have provided China with an ultra-edge in the political and foreign affairs of Nepal. Most importantly, the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal has direct hotlines with the President, Prime Minister, and Chief of the Nepal Army, allowing the former to make public appearances in these offices and advise on administrative and political matters. Millions of military assistance from China have helped Beijing buy diplomatic immunity to its citizens involved in scamming, phishing, and trafficking in

The book entitled *The Backfire in Nepal: How India Lost Plot to China* by US-based Nepali journalist Sanjay Upadhyaya helps find these answers. The book provides a detailed account of Nepal-India relations in the last fifteen years.



## REVIEW

Nepal.

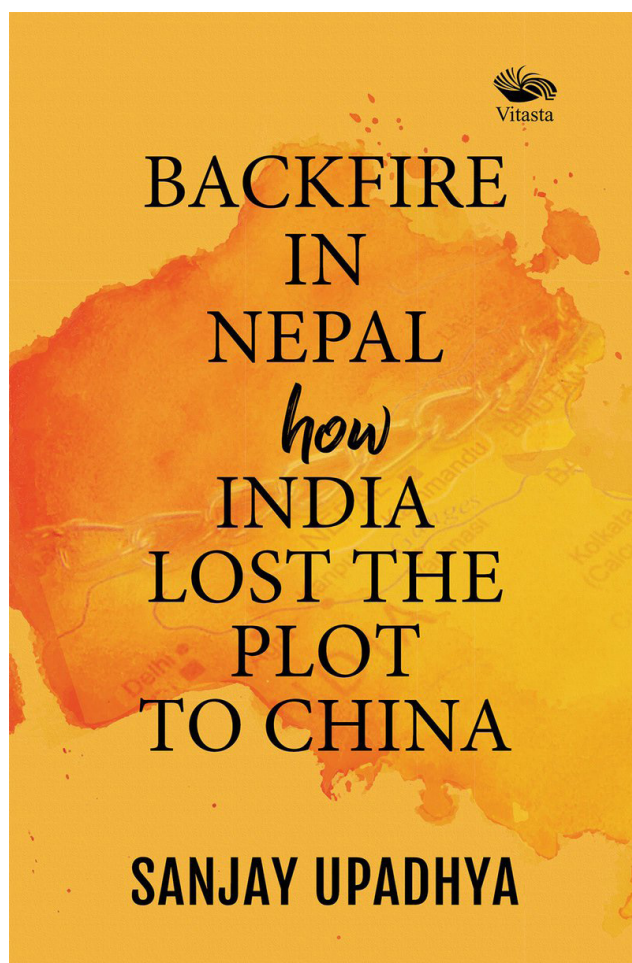
While previous administrations in Nepal strike a balance between India and China including Prachanda who stood as a staunch critic of alleged Indian ‘expansionism’ since 1950, KP Oli has used India’s 2015 unofficial border blockade to his advantage in evoking ultra-nationalism based on anti-India manoeuvrings. Oli also holds India accountable for his ouster in 2016 from the Government, and with his present tenure, he continues to be revengeful. Meanwhile, post-December 13 dissolution of the Parliament, Oli was seen taking a moderate view of India. However, it changed very soon after he reiterated Kalapani, Lipulekh as Nepalese territories, and relocated Ayodhya in Nepal.

On the other hand, despite a turbulent relationship, India’s humanitarian assistance to Nepal helps ease the tensions. Noteworthy, India was the first country to reach on the ground after a major earthquake had hit Nepal in 2015. India has also supplied a million doses of COVID-19 vaccine and other medical assistance including medicines, ambulances, and medical appliances. However, India continues to misread Nepal’s political developments.

Prime Minister Modi’s 2014 visit after seventeen years gap by an Indian Prime Minister to Nepal helped India “dispel many traditional Nepalese misgivings about India policy”, but the hidden push for a Hindu *Rashtra* in Nepal backfired on India. India cannot deny that its shortfalls are due to short-sighted strategic interests and lack of promised deliveries to Nepal. For instance, in 2016, the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was formed to revise the 1950 Treaty and smoothen border management. Still, five years since its formation, the final report of the EPG continues to dust in the Prime Minister’s Office. Nepal also waits for India to exchange the demonetised Indian currency stuck with the Nepal *Rashtra* Bank.

In contrast, the “Chinese have acted purely on national interest”. There has been no compromise on China’s security concerns looming from a critical border between Tibet and Nepal. From cracking down the 2008 free-Tibet movement to the signing of Mutual Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters in 2019, and Nepal’s unequivocal support to ‘One China Policy’, China has shown an uncompromised bargain in Nepal. On the other hand, India continues to misread how Beijing sees Nepal – both in terms of China’s visions of the past and the future. This complicates the core trilateral challenge: ensuring that Nepal is not sucked deeper into the Sino-Indian vortex, only to be scorned for aggravating the Asian giants’ rivalry.

As the events unfold between India and Nepal, the book could not have been timelier. The book becomes



*“The Backfire in Nepal: How India Lost the Plot to China”, by Sanjay Upadhyia, New Delhi: Vitasta, 2021, pp. 288, Rs, 495.*

a must-read for policymakers, journalists, researchers intending to know recent developments in India-Nepal relations as it covers history and the most recent events. That said, the book falls short on the analytical front. The author has also avoided dealing with dates which makes the reader seek digital support that breaks the rhythm. Overall, unlike history books, the book’s language keeps the momentum for a reader until a few scattered pages of the last chapter- *All in Mind*, often repeating the arguments. The book is the most recent additions to the literature in India-Nepal relations with a focus on China factor. While the book interests Indian readers, it is a must book for readers in Nepal too; though it may take some time to be available in the Nepalese book stores. Meanwhile, the Kindle version of the book shall be coming soon.

*Rishi Gupta is ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Center for South Asian Studies, JNU, India; Senior Fellow, Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu*

Nepal-India-China

# On Nepal, India And China

*Expert on international relations Dr. Shambhu Ram Shimkhada discusses how emergence of India and China as the world powers has reshaped the Himalaya's traditional political balance*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As India and China are emerging to be global economic powerhouses, implications for the Himalayan Region, which they consider as their backyard, are natural. There are broader implications for Nepal, which shares the border with both the countries.

Several books have been written analyzing and discussing the relations between the two Asian powers and their role in their periphery. Dr. Shimkhada, a well known scholar of international politics, discusses the states of countries like Nepal in the new context.

"As China and India, both rise, will they take the traditional power-centric path of hegemonic and conflictual polarity of not allowing a "peer competitor" to emerge or find a new path or rising together in a new paradigm of cooperative and managed competitive plurality?

"These are the kinds of questions the author raises, if not fully answered in this edition," writes Achyut Wagle, professor of economics, Kathmandu University, in his introduction. "The book provides a much-needed vantage on Nepal's foreign affairs for students, researchers of international relations."

Professor Wagle has rightly pointed out the main strength of the book which details the implications of the changing relations between India and China in Nepal's foreign and internal policy.

In the book divided into four different parts, Dr. Shimkhada has raised important issues emerging in the world and their implications to Nepal's foreign policy. In the first chapter, Dr. Shimkhada reflects on some themes of international relations. The second part is about some reflections on Nepal's foreign pol-

icy, part three is about Nepal-India relations and part four is about Nepal-China relations.

