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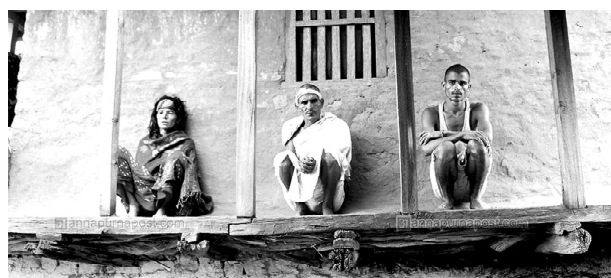
As the government is preparing for the third phase of local elections as well as the national and provincial elections, it seems there is a long way to go before a stable government takes the helm of daily affairs. Maoist leader Prachanda has recently issued a statement indicating that his party may withdraws the support any time showing how vulnerable this government is. As ever, Nepal's political situation is unstable. As politics process is taking a new course, instability continues to lurk in the country. Following the warning of Maoist Chairman Prachanda to withdraw his support, Prime Minister Deuba's government has felt a shock. Parties are preparing for the third round of election, constitution amendment, and elections for the provinces and center. Politics aside, this issue gives space to the trauma women have suffered as part of the chhaupadi tradition in the far and mid west. Although the government has taken several steps, the practice continues to kill women. We have taken up the issue as our main story. Besides, New Spotlight has also interviewed Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad, daughter of Bharat Dutta Koirala, the renowned Magsaysay award winning media professional and educator of Nepal. Shabnam Koirala-Azad is the first Nepali American woman dean at the American University. Along with this, we have also covered India-China standoff and its implications to Nepal while other development stories, columns and interviews are in their place.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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ARMY CHIEF'S UK VISIT

Military Diplomacy

Visits by COAS General Rajendra Chhetri to United Kingdom have helped strengthen Nepal's traditional relations with that country

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Nepal Army and British Army have always maintained their two centuries old traditional relations in a friendly manner, the ties have not developed without hiccups in the past few years. Following the recent visit of COAS General Chhetri to the United Kingdom, the traditional relations have come to be normal as they were in the past.

With an official invitation of Chief of Staff General of the United Kingdom Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, COAS General Chhetri visited United Kingdom between August 10 and 15.

Nepal and British armies have maintained cordial and friendly relations all the time and the British Army has always provided the necessary support at times of disasters or any other difficult time in Nepal. Despite sending helicopters to carry out the post-earthquake rescue mission in Nepal,

British Army's helicopters did not receive the permission during the great earthquake.

As Colonel of Nepal Army Kumar Lama was arrested in London in a case related to Nepal's conflict period, Nepalese Army took the incident as unusual and against the traditional friendship between the two countries.

However, the recent official visit of COAS General Chhetri to the United Kingdom has helped bring the relations back on track. With COAS General Chhetri's series of meetings with his counterparts and senior army officials, the existing warmth in the relations between the two armies has returned.

During his visit, COAS General Chhetri paid a courtesy call to General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter,

Lieutenant General and Colonel Commandant of British Gurkhas Nicholas Pop separately. COAS General Chhetri also paid a courtesy call to Air Chief Marshal of British Army.

COAS General Chhetri was informed about the modernization in the British Army and bilateral relations between Nepal and United Kingdom. He also inspected 19 Regiment Royal Artillery of British Army and attended the dinner hosted by Nepalese Embassy in London.

"COAS General Chhetri's recent visit to United Kingdom helped to further strengthen two hundred years' old historical and friendly relations existing between Nepal and United Kingdom," said Nepal Army in its press release.

COAS General Chhetri visited England following the participation in Chiefs of Defence Conference of Troops Contributing Countries-TCC in New York. As the chief of the fifth largest UN peacekeeping troops contributing army, the COAS visiting the countries had its own significance. During his visit to UN Headquarter, COAS General Chhetri engaged in series of meetings with high ranking UN officials. COAS General Chhetri persuaded the officials to take up Nepal's case as Nepal is aiming to increase the numbers of peacekeepers in UN.

As an oldest organisation of Nepal, Nepal Army has a role to play. Given its prestige and expertise in peacekeeping, Nepal Army can support, promote and protect Nepal's interests. Given the growing clout of military diplomacy, Nepal Army has been pursuing its role to safeguard and strengthen Nepal's image in the global order. The recent visit of COAS General Chhetri has proved it again.

'Visit Strengthened Relations'

In his recent visit to the United Kingdom, Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) **GENERAL RAJENDRA CHHETRI** spoke to BBC Nepali service. Excerpts:

How do you take your recent visit to the United Kingdom?

My visit to the United Kingdom was successful as the visit paved the way to further strengthen the existing relations between Nepal and UK. Our two armies have more than two centuries old relations and they have remained cordial and strong. We discussed the issue of the British Army's previous military support. We also discussed the continuation of training provided by the British Army to Nepali Army. Some British Army personnel came for training in Nepal in the past. We wish that needs to continue. The British Army has supported the capacity building of Nepal Army in the past. We talked about all these issues.

After the arrest of Nepal Army's Colonel Kumar Lama and return of three British helicopters from Nepal,



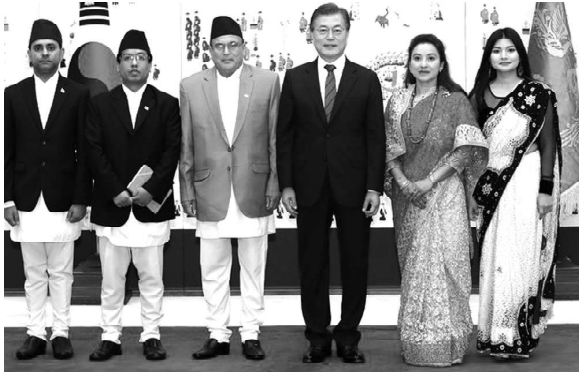
the relations reportedly deteriorated. Is this visit normalizing the relations?

So far as Colonel Lama Episode is concerned, it is close to an end. Of course, there was an uneasiness about this for us. We do believe that there is no role of British Army in the episode. There was certainly a misunderstanding on the issue of Chinook Helicopter of British Army during the earthquake. We wish such misunderstanding should not be repeated. I do believe that this kind of high level visit will definitely help address misunderstandings. ■

NEWSNOTES

The President Of ROK Eager To Visit Nepal

President of Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in expressed his willingness to visit Nepal. Recalling his previous visit, President of Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in showed concern over the progress made in reconstruction and conveyed that he participated in the rehabilitation in Nuwakot district during his



visit to Nepal in 2016.

Underscoring the existing warm and friendly relations between the two countries, President Moon Jae-in also stated that Republic of Korea will continue to support Nepal in its development endeavors as Nepal is an important ODA partner of Republic of Korea.

Receiving the Letter of Credence of Nepalese ambassador to Republic of Korea Arjun Jung Bahadur Singh, President Moon Jae-in expressed his happiness in increasing trends of Korean investment in Nepal.

Foreign Secretary, Australian Official Sign MoU

An MOU been signed on the establishment of a bilateral consultation mechanism between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Nepal.

"This is a proud and progressive moment for Nepal. The diplomatic relationship between Nepal and Australia is gaining new heights," Foreign Secretary



Shankar Bairagi has written on Facebook.

US Embassy Organised Model UN Conference

The U.S. Embassy and Youth Thinkers' Society jointly organized a university-level Model United Nations Conference for over 200 students from South and Central Asia recently.

According to a U.S. Embassy Facebook page, student delegates from 15 different countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan traveled to Nepal to simulate four UN committees over the next five days.

They debated key issues including countering violent extremism, promoting migrant and human rights and nuclear non-proliferation. In his keynote remarks Chargé d'Affaires Michael Gonzales told participants that their experiences in the SCA MUN event will give them the skills needed to be policy advocates in the region and in their own countries. Other opening speakers included the Country Director for UNDP Nepal



and the Head of Multilateral Affairs for Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal.

Japan Continue To Provide Support

State Minister for Environment Japan in Tadahiko Ito said that Japan is ready to provide Nepal necessary technical and other support to manage disaster waste generated by devastation of earthquake.

Addressing the Stake holders meeting of Disaster Waste Management Following earthquake in Nepal, Japanese minister Ito has made offered to share Japanese technology and knowledge to manage the disaster waste.

"Having a disaster prone country a long experiences of managing disaster waster, Japan is ready to share our expertise and technology in managing the waste in Nepal," said state minister Ito. He also urged Nepal to reconstruct the heritage sites keeping its century's old practices and face.

Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Paudel hailed support of Japanese government and people in earthquake relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Former minister and member of Legislature Parliament Nabindra Raj Joshi said that Nepal Japan's support to reconstruction is immense.

Ambassador of Japan to Nepal Masashi Ogawa said that Nepal has a progress in reconstruction and



government of Japan happy to be with Nepal in this effort. The stake holders meeting is also a part of Japanese support.

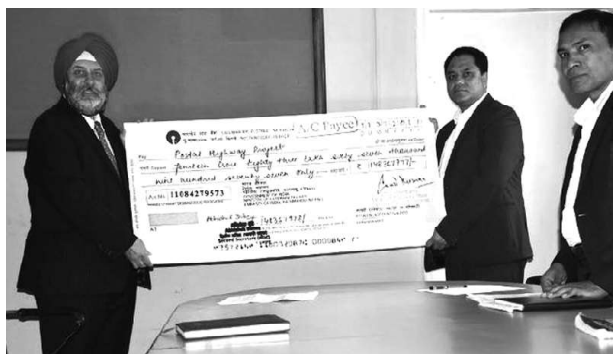
Japan Extends Scholarship To Govt Officers

Japanese ambassador to Nepal Masashi Ogawa and Shanta Raj Subedi, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, have signed and exchanged a set of notes on behalf of their respective governments for extending Japan's Grant Assistance up to two hundred and eight-two million Japanese Yen (¥282,000,000), the equivalent of about two hundred and fifty-seven million Nepalese Rupees (NRs. 257,000,000) to the Government of Nepal for the implementation of the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) Scheme in Japan's Fiscal Year 2017.

Similarly, Jun SAKUMA, Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Baikuntha Aryal, Joint Secretary of the International Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance have also signed and exchanged a Grant Agreement for the implementation of this Scheme.

Indian Ambassador Hands Over Money

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri handed over a Cheque for an amount of INR 14,83,67,977.00 equivalent to NRs. 23,73,88,762.68 (to Secretary, Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Devendra Karki at Singha Durbar Kathmandu.



According to a press release issued by Indian Embassy, the amount has been released towards 25% of tendered cost (including 10% mobilization advance) of the two contracted road stretches namely Maisthan-Gaushalabazaar-Samsi Road and Birendrabazaar-

Yadukuha-Mahinathpur Road being implemented under Postal Highway Project in Nepal with Government of India's grant assistance worth NRs. 8000 million.

Earlier, on January 30, 2017, an amount of NRs. 24,97,10,698.17 was released for the Project towards 25% of tendered cost of four contracted road stretches namely Birendrabazaar-Mahinathpur, Janakpur-Yadukuwa road, Manmat-Kalaiya-Matiarwa (0-15 km road) and Manmat-Kalaiya-Matiarwa (15-26.660 km road).

So far, construction of two roads of Hulaki Rajmarg (i) Dhangadhi-Bhajaniya-Satti road & (ii) Lamki-Tikapur-Khakraula road have been completed with Government of India's grant assistance worth NRs 1020 million which were inaugurated on 19 January 2017 at Dhangadhi.

Govt Appoints Kshetri Chief Secretary

Secretary of Cooperative and Poverty Alleviation



Rajendra Kishor Kshetri was appointed the chief secretary of Nepal government. The meeting of the Council of Ministers appointed him to the top job in civil service.

"I am very honored to head civil service at a crucial transitional period. I am very grateful to the government of Nepal for promoting me as the chief secretary. I will work professionally as per the tradition, practices and responsibility given to the chief secretary," Kshetri told New Spotlight.

Having an expertise in water resources related laws, Kshetri, who served as Secretary at the Ministry of Energy, Nepal Law Commission, Office of Vice President, Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority and he was a secretary at Ministry for Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation now. Before being transferred to administrative service, he worked in legal service of the government.

A total of eight high-ranking government staffers had vied for the post of chief secretary. Kshetri was selected by the government as the senior-most secretary. The post was vacant following the appointment of chief secretary Dr. Som Lal Subedi as Alternative Executive Director of Asian Development Bank.■

BUSINESS BRIEF

Finance Minister Opens Joint Bank Transaction

Minister of Finance Gyanendra Bahadur Karki inaugurated the joint transaction of Global IME Bank and Reliable Development Bank after the acquisition of Reliable Development Bank by Global IME Bank.