Starting with analysis and discussion of the theories of international relations, he analyzes Nepal's relations with two neighbors and the relations between the two countries in the new context. He also discusses competitive and cooperative patterns of relations between the countries dealing with Nepal.

Author Dr. Shimkhada has cited an agreement between India and China to use Lipulekh, a remote part of western Nepal, claimed by Nepal, to improve their bilateral trade. From India-China border disputes in Bhutanese territory Doklam to recently disputed area in Laddakh, Dr. Shimkhada has laid out clear analyses showing how two Asian powers are competing with each other.

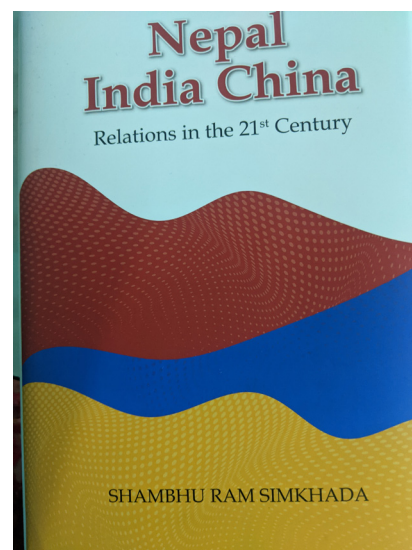
At a time when Nepal is gradually losing its credibility in both the neighboring countries due to confusions and contradictions of its leadership, Dr. Shimkhada has come out with a very viable suggestion on how Nepal needs to deal with southern neighbor India and northern neighbor China.

As Nepal shares land as well as civilization with India, it is in the broader interest of Nepal. Similarly, Nepal and China have old relations based more on geography than culture and civilization. Surrounded by two big countries, Nepal has very little space and option to maintain the relations with the neighbors.

"At a time when internally, political parties and their leaders are divided on matters of national importance and international affairs and there are significant new developments in the region and the world, to minimize risks and optimize opportunities, national consensus on foreign and national se-

curity policies among the key political actors has become most urgent. In this new environment relationship of trust and confidence with the two immediate neighbors within the overall guiding philosophy of Amity with All and Enmity with None continues to be the most important issue of Nepal's foreign policy and national security agenda," writes Dr. Shimkhada in his preface.

At a time when the region is facing new security and diplomatic situation with the rise of India and China, this book is highly relevant and important. For those who want to know Nepal, India and China, this book is a valuable, must-read.



**Relations In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
**By Shambhu Ram Simkhada**  
**Publisher: Sanrab Publication**  
**Distributor: Unnati Books, Exhibition Road, Kathmandu, Telephone: 4218568**  
**First Edition : 2018**  
**Second Edition: 2021**  
**Price: Rs.999.00**  
**Page: 360**

# Inauguration Spree

*Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is in a spree of inauguration of transmission line and other projects*

By A CORRESPONDENT

With strategic attempts and efforts of the last four years, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is now in a spree of completion of various transmission lines, substations and hydro-electricity power projects. As the country's largest substation started 3 years ago, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli inaugurated the 400kV Dhalkebar Substation, connecting internal and trans-boundary transmission lines.

Stalled for years due to various obstructions at local level, the speed taken in the last three years also helped to complete 220 kV Danda-Kusma, a portion of Kaligandaki Corridor transmission line constructed under a loan assistance from the Asian Development Bank's SASEC project.

Although managing director Kul Man Ghising, who moved all the stalled projects mobilizing his highly qualified employees and colleagues of Nepal Electricity Authority, left NEA last August completing his four year tenure, acting managing director Hitendra Man Shakya is now in the chair to accelerate the speed.

Having worked in NEA, holding various positions, acting MD Shakya, who also knows the ins and outs of the organization, has started his job of driving NEA at the previous pace. Along with organizing the inauguration programs, Shakya also needs to address many other projects which are facing various hurdles at the final stage of completion due to COVID-19 pandemic.

## 400 kV Dhalkebar Substation

At a time when Nepal's 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Project is in final stage of completion, the inauguration of 400 kV, Dhalkebar Substation; Nepal's largest substation, by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is highly important.

Following the completion of the substation, Nepal will be able to supply electricity generated by Upper Tamakoshi. Similarly, this substation will also help to import electricity up to 800 MW during the lean season and export same amount of surplus electricity to India during the wet season.

Spread in 13 bighas of land, the 400-200 kV station will pave the way for export and import of electricity to India. It can play a key role in distribution of electricity to east and west along with India.

The event was attended by ministers for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and Urban Development Minister Prabhu Sah,

"Congratulations #Nepal for the inauguration of the country's largest substation that would facilitate high volume cross-border electricity trade. We are proud to support major parts of the substation & linked high voltage lines & remain committed to boost

Flag of Nepal's electricity sector," tweets Faris H. Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

As a part of trans-boundary transmission line project, the World Bank has provided loan for the transmission line. However, Nepal Government and Nepal Electricity Authority solely financed the recently completed modern sub-station Based on Gas Insulated Technology -- Dhalkebar substation is the largest electricity hub of Nepal.

Constructed at the cost of Rs. 2.20 Billion of NEA and Nepal government, 400-200 kV substation has transformer capacity of 635 MVA and another 315 MVA's transformer is under the process of installation.

Following the charge of the substation, Nepal and India have now first 400 kV cross border transmission



line with the capacity to exchange up to 1000 MW. This sub-station is also important for Nepal's internal power management. After the completion of





Province Bikas Lamsal and NEA's acting managing director Hitendra Dev Shakya were present on the occasion.

Prime Minister Oli said that NEA has made major achievements in the past few years making Nepal a country to export the electricity to India. He said that this project will help evacuate the power generated in these areas.

Addressing the program, acting MD Shakya said NEA is also working hard to complete the second phase of the project as early as possible. The two structures have been ready for

the operation after the installation of equipment and successful test of the transmission line.

Project Chief Chandan Kumar Ghosh said that charging of the sub-station and transmission line has been completed. Sub-station and transmission line are ready for the electricity connection.

Nepal Electricity Authority had started construction of Dana-Khurkot transmission line on May 30, 2016 with the financial support of Asian Development Bank. Tata-Chint Electronic JV had got contract to construct the 39.6-Km long Dana-Khurkot transmission line along with sub-station at Rs 2.90 billion.

Around 110 towers were constructed for the same and the latest modern technology has been installed at the sub-station. The power produced from Ghalemdi hydropower project has already been connected at the sub-station after the successful charge of the transmission.

Five-MW Ghalemdikhola and 13.4 MW Thapakhola hydropower project under the Dana sub-station are in operation. A target was set to

400 MW Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Inaruwa transmission lines, the substation can transfer 200 MW each to Hetauda and Inaruwa.

Other functions of the substation are to distribute the electricity generated by 456 MW Upper Tamakosi to east and west Nepal and evacuated from Gongar-Khimti-Dhalkebar 220 kV transmission line. Till the completion of the Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Inaruwa 400 kV Transmission line, the substation can distribute up to 300 MW of electricity to east and west through existing 132 kV transmission line.

Now, Nepal can export surplus electricity to India. Constructed with a provision of further upgradation in future, Arun III project will also supply 100 MW free electricity to Nepal from Dhalkebar substation later.

Despite various obstructions including floodwater inundation and COVID-19 crisis, the project has been completed in 3 years' record time. The consultant of the project was a NEA Engineering, a subsidiary company of NEA.

Earlier, the World Bank and NEA financed the 220-132 substation in Dhalkebar under Nepal India Transmission and trade project. The substation was recently strengthened and expanded further aiming to enhance the bilateral exchange and trade.

"This is a major achievement in the country. We are now in a position to import surplus electricity to India and Bangladesh," said Prime Minister Oli. He said that Nepal government will facilitate more private sector to invest money in hydro power development.

### **220-kV Dana-Khurkot Transmission Line**

Just a week after the inaugural of country's largest sub-station, Prime Minister Oli inaugurated the construction of the 220-kV Dana-Khurkot transmission line and sub-station under the Kaligandaki corridor transmission line project in Kusma.

Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Top Bal-dur Raymajhi and Environment and Development Minister of Gandaki

## ENERGY

complete the project within two years; it was delayed by two years due to various reasons. The sub-station has been spread on around 156 ropanis of area. The test of a six-kilometer long transmission line connecting Khurkot to Kushma Municipality-8 Chuwa of Parbat has been successful.

A substation and transmission line have been constructed to connect the electricity generated from the Kaligandaki and its tributaries flowing through the northern region of Myagdi and the hydropower project to be constructed in Mustang to the central grid.

A transmission line from Khurkot to Bardaghat is being constructed as per the target of constructing 142-Km transmission line from Dana of Myagdi to Bardaghat of Nawalparasi. Acting MD of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Hitendra Dev Shakya said that the completion of the project will help to evacuate the energy generated in the projects under construction in Kalgandaki corridor.

He said that the construction of Kusma-Bardaghat and New Butwal portion is undergoing now and it will also complete in time. Acting MD Shakya said that the transmission line evacuates over 400 MW

power from the corridor.

### NEA Leakage Control

At a time when NEA is bringing more electricity to national grid through construction of various projects, it is also working to control the leakage. Acting MD Shakya directed NEA's officials to focus on power leakage control, revenue collection, and electrification, improving service delivery with customers and meeting the given targets.

Signing the performance agreements with the heads of distribution and customer service centers, he said that electricity leakage control and service delivery improvement is the priority. The top management of NEA signed performance agreements with the heads of 23 distribution centers under the provincial office of Province-2, Janakpur.

Manoj Kumar Singh, head of the regional office, signed the performance agreement with Hitendra Dev Shakya, Acting Managing Director of NEA. Meanwhile, the chiefs of distribution centers have signed an agreement with Harraj Neupane, Deputy Executive Director of the Directorate of Distribution and Customer Service of NEA.

In the performance agreement, control of electricity leakage

has been given high priority giving it 50 points. Arrangement has been made to reward or punish the chief of distribution centers by objectively evaluating the performance indicators.

The NEA has set a target of reducing the leakage of electricity to 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal year. Last year, the leakage towards distribution was 10.28 per cent. The target has been set to reduce the leakage of electricity from 15.6 per cent in the last fiscal year to 12.08 per cent in the current fiscal year of the distribution centers under the Provincial Office Janakpur.

The leakage till November is 16.6 per cent. The heads of each distribution centre under the office have been given separate targets for leakage control, said NEA. The Janakpur Provincial Office collects 31.23 per cent of the revenue from the sale of electricity.

With more transmission line projects under the process of completion, NEA is now looking to reduce the power leakage. Recent activities of NEA have shown that a strong and dedicated team in management can bring a lot of changes to a government utility.





# Rehabilitation Complete

*With the grant assistance from JICA, the rehabilitation of Sindhuli Road, which was badly damaged by earthquake, has been completed*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when over 60 percent mobility to eastern sector of Nepal is happening through Sindhuli Road, any disruption in the road has heavy impacts. Constructed with the grant assistance from Japan government, Sindhuli Road was a life line linking capital Kathmandu with eastern hill and terai.

Although the traffic was resumed a few days after the damage caused by the earthquake in 2015, some parts of the road were hit badly. The Sindhuli Road was damaged in more than 24 places by a major earthquake on 25 April 2015 as well as a major aftershock on 12 May 2015 in Nepal. Among the damaged portions, 5 critical sites which needed rehabilitation were relevant for Japanese support due to the large scale damage as well as technological challenges.

According to a press release issued by JICA, upon request from the Government of Nepal, Government of Japan provided a grant aid to rehabilitate the critically damaged portion of the Sindhuli Road based on the Exchange of Note between GON and GOJ and Grant Agreement (G/A) between GON and JICA amounting JPY 1,047 million, which was signed on 25th October 2018.

Completion of the Rehabilitation of Sindhuli Road project supported by JICA, is leading to full operation of the portions damaged by the 2015 Nepal Earthquake

Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT) Basant Kumar Nembang has virtually inaugurated the Rehabilitation of Sindhuli Road project.

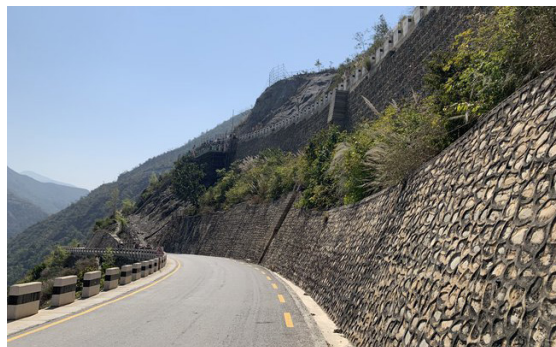
A virtual inauguration cere-

mony was held for the completed Project for the Rehabilitation of Sindhuli Road Affected by Earthquake and it was attended by the officials of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MOPIT), Department of Roads (DoR), JICA Nepal Office, the consultant Nippon Koei and the contractor Hazama Ando.

Rehabilitation of the Sindhuli road will facilitate a smooth traffic flow, which will not only result in having a reliable link between Kathmandu and the Eastern Terai but also cater to the need of the public by creating better mobility, easier accessibility to health facilities and education, better economic socio-cultural activities. Furthermore, one of the major outcomes of the rehabilitation project is the transfer of advanced and effective technology to the Nepalese Counterparts and Engineers, mainly for the slope stabilization of the mountainous roads.

Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Basanta K. Nembang reiterated that Japan, a long term development partner for Nepal, has been implementing milestone projects facilitating development endeavors in Nepal and the rehabilitation of Sindhuli Road post the 2015 Earthquake is another stepping stone amongst its various other contributions.

Expressing his appreciation, he further added that the modern technological methods used for constructing the roads with the concept of 'Build Back better' would be a major



learning experience for all its stakeholders reaping sustainable benefits.

Masamichi Saigo Ambassador of Japan to Nepal during the ceremony stated, "I am really proud of this achievement, as we were able to complete the project despite the ongoing pandemic and that this road will provide functional benefits to locals and other travelers due to improved accessibility leading to enhanced socio-economic benefits."

During the ceremony Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Ms. Yumiko Asakuma expressed her belief that, with the completion of the project, the overall goal to secure sustainable and safe traffic along Sindhuli Road will be realized.

The Sindhuli Road is one of the most important roads in Nepal that links Kathmandu City, the capital of the country, with Eastern Terai Plain. The construction of the Sindhuli Road, with a total length of 160 km, started with the Japanese grant aid in the 1996 and was completed in March 2015.

The Sindhuli Road is a milestone project of JICA's cooperation to Nepal as it is not only the biggest Japanese Grant Aid, but also a technical challenging road encompassing diverse geographic conditions, including mountains and river valleys.