Under the merger policy of Nepal Government and



Nepal Rastra Bank, ten different banks have already merged with Global IME. Established eleven years ago, Reliable Development National Bank used to have 17 branches in different parts of Nepal.

According to a press release issued by the bank, this is the first joint transaction following the merger. Established ten years ago with a slogan of banking for all, Global IME is now a largest commercial bank in Nepal.

Global IME has been providing banking service in India, Australia, Malaysia and other countries around the world to Nepalese.

NIBL Capital Markets Demat Accounts Cross 1,00,000

NIBL Capital Markets Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Nepal Investment Bank Limited, has been functioning as a Depository Participant under CDS and Clearing Limited since 2014.

NIBL Capital is also a licensed merchant banker and fund manager from the Securities Board of Nepal (SEBON).

At present, NIBL Capital Limited is one of the leading depository participants with over 11.5% market share and has achieved the mark to cross 1,00,000 Demat Accounts, a first among the peers. These beneficiary owners are facilitated through NIBL Capital and all branches of NIBL within and outside the valley.

NIBL Capital is also the first to launch comprehensive mobile applications in Nepal's Capital Market in the form of the NIBL Capital Mobile App that helps customer to access the details of DEMAT Accounts, Mutual Fund NAV, and allows customers to track their portfolio growth. Customers can also log on to online DEMAT service through www.niblcapiat.com and view the statement and their current holdings.

Apart from facilitation as a Depository Participant, NIBL Capital also renders a comprehensive and wide range of services in the field of Registrar companies and currently serves over 5,72,600 shareholders of 30 registrar companies. Shareholders can also check the Rights Share Eligibility on www.niblcapiat.com.

ADB To Give \$21m For Customs Reforms

Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing Nepal US\$ 21 million in policy-based loan to support the government's efforts to simplify, harmonize, and modernize the country's trade processes to meet international standards.

Issuing a statement, the Manila-based regional development bank said that its board of directors has approved the loan that will support the government in developing its national policy and legal framework for trade facilitation as well as customs procedures.

The loan will also strengthen the organizational structure of Department of Customs to overall expand exports and increase export competitiveness, according to the statement.

Kumari Bank Ltd Helps Nawalparasi Schools

Kumari bank has provided computers and printers to different schools in Nawalparasi. Issuing a statement, the bank said that it distributed computers and printers through the Rotary Club of Kathmandu North East (TEACH Program) under its corporate social responsibility.

The statement further added that the bank provided computers and printers to improve financial literacy among school children. Rajesh Shrestha, chief marketing officer, of the bank handed over the equipment to



Mahendra Raj Bhandari, president of Rotary club of Kathmandu North East, according to the statement.

CG Focus On Energy-efficient Products

Wise choice and use of household electrical devices is crucial for energy saving, Managing Director of CG Corp Global Nirvana Chaudhary has said. Highlighting the long-term benefits of using energy-efficient items, he said energy saving movement can start from home.

Chaudhary was speaking at an event organized in Kathmandu to encourage people to use energy saving technologies. The event entitled 'Energy Saved is Energy Earned, New Era Begins with Inverter Technology' was organized by CG Electronics - the sole distributor of LG products for Nepal.

Chaudhary said that the company is committed to protecting the environment for a better tomorrow.

"The company has also signed with United Nations (UN) to work on its sustainable development goals (SDGs)," he said, adding that the company is always committed to support the global goal of UN for the betterment of the next



generation.

DPM Mahara For Economic Diplomacy: CNI

A Delegation of Confederation of Nepali Industries (CNI) has called on the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara, urging him to play a prominent role to improve Nepal's foreign trade.

Led by CNI president Hari Bhakta Sharma, the delegation also requested him to facilitate promotion of Nepal's foreign trade.

According to a press release issued by CNI, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Krishna Bahadur Mahara said that the government would take forward the idea of economic diplomacy with high priority.

Talking to members of a delegation, DPM Mahara shared that the Nepali diplomatic missions would also be mobilized for promoting economic diplomacy.

He also said that the MoFA would take the initiative to facilitate the Nepali businesspersons at the international level.