## NATIONAL SECURITY

# National Priority

*At a function organized by Nepal Army, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli stressed the need for coordination among different agencies*

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when there are over three dozen different organizations working in the border related issues, there are more confusions and contradictions in handling the issue due to lack of coordination. A seminar organized by Nepal Army in this regard is highly important.

Since the unification of the country, Nepal Army has been in the forefront of protection of Nepal's border. Although the new constitution has changed its role slightly, Nepal Army has remains a prime institution to protect Nepal's border.

Addressing the seminar, COAS General Purna Chandra Thapa has made it clear that Nepal Army will play a leading role in the border management of the country, coordinating with 34 different organizations.

"There are 34 agencies involved in the border management. There is the need to have better coordination and management among these agencies. The crisis of COVID19 has taught us many lessons on difficulty and challenges posed by open border," said General Thapa.

Inaugurating the seminar, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli pointed out the need of resolving the border related problems through serious diplomatic efforts and dialogue between Nepal and India.

The seminar was titled 'Nepal's International Border Security and



Areas of Coordination among Border Management related Agencies'. The prime minister argued that the relations with neighboring nations could be made cordial and emboldened only on the basis of facts, equality, respect and justice not on hegemonic measures.

"In order to consolidate Nepal-India ties in a cordial manner, we had to print the map and talk to India. Our relations could turn to be cordial by only returning our territory through dialogue. Border disputes are prevailing in Susta and Kanchanpur," he said.

Open and friendly dialogue would be held with India regarding the issue of Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani based on facts and evidences,

he said, adding, "We must retain our territory. Both the nations should consider fact and truth in maintaining relations. Are both the countries in a position to claim other's territory?"

PM Oli went on saying, "There have been some historically-unsolved border problems. The issue of Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani has remained unaddressed for the past 58 years. We were forced to get displaced silently when the then ruler did not dare to speak up against the intrusion."

He claimed that a new political and administrative map was printed by including these territories of late. "We updated the map and also included it in the schedule of the Con-

stitution and coat-of-arms.”

It is not true that the move has increased misunderstanding with India, he said, adding that, “We need to assert our claim on our territory at any cost. The border security agencies should be highly cautious and alert when the border affairs become more sensitive,” PM Oli added.

“We have been admonished and warned while claiming our territory,” he said, adding that, “There would be dialogue in future to resolve the border disputes”. He also directed the concerned authorities to pay special attention towards preventing intrusion in Nepali territories and misusing of no-man’s land in the coming days. Border security is an integral part of national security, PM Oli said, adding, “How can a nation remain secure when there is no border security? We have framed a working policy to implement security policy to that end.”

Of late the government has increased the force of border security and border outposts, PM Oli shared, adding that adequate attention has been paid to equip the force with logistics.

“The Constitution has represented the aspirations of the nation and the people. The independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and prosperity should be best utilized for country’s sake,” he said, adding, “There are some problems along the border as we are India-locked from east, west and



south directions”.

Citing shifting out of border pillars in Kanchanpur and other areas of Terai, he asserted that Nepal would not accept reference border pillar as the real one. “We should responsibly take initiative for the security of our land and territory.”

Nepal is a country of glory not only from the evolution of civilization but also from the perspective of origin of knowledge, its expansion and investigation, he claimed. “We can feel the glory of our country not only because of the nature but also the because of the contributions our ancestors made in building the nation.”

Prime Minister Oli further said that Nepal has not left its cam-

paign of independence and respect in the history albeit there were some weaknesses.

Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa said the government has emphatically treated the border security as a crucial part of national security. He stressed the need to formulate different thematic laws for consolidating border security.

“The ministry would not leave any stone unturned in providing necessary resources and technology. It is realized that there is the need to develop a mechanism for coordination and information sharing among all security agencies.”

Chief of Army Staff General Purna Chandra Thapa said the border should be managed scientifically taking into consideration the concerns of the general public and complications experienced during the time of COVID-19.

At a time when as many as 34 agencies have been involved in the management of international border of Nepal in a direct or indirect manner, Nepal Army’s initiative is valuable to maintain Nepal’s border.

Although the border issue is politically very sensitive in Nepal, Nepal Army organized the program bringing different agencies working in the areas for better coordination.





# KATHMANDU VALLEY Pollution Proportion

*Although lockdown and disruption caused by COVID-19 has drastically reduced the economic activities and vehicular movement, Kathmandu Valley's Air Pollution reported five times unhealthy than WHO recommendation making the valley risky for those undergoing health problems. As the government's enforcement mechanism is poor, it is unlikely to see any changes in near future. Good sign is that 10 municipal governments have been jointly taking some efforts. However, they don't have much needed legal tools*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Air pollution in Kathmandu Valley reached worst among the cities across the world on Monday and Tuesday (January 4 and 5 2021).

"This was for the first time the air in Kathmandu Valley has been found to be most polluted following the installation of Real-Time Air Quality Index (AQI) in 2016," said Indu Bikram Joshi, Acting Director-General of the Department of Environment under the Ministry of Forest and En-

vironment reports The Rising Nepal.

The AQI record crossed 400 on Tuesday within Ratna Park area, which is the most hazardous. In previous years, the air quality index used to be limited to 190 during winter reports The Rising Nepal.

Joshi said that the air was still polluted on Tuesday. The department has also issued a press release altering people not to move outside in the morning and evening without any

purpose. The statement asked older people with chronic diseases, including respiratory problem like asthma, cough and COPD to stay indoors.

Air pollution was high in Biratnagar and Nepalgunj after Kathmandu, with over 300 AQI in both cities Monday and Tuesday. The risk of air pollution due to open and waste burning is high during the winter as people often make a fire or burn waste to escape the cold, he said. The



government has asked people to stop burning in the open to help control air pollution,” said Joshi

Due to COVID-19, most of the industries, schools and factories remain closed, but the AQI crossing 300 is unbelievable, Joshi said. He also urged people to wear a mask when going out of home.

With winter in the middle and the temperature declining, Nepal’s air quality has started deteriorating, causing a severe threat to COVID-19 patients. As Kathmandu Valley’s urban setting is haphazard and unmanaged, the urban climate emissions include CO<sub>2</sub> and short-lived climate pollutants, particularly black carbon and methane also prevailing there.

Inefficient urban land use, housing and building design, inefficient transport systems, and reliance upon fossil fuels, particularly coal, for power, are key urban factors driving CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Although the movement of people and vehicle has declined, in-

dustries are yet to operate fully and the resulting air quality has improved in Kathmandu, it is still not suitable for certain groups such as senior citizens and people with respiratory ailments.

According to Bhupendra Das, Air Quality Specialist at Nepal Energy and Environment Development Services (NEEDS), a non-government organization, the temperature would be trapped during the winter season and dust particles remain suspended in the air, which causes more hazards to the environment.

Winter inversion (layer of cold air trapping warm air), vehicular emission, open burning, and cross-border industrial pollution are the main causes of the pollution in Kathmandu, Das said.

“There should be controls in vehicular movement, industries like brick kilns should embrace clean technology and open burning should be stopped to minimize air pollution in the Valley,” he said.

Joshi said that the govern-

ment has also issued Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Management Action Plan-2020 to ensure the fundamental right of citizens to live in a clean and healthy environment. “The government has been working endlessly to improve the environment of the Valley and other parts of the country and it will surely improve,” he said.