Nabil Bank Ltd Installs 100th ATM Kiosk

Nabil Bank has installed its 100th ATM kiosk at Budhanilkantha. Shambhu Prasad Poudyal, chairman of the bank, inaugurated the new ATM amid a function. Issuing a statement, the bank said that it has installed ATM kiosks in three other locations -- Hattisar Road in Kathmandu, Hotel Vishuwa in Birgunj and Lumbini in Rupandehi.

"Any cardholder carrying Visa, MasterCard, UnionPay



International & SCT card (domestic and international) can avail cash withdrawal and other facilities from the new ATM kiosks," the bank said in the statement. Nabil Bank Ltd is providing services through 52 branch offices across the country.

NIC ASIA Bank Has Manisha Koirala As Its Brand Ambassador

NIC ASIA Bank has appointed actress and social worker Manisha Koirala as its Brand Ambassador. Originally from Nepal, Koirala mainly appeared in Bollywood and South Indian movies and received several top accolades, including four Filmfare Awards. She is one of India's most well-known actresses.

The Bank has entered into an agreement with Koirala, who will work as the Brand Ambassador of the Bank for two



years. The Bank said it was delighted to welcome Manisha Koirala into NIC ASIA family as its brand ambassador.

NIC ASIA Bank is one of the largest private sector commercial banks in the country in terms of capital base, balance-sheet size, customer base, number of branches and ATM network. Currently there are 118 branches in operation, spread all over the country. The Bank has been providing its services for the past 19 years and now is going to celebrate 20 years of its operation.

Nepal Investment Bank, Ace Bank Start Joint Transaction

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. (NIBL) and Ace Development Bank will begin their joint transactions in the name of Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. Following the completion of acquisition process, both the banks started the joint transaction formally.

NIBL acquired Ace Bank on swap with 100 shares of Ace as equal to 41 NIBL's. Following this, paid capital of NIBL reaches 9.24 billion now. After this merger, NIBL is the first commercial bank to have largest paid up capital.

After this acquisition, promoters' share reached 69 percent, with 31 percent share of public.

According to a press release, NIBL will expand its service further following merger with Ace. In its three decades of service, NIBL received bank of the year award five times.

Issuing a statement, NIBL said that its total paid-up capital has reached Rs 9.24 billion after the acquisition of the development bank.

"The paid-up capital is the highest among private sector commercial banks in Nepal," the bank claimed in the investment. NIBL further said that its total deposits and loans have Rs 124 billion and Rs 107 billion, respectively. "The management committee and the CEO of NIBL as well as the bank's head office will remain the same even after the acquisition," the bank added in the statement. ■

New Nepal's Persistent Old Malady

Local elections have just been carried out (except in the controversially carved out Province No. 2); but the big question remains: what have they achieved? Depending on what you think were the objectives achieved, the answer can be good, bad or downright ugly.

If you think it was to fill the vacuum of political unaccountability at the local level, plagued as it was for the last two decades with overbearing VDC secretaries and DDC LDOs, made worse since 2006 by all-party political cartels that siphoned off earmarked budgets as party and personal pelf, you will be thankful that at least now we have elected local leaders who can be held accountable. Incidentally, as per the 2015 constitution, they cannot be removed by any means for the next five years no matter if they fail to perform or engage in naked corruption. At least, you will say, now I have an elected ward chairman or mayor that I can buttonhole if my drain is clogged or if no water comes out of my tap. And you can also have the satisfaction that the process of grooming a new generation of political leaders - a process arrested for twenty years by the current crop of top party oligarchs - has finally restarted, giving hope to the continued flowering of democracy in Nepal for generations to come. You are among the congenial optimists still in absolute thrall of political parties and who think nothing but good can come from this national exercise which was so exuberantly participated in by the voters hungry to exercise their right to choose their local representatives.

However, if you think these elections were meant to strengthen local self-governance, you are in for a rude shock. The current constitution is very generous with giving whatever rights anybody asks for, whether it is practical or not, and whether those given the rights have the capacity to enjoy those rights with the concomitant discipline of mandatory obligations and responsibilities that go with them. During the election campaigns, candidates have promised the moon, from monorails to smart cities, with no idea of what resources are required and where they are



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

to come from. Worse, there is no law that defines the scope of their office, not even where they are going to get their salaries from. It seems that the definition of the roles and responsibilities must come from the provincial government which is nowhere in sight.