The Action Plan has various objectives including controlling air pollution in the Valley, such as reduction of outdoor pollution generated or emitted by transport and construction sectors, reduction of indoor pollution, awareness-raising about the condition of air pollution, potential impact on public health, developing a decision support system for air quality management in an emergency situation.

The Action Plan also focuses on controlling vehicle emissions by encouraging electric vehicles, and taking steps to better manage construction activities, indoor pollution, industrial emissions, household and agricultural waste in an eco-friendly manner,



ensuring environmentally sustainable transport system and awareness campaign.

According to “State of Global Air 2020” (SOGA 2020) report, Nepal is placed among the top 10 countries with the highest outdoor pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels) in 2019.

The World Health Organization’s air quality guidelines stipulate that 24-hour mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> should not exceed 25 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and that for PM<sub>10</sub> should not exceed 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. These pollutants are five times higher in the atmosphere.

At a time when Kathmandu Valley’s air pollution is getting worse, there is a realization to take integrated actions from different stakeholders. Organized by Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), Department of Environment (DoEnv), World Health Organization (WHO), Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) and Clean

Energy Nepal (CEN), a symposium, with local government representatives on air pollution management in Kathmandu Valley, organized via the online Zoom platform, discussed ways to improve the air quality of the valley.

Public Health Administrator for the Country Office of WHO in Nepal, Dr. Khurshid Alam Hyder said that air pollution is one of the emerging health and environment issues.

He said that the quality of air that people breathe is not healthy and exceeds almost five times the WHO recommended value. KMC and LMC have already committed to maintain the air quality within the WHO guideline by joining the Breathe Life campaign.

Addressing a symposium with local government representatives on air pollution management in Kathmandu Valley, he said that WHO has been providing technical support to

minimize health impacts of air pollution through research studies and capacity building and will continue to do so in implementing the air quality management action plan.

#### **Deteriorating Air Quality**

Air Quality Monitoring (AQM) stations placed in 25 places across the country, including seven in the Valley, have shown that particulate matter (PM) 2.5, an indicator of pollution level, is found higher than standard value set for Nepal (40 micrograms per cubic metre), Shanker Prasad Paudel, senior divisional chemist and information officer at the Department, told The Rising Nepal.

According to Paudel, the Department has set two minimum standards for measuring air quality in Nepal -- PM 10 and PM 2.5. The minimum air quality standard for PM 10 is 120 microgram per cubic metre.

According to the record, Rat-





napark area measured 75.83 microgram per cubic metre suspended particles in the air under category PM 2.5 on Monday (December 7).

With that value, Kathmandu became the third most polluted city in the country, according to Paudel. From December 3 to 6, Ratnapark's AQM station recorded PM 2.5 values of 65.52 micrograms per cubic metre, 58.09 micrograms per cubic metre, 62.29 micrograms per cubic metre, and 66.43 micrograms per cubic metre respectively. All of them have exceeded the minimum standard, according to Govinda Lamichhane, environment inspector at the Department.

#### **Seminar Objective**

The main objective of the symposium was to discuss the problem of air pollution and its health effects among the representatives of municipalities and addressing the problem of air pollution from their level in the Kathmandu Valley. It was organized under Urban Health Initiative (UHI) as knowledge sharing event with support from WHO.

Focused on the immediate implementation of Kathmandu Air Quality Management Action Plan, 2076 from the local level, around 80 participants joined the program including the Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chiefs of Environment Sections and health officials of local governments of Kathmandu Valley, senior officials from MoHP, DoEnv, WHO, Academicians and Journalists.

Moderated by the Board Chair of CEN, Bhushan Tuladhar, Chief of Health Coordination Division from MoHP, Prof. Dr. Jageshwor Gautam delivered welcome remarks highlighting the sources of air pollution, degrading air quality of the valley during winter and the inter-linkages of air pollution and COVID-19.

Dr. Gautam shared the efforts of the government of Nepal and municipalities to curb air pollution and concluded his remark saying that: "we must take a holistic and integrated approach to minimize air pollution engaging all the concerned stakeholders."

Mayor of Dhulikhel Municipality and the President of MuAN Ashok Kumar Byanju said that "integrated planning and effective coordination among all the local governments of Kathmandu Valley is inevitable to control air pollution including maintaining environmental sanitation in the Valley.

In his presentation, Prof. Sanjay Nath Khanal highlighted the causes and scenario of air pollution in Kathmandu Valley by taking reference of latest research findings and suggested the possible measures which can contribute to control air pollution.

Indu Bikram Joshi, DDG of DoEnv, in his presentation highlighted the key features of Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Management Action Plan, 2076 and the role of different stakeholders including the Local Government of the Valley.

Mayors and Deputy Mayors of different municipalities made their remarks in the program where they shared about the problem they are facing and the key initiatives they have



taken forward to control air pollution at the local level.

They also highlighted the need of technical and financial resources required for the local level to initiate programs focusing on air pollution including other environmental problems in the Valley and stressed the need of effective coordination among all local governments including the federal and provincial government.

Average particulate air pollution levels are up to 5 times higher than WHO air quality standards, putting many at risk of long-term health problems.

Ground-level ozone, produced by the atmospheric interaction of a mix of air pollutants, including methane and NO<sub>2</sub>, is another health risk, raising rates of asthma and chronic respiratory illness as well as other sorts of breathing problems and reduced lung function.

A city of medieval palaces and temples, Kathmandu lies in a bowl-shaped valley along an ancient trade route linking India and Tibet. The valley is growing rapidly.

In recent years, air pollution in Nepal has become a serious environmental and public health risk, with pollution levels 4.9 times higher than recommended by the WHO.

Deteriorating air quality in Kathmandu is putting hundreds of thousands of Nepalese at risk of several health problems. In fact, the WHO has consistently found air pollution to be the leading risk factor for death and disability in Nepal.

The air quality of the city has been a major public health problem causing air pollution-related morbidity and mortality, placing an economic burden on the country due to loss of productivity and over-utilization of health system resources.

Until recently, there were no air quality monitoring stations in place, which was a major obstacle to mitigation of existing air pollution in the country. There has also been a lack of health impact assessment data to estimate the health and economic burden of air pollution as well as of the sectoral measures needed to tackle this environmental challenge.

In response, the government of Nepal, through its Department of Environment, has established three monitoring sites; two in Kathmandu valley and one in Dhulikhel, and plans to set up a network of air quality monitoring sites throughout the country.

As the first South-East Asian city to pilot the Urban Health Initiative - launched with strong political sup-

port - lessons learned in Kathmandu will serve as an example and open the door to air pollution and health mitigation projects in other major Southeast Asian cities facing air pollution problems. Plans are underway to build the capacity of key stakeholders and perform joint multi-sector data analysis.

Outdoor air pollution alone is responsible for 4.2 million deaths annually, mainly attributed to NCDs. Furthermore, physical inactivity is responsible for 3.2 million deaths annually, and traffic injuries cause some 1.3 million deaths annually – both health risks are likely to be much larger among urban populations.