There is an effort underway to cobble together an act, any act-like document, which will allow the elected local bodies to function; but the central party oligarchs and the even more centralizing bureaucracy are already up to their old tricks. Local bodies of yore, long before Loktantra of

2006, already enjoyed the right to get 50 percent of Nepal government revenues from hydropower dams in their vicinities, the right to earn substantial revenue from sand and aggregate mines, etc. The proposed new act limits that to a tenth, a meagre five percent for village councils and municipalities, ten for provinces and a whopping 85 percent for the central government. If these old guards have their way, the newly elected local officials will be

nothing more than Loktantra's new tax collectors for New Nepal's New Ranas in Singha Durbar. There was much chest-thumping bravado by the Loktantricksters that they have now taken, in this blessed secular federal republic, Singha Durbar to the village doorsteps. The voters are now in for a rude shock: yes Singha Durbar has arrived at their threshold, but as a vicious new tax collector and certainly not as a development service deliverer!

If, however, you are part of the inner circle of Loktantra's party oligarchs and you argued for ramrodding local elections through even with no legal instruments in place just to argue that the implementation of this unworkable and contradictory constitution is a fait accompli (and to shut down voices arguing for the restoration of the 1990 democratic constitution), things may start turning rather ugly and fairly soon. Your regressive plans to curtail the

authority given to local bodies by the 1997 Local Self-Governance Act will backfire on you, and you will not have the safety valve of a king to kick around anymore. Those newly elected local chiefs may not have the

Susan Sontag, someone not very sympathetically disposed to Simone Weil's ideas, writes that Weil is "...the most uncompromising and troubling witness to the modern travail of the spirit." She greatly influenced Czesław Miłosz the Polish 1980 Nobel prize winner as well as Albert Camus, the great French writer and a 1957 Nobel laureate himself. For Miłosz and for Camus, her writings gave new direction and freedom to their inner life and its outward expression in their published works. And reading her essays, one can understand why.

requisite legal authority, but they do have legitimacy conferred by direct democracy that you who have self-extended the life of your metamorphosed CA do not. Given that you have done away with all moral high ground of political ideology - Kangress leaders having long given up BP Koirala's democratic socialism, UML having long forgotten any semblance of Marxism-Leninism, and the Maoists having become comrade billionaires - you have no ground to wield any influence over your newly elected cadres. Not when, under your dispensation, vice-chancellors of universities, former police chiefs and directors of Inland Revenue Department are in jail for corruption (even when you the top party oligarchs who ordered those corruption, i.e. Sudan or the tax writeoff scandals etc. have gotten off scot-free and are quietly nursing your ill-gotten gains). When the newly elected cannot deliver to their voters because of your incompetence and lack of foresight in putting in place the necessary institutional and legal instruments, it is you they will come after to save their skins. Do not forget that they have paid hefty sums as levies to you and your party central coffers to get the party tickets, and they have spent their personal fortune in the campaigns. It is not going to be about lofty ideological differences but much more crass and mundane issues of lucre that will bedevil inner-party relationships in the days to come.

There are already ugly signs of where the country is headed post-local elections. Newspapers are reporting that elected representatives have started eyeing lucrative sectors and are behaving worse than Rana tax collectors of yore. One new village chief dashed off a missive dissolving the local forest users' group and another decided it was he, and not the education ministry, that would appoint village teachers! If there was any development success in Nepal from the Panchayat to multiparty period, it lies in the unique success of community management of forestry, electricity, water supply and so on. In the last ten years, given the absence of elected local officials, a unique experiment in local self-governance was the Citizen's Ward Forum of village assembly-chosen representatives debating, deciding and managing their development needs. All these democratic instruments are now under serious threat from newly elected local party hacks eager to recoup their electoral expenses and more. A grim future awaits us all, which is not at all pretty to contemplate.