Given such a scenario, the panel discussion involving all different stakeholders to address the air pollution is significant. Director General of Department of Environment Mukunda Prasad Niraula in his closing remarks assured the government's commitment to strengthen the capacity and regulatory mechanism at local level. Summarizing the discussion, Board Chair of CEN, Tuladhar said that issues discussed will help implement the policies and programs.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

# First Success

*Almost 75 percent frontline health workers are administered COVID-19 vaccine*

By A CORRESPONDENT

With a million vials of Covid-19 vaccine, which was gifted with generosity by Nepal's southern neighbor India, Nepal is among a few countries to have launched COVID-19 vaccination campaign comparatively earlier. However, Nepal is unable to accelerate the pace for vaccination.

As Nepal is receiving additional 2.2 million vaccines from India and China has offered 500,000, there are over 3 million vaccines in the process of coming to Nepal, enough to vaccinate over 15 percent population. Nepal now needs to work to accelerate the process of vaccination to contain the second wave.

Under its neighbor-first policy, India has already expressed its commitment to help Nepal's campaign by providing additional vaccination. Given the circumstances, Nepal is in a good position to have vaccines.

"Very important priorities now, after vaccination of health workers to front-line service providers in institutions, are banks, airports, offices and senior people, aged 65 and over, and those under 65 with health conditions," writes Dr. Badri Raj Pandey in his Facebook post.

Invention and successful trials and eventually the arrival of one million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from India have been a big sigh of relief to the Nepali people panicked for a year after the outbreak of the deadly virus.

The much-awaited COVID-

19 vaccine finally arrived in Nepal in the form of grant from the southern neighbor in the last week of January and the first phase of nationwide vaccination drive began on January 27 and concluded on February 6.

During the 10-day first phase drive, frontline workers, mostly the

restaurant employees, drivers, conductors etc.

This will help in getting the economy back.

We have 8 lakhs vaccines coming from India and are expecting another 23 lakhs from WHO.

Government authorities,



health workers, received the first jab. According to the Ministry of Health and Population, in 10 days, 184,745 got the jabs across country.

Second Phase of vaccination must begin soon for those above 55 and people in the second frontline who work in close proximity with customers like public servants, teachers, bankers, security personnel, hotel and

health experts and workers are found to be excited with the availability of the vaccines much before the expected time. However, people in general and even a few health workers seem lacking confidence on the vaccines. It is evident from the fact that Nepal could cover only less than half of the targeted number of people in the first phase of vaccination.





Studies are showing the second dose given at 3 months is better than 1 month.

For a successful vaccination drive, people's trust towards the vaccine is necessary. But it was found lacking in Nepal.

Dr. Shyam Raj Upreti, Coordinator of the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee at the MoHP, said that the first vaccination drive in Nepal could not be considered successful in terms of coverage.

"As the 10-day immunization campaign ended, the number of vaccinated people did not reach 200,000 while our target was to inoculate 430,000 front line health workers in the first phase," he added.

He gives two reasons for failing to meet the target.

"Firstly, the immunization booths across the nation have been set at the district headquarters thereby barring the access of health personnel working in the rural areas," said Dr. Upreti, adding, "Secondly, we somewhat failed to generate awareness about the importance of vaccination to overcome the pandemic prior to launching the campaign."

"I think no one has expect-

ed that the vaccination campaign will take place this soon in Nepal," said Dr. Rabindra Pandey, a public health expert. "This is why it was difficult for many people to take it."

As a few health workers are exposed to misinformation and rumors on vaccine, more awareness is still needed to build trust and confidence in vaccines, said Dr. Pandey.

During the inoculation period of the first phase drive, we address vaccine hesitancy and tackle misinformation on the side effects, now we hope more confidence will be developed among the vaccine receivers in the second phase, added Dr. Jhalak Gautam, Chief of Child Health and Vaccine Department at the Department of Health.

It is very important to understand that even if some side effects are noticed after immunization, people must take it easily, as it is a sign that the shot is working," said Gautam.

Although some side effects were seen among the jab receivers, no any severe case has been reported during the first phase campaign, he added.

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) has already started preparations for the second phase

of the vaccination drive.

The surplus COVID-19 vaccines from the first phase will be used for those falling in priority in the second phase of the inoculation.

Dr. Upreti said that plans were being made to vaccinate people aged above 55 years, as they fall in high risk group of COVID-19.

"We had planned to vaccinate around 430,000 frontline health workers in the first phase. As the number of people getting vaccinated is less than 200,000, the remaining doses of vaccines will be used in the second phase of our vaccination drive," said Dr. Jageshwor Gautam, spokesperson at the MoHP.

Dr. Gautam added, "The ministry has aimed to inoculate 30,000 government health workers, 60,000 female health volunteers, and 250,000 health workers registered in Nepal Health Council."

However, as most of the health workers registered at the Council have fled abroad for employment or studies, the number of people receiving vaccines here is lesser than our target, he said.

Dr. Gautam said that along with the front-line health workers, the

employees of the immigration offices, customs offices, Tribhuvan International Airport and senior citizens of old age homes were also being inoculated.

China has pledged to provide 500,000 doses of vaccines in grant. Similarly, Nepal will be receiving 2,256,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX facility, according to the 'Interim Distribution Forecast' published by COVAX.

COVAX, co-led by Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (Gavi), informed that the UN Health Agency would start the distribution of vaccines by the end of February.

"For AZ/SII (AstraZeneca/Serum Institute of India) and AZ (AstraZeneca) indicative distribution, delivery is estimated to begin as of late February," read the forecast.

'Covishield' developed jointly by the Oxford University and AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India will be provided to Nepal under the facility.

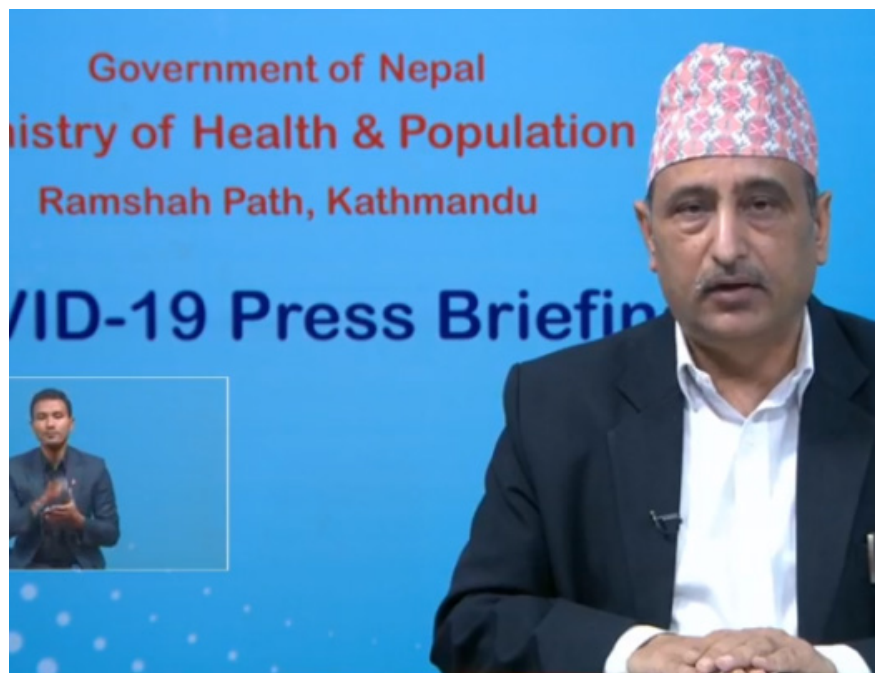
"We are receiving 'Covishield' vaccine under COVAX program which is a preferred vaccine for us as the existing storage and transportation infrastructure used in the nation to immunize children can be brought in use," said Dr. Jhalak Gautam.

"It will not be a problem for us to store the vaccines, as we have infrastructure suitable for it, the main thing is prioritized people must come forward and get the jab with trust and confidence," added Dr. Gautam.

The Covishield vaccines can be stored at a temperature between two to eight degrees Celsius. The MoHP is also planning to procure four million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine from India in the final phase.

The first phase of the vaccination drive was conducted from 201 booths in 77 districts. Frontline workers including health and sanitation workers were inoculated based on priority.

According to the statistics provided by Ministry of Health and



Population, of the total number of people that received the jab - 24,224 were from Province 1; 25,637 from Province 2; 63,308 from Bagmati Province; and 18,472 from Gandaki Province. Similarly, 28,941 received the vaccine in Lumbini Province; 9,420 in Karnali Province, and 14,855 in Sudurpaschim Province.

As Nepal has successfully handled the first phase of Covid-19 vaccination campaign, Nepal needs to accelerate the pace of administering the Covid vaccine. Given the assurance coming from Nepal's friends and neighbor India,

#### **Don't Spread Unnecessary Rumor against Vaccine: Dr. Badri Raj Pandey**

I took Covid vaccine and I felt no uneasiness. Vaccines cause minor complications like swelling the place where vaccine is administered, headache, tiredness, muscle pain and sometime fever 37.8. I was prepared for all these reactions. However, nothing happened to me. Even if that had occurred, I would have used Paracetamol and I would be alright in a few days. Such symptoms can be seen till 3 days of administering vaccine. Unnecessary rumors regarding using the

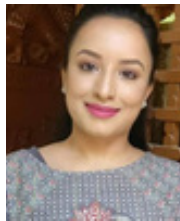
vaccine creates panic on the minds of the people regarding the Covid vaccine. One has to understand that there is no guarantee that the vaccine is 100 safe. The main thing is don't panic that it will have adverse effects.

The currently administered Oxford AstraZeneca Vaccine can reduce 76 percent of risk of infection of covid-19. For its efficacy one has to wait for 3 weeks. One has to take the second dose within 3 months. If it is used massively, it will help to contain virus.

One should take the vaccine in confidence if he or she is taking aspirin everyday and over 65 years of age. Otherwise why should I have taken it. I want to congratulate Indian government for supplying the Covid vaccine in SAARC Region. Why has Pakistan not received it? One has to hail Nepal government for starting the vaccination campaign earlier.

My humble request is to all, to go to vaccine center, to get the vaccine administered. However, one has to wear masks, maintaining social distance and should follow health protocols, following the vaccine administration.

# Women's Representation In Politics: Just A Tokenism



BY: NOVELA ACHARYA

Persistent gender inequality in political representation is a global phenomenon. As per a recent data released by the UN Women, only 25 percent of the parliamentarians in the world are women. At the ministerial level, the number is much smaller, which indicates that the goal to achieve gender parity in politics seems far off than expected.

Looking into the political scenario in the context of countries in South Asia like Nepal, the gender gap is much higher compared to the developed nations in the west. Despite of years of political struggle, civil society lobbying and the promotion of progressive laws and policies in favour of women, women's representation and participation in the political arena in Nepal remains with considerable challenges.

Patriarchy, socially constructed gender roles and the regressive social structure of the Nepalese society remains deeply entrenched which curtails women's active role and leadership in the politics vis-a-vis in democratic dispensation. Still today, Nepalese society is reluctant to accept women as a decision maker or see women in the important leadership position, both in political parties or governance hierarchies, because of which accomplishing gender inclusive political structure seems far-fetched.

Nepal received its first female Head of State with Vidya Devi Bhandari as the President in 2015, but the presence of women leaders and decision maker in the federal, provincial and local governance level and political parties' structure is dismal. Women being the Head of State is a good initiation in our political paradigm, however being it also a ceremonial head, was the logic behind her selection by the political parties to the highest position of the country.

Although the Constitution of Nepal 2015 was based on the principle to build inclusive democracy, there has been lack of fair representation of women and marginalised community in the politics. There are very few active women leaders in the fore-front in politics, economy, civil society and social framework and these too do not represent the population of ordinary grass-roots' women of Nepal. Most of them are either wives, daughters or close relatives of the male leaders who are in the power-exercising position in their respective political parties or the country's overall politics. The blatant misuse of Proportionate Representation (PR) Election System in favour of female relatives have raised questions about the validity of such elec-

tions. The last Federal Parliament had the record number of 56 husband-wives or inter relative pairs, representing in the name of ordinary and marginalized Nepalese women and men. Other few women, who are lucky to have risen to the prominence in political and other domains, either they hail from aristocratic families or from the elitists groups.

Thus, the women representation in political domain remains largely as tokenistic in nature.

Patriarchal mind-set is clearly reflected in the overall structure of the political parties as well. In the major political parties, be it Nepali Congress or Nepal Community Party, all the leading and decision-making seats are occupied by men. The law on political parties and electoral acts highlight on fair representation of women in parties' structures, but women politicians are not given a fair and meaningful responsibilities. The question arises how the regularity body of political parties in Nepal, the Election Commission (EC) accepts and register these parties for electoral purposes! This shows either women leaders are not taken seriously as a political entity, following the traditional and conservative belief that men are supposed to be a born leader, whereas, women are merely a home-maker and the lack of realisation of the capabilities and potentials of women as political leaders by the mind-set of male chauvinism.

Apart of these, lack of media coverage of the news related to the women political leaders is another major factor which prevents women to be seen at the fore-front of the political platform. This may be likely that the medias don't see or find any women politician as a political party ideologue, policy-maker, communicator or a mass-mover. It's sad to say, not a single big media house, has ever given the executive head position to any women in their entity, despite the so-called growth of Nepali media-dom! Mainstream medias do not prioritise and disseminate the news of the issues raised by the women leaders, which shows women not being active and participative in the major decision-making processes in the eyes of the general public.

In 2017, Nepal embarked into the federal structure after completing the local, provincial and federal elections. Election Commission (EC) mandated that 40.4% of total nominees be women and also the nominations for chief and deputy chief put forth by each political party should be gender-neutral in nature, meaning if mayor's position



is occupied by a male then deputy mayor should be a female or vice-versa. As the result of this, 40.9% of the seats were then occupied by female. This shows that political parties didn't nominate the women representatives voluntarily, rather they simply had to do it after EC compulsorily mandated to do so. Further, when we research in-depth, we can find only 2 percent of the local governments across the country are actually headed by women (15 out of 753). This is a stark contrary against the constitutional right of so-called inclusive gender representation.

Even though done with the EC mandate for gender equality in election, local election was a step towards quantitative advancement but a step backward in qualitative political representation of women in Nepal. Having said that, reserved quotas seem to be the only method through which women are able to secure their seats proportionate to their male counterparts. At the end, gaining presence of women in politics through affirmative actions like quota system doesn't help secure democracy in true sense. Tokenism as such doesn't help in the meaningful participation of women and their empowerment. Increasing the number of female representatives through quotas only help accelerate the representation of women but to have inclusive governance, higher number of elected women representatives are needed.