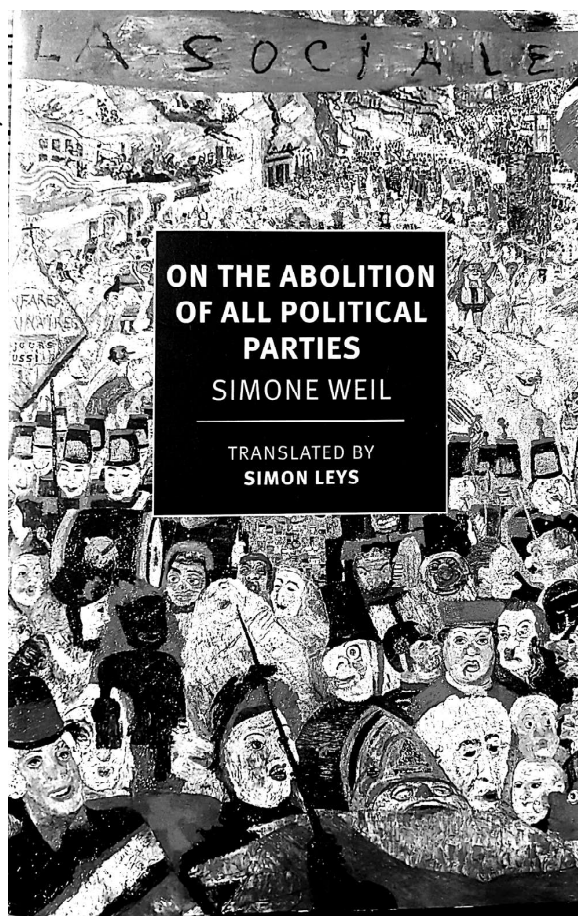
What is a concerned citizen to do? Tinkering around

trying to reform the entrenched kleptocratic machinery we have been bequeathed, especially by the political adventurism of 2006, is futile as proven by the Ranju Darshanas, Rabindra Mishras and Kishor Thapas in the recent hustings and by Devendra Raj Pandey a generation ago with his now aborted Lok Dal. What is needed is an overhaul, even when a full-scale revolution is near impossible; but that can only happen if worried citizens begin the difficult task of overhauling their misperceptions of what parties and democracy are all about. And there is no place better to begin than France's gift to the intellectual world, Simone Weil (see her "On the Abolition of all Political Parties", New York Review Books, 2013).

Susan Sontag, someone not very sympathetically disposed to Simone Weil's ideas, writes that Weil is "...the most uncompromising and troubling witness to the modern travail of the spirit." She greatly influenced Czesław Miłosz the Polish 1980 Nobel prize winner as well as Albert Camus, the great French writer and a 1957 Nobel laureate himself. For Miłosz and for Camus, her writings gave new direction and freedom to their inner life and its outward expression in their published works. And reading her essays, one can understand why.

An anti-fascist fighter, Weil understood the evil power of political bureaucracy and had argued against Trotsky that élite communist bureaucrats could be just as oppressive as the worst capitalists. Tracing their origins to the 12th Century Inquisition and blaming them for the death of the spirit of the Paris revolution of 1789, she argues that political parties are so marvelous a propaganda machine that if one entrusted the organization of public life to the devil, he could not invent a cleverer device. Under the guise of defending the public interest, they organize to accumulate power which is never enough thus making them in essence totalitarian; and to do so they demand from their servile members the sacrifice of any individual sense of truth and justice with total subservience to the views of the party oligarchs. She argues that if democracy is to be saved, parties must be abolished, and the individual citizen's views on public issues must be expressed through "journals of political ideas" that must be forbidden from endorsing their members if they stood for elections.

Simone Weil could have been writing about the angst of today's concerned Nepali: she is a good place for the Ranju Darshanas and Rabindra Mishras to begin their difficult reflections. ■





MONETARY POLICY

Too Little A Boost

Contrary to the claim of NRB, the recently announced Monetary Policy for Fiscal Year 2017/18 may not boost the economy

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the government has announced the goal to achieve 7 percent economic growth next year by increasing the investment in infrastructure and agriculture, NRB's recently released Monetary Policy has shown little signs it will address the current cash crunch.

Bankers and economists have been saying that the banking sector will be unable to invest money in the infrastructure sector given the current level of savings. As the flow of remittances continues to decline and capital expenditure is yet to increase, there is little hope for the deposit to jump in banks.

As the flow of deposit in the commercial bank is declining, banks are announcing new lucrative interest rates to lure the money. However, the flow of deposits is yet to improve.

"The monetary policy has prioritized agriculture, tourism, energy, small and cottage industries and liquidity management," said NRB governor Dr. Chiranjibi Nepal. "Nepal's balance of payment is satisfactory, financial imbalance is decreasing