Increasing women's representation through affirmative actions or solely appointing kith and kin have a long-lasting impact in the national politics where the sufferers are the general public. Such actions have a major setback for Nepal to own a female leader at present and in the future too. It has direct bearing in the major decision-making in the national politics.

In present day context, the controversial dissolution of Parliament has been criticised in three aspects in relations to inclusive politics: 1) The only women President of the country Mrs Bhandari was condemned by political parties and intelligentsia, that she acted under duress by endorsing the dissolution, recommended by the PM, who happens to be a male, without having her say. However, everyone was silent whether the President, who obliged to act as per the recommendation, has the discretionary power in

the constitution to neutralize the PM's recommendation. 2) Soon after, political leaders of the various parties put forth their opinions and arguments on this matter reprimanding the House dissolution, however, none of the women politicians were either found to be in the front-line giving their stand-point or listened by media, about their voices on this national conundrum. This clearly demonstrated that Nepal has not been able to groom a single woman leader of a high political stature as of today, and the increasing representation of women through affirmative actions and favouritism seems totally implausible. 3) The President, being a woman had to pass through a torturous moment, when she was labelled, battered and humiliated with personal attacks and hate speeches in public protests and social media. All these unfortunate situations concurred, simply because she is a woman.



**G e n d e r**  
Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is imperative in politics in present day Nepal hence political parties should be gender-sensitive at all times in order to create just and fair society for women to voice their opinions and help promote meaningful participation of women politicians. Rather than focussing on affirmative actions and merely increasing the number of wom-

en, political parties need to mentor and give participative opportunity for women so that true women political leaders are born in the country. In country like Nepal, only having GESI policy is not sufficient, it should also be practised effectively especially, role-modelled in public affairs. Misogyny and various forms of discrimination against women leaders should stop, rather they should be provided with meaningful support within the political party as well as in the governance. Favouritism should be put to an end so that potential women leaders coming from grass-roots level too get opportunities. Society also need to change their patriarchal mind-set and not be reluctant to take women as their leader, since women leaders are the future of today and tomorrow. Women have shown their acumen to resolve crises and pandemic with ease, their leadership are a solid shield to corruptions and misappropriation for public funds, and they abide by the rule of law.

*The author holds a Master of Science degree in Gender and Development Studies from the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand.*

# 2020 – The Year That Was



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

During 1962/63 there was a popular satirical program in the UK, presented by David Frost, Bernard Levin and others under the title 'That was the week that was' or TW3 which is now a faint memory. This Corona pandemic of 2020 has been an eerie experience which we would like to forget. Nepal's had looked forward to this year's 'Visit Nepal 2020', like that of 1998 and 2011 to be a great game changer for our country. With the elusive Yeti projected as a symbol, expectation was that a tourist bonanza would follow but unfortunately this turned out to be a whimper. The reality should now dawn in the minds of tourism industry experts that they must depend more on the locals plus the people in regions adjacent to us. The rumoured 'two day's weekend' as being contemplated will hopefully get Nepal's to get to know their country better. This will lead to the development of Home Stay facilities all over the country to facilitate this.

Individuals, from far off lands will hesitate to travel to distant places but it is not just the effect of this pandemic that caused this setback to tourism in Nepal. Since the time that legendary Boris of Royal Hotel, by courtesy of Thomas Cook brought tourists here, things have changed enormously. New thinking has to percolate into the minds of our tourism leaders that it is the development of middle class facilities that is going to pull the industry out of the glut that it is in. Simple, clean facilities with reasonable prices have to be offered so that the Nepal's and others from nearby neighbouring lands come in the visit places in Nepal.

We have to have lateral thinking. True that PM Oli has done a great job in stressing the construction of the Dharahara. He will certainly be remembered for it. Because of his example local bodies have been constructing just view towers too, thinking that visitors come to Nepal to see mountains only. Has all thinking by local authorities gone haywire? Well, instead of mountains, what is there to see or do in Nepal? Adventure tourism, like paragliding at Pokhara and rafting plus bungee jumping has been done at other places. Besides Pokhara, Rupa, and Begnas other sites where lakes exist e.g. Rara could be developed. Locals must be encouraged and aided to do so.

Amenities must be encouraged and facilities provided at sites already functioning e.g. Mankamana, Chandra Giri & Sarankot so that services improve to make it visitor friendly. Other cable cars facilities must be encouraged at appropriate sites. Museums showing different cultures e.g. Tharu at Sauraha and Dang, Kirat at Dharan and Maithili at Janakpur must be set up like the museum at Pokhara. Local foods must be promoted like the Sauerkraut that is popular in Germany. Why not a Kimchi Festival as it is getting popular in Nepal or a Gundruk festival at Ghandruk. Cheese festival at Jiri with different varieties of cheese e.g. goat and buffalo are options. Delicacies from tama, sisnu, wuha, millet should be encouraged and propagated. After all it all comes down to 'Eat, drink and be merry'.

Like the 'Mini Indonesia', a 'Mini Nepal' should be constructed somewhere within our country to depict the lifestyles, customs, cultures and traditions of the several of the various ethnicities and tribes that constitutes Nepal. This will be very interesting to not only foreigners but also to locals to know our land better.

The idea of a museum at Narayan Hiti Durbar was appropriate. The statues of the Rana PM could perhaps be shifted there from the Tundikhel so that people can gaze at our history.

New projects must be taken up. One notes that the Peace Pagoda, Mountain and Gorkha Museums have aided tourism in Pokhara. Even a Shiva statue being constructed there will draw devotees. Buddhist statues existing at different site also attract visitors. A Vyas statue is contemplated at Tanau. Beni Nagarpalika is said to be constructing a Ravan Park as Ravan, his two brothers and sister are supposed to have been born at Beni Bazar in Myagdi District. This facility will perhaps attract Sri Lankar tourists there.

October Fest is held during the course of the month in Munich in Germany. It is claimed in Nepal that as much as three-quarters of annual consumption of alcohol occurs during the period between Dasain & Tihar. As many varieties of regular and craft beers are produced in Nepal it would be a good idea to hold a similar festival annually here too. This will attract visitors from the South to taste our varieties of beer at various strategically placed watering holes along our Southern border e.g. at Biratnagar, Hetauda, Bhairahawa, Dang and Nepalgunj! Any time after July is ideal to get away from the Indian Heat waves which are being made worse by presently occurring global warming.

As Westerners do not come here during their Christmas & New Year we have to make alternative plans. Why not let people from the North for what can be termed the 'Losar Season' extending from mid-Dec to mid-January? Perhaps some efforts should also be made to identify appropriate ice slopes so that Nepal can become a destination for skiing enthusiasts from all over the world,

Now that cannabis or hemp cultivation is no longer ostracised, efforts are essential to make proper usage. Formerly fabrics, textiles and other products were made there from. Bags like those of jute, being biodegradable can replace plastics. Cannabis has great potential is for medicinal use. Last but not the least is the possibility of building inexpensive dwelling with 'Hempcrete'.

As we try to deal with the pandemic, the rules and regulations regarding incubation periods must be rational and clear cut. Potential tourists do not have essential information. Let our government and Ministry of Tourism bring about rules that are safe and beneficial to visitors and locals.

*The author is a retired medical doctor and writes fiction under the pen name of Mani Dixit also. Website: [www.hdixit.org.np](http://www.hdixit.org.np). Twitter: @manidixMithd*

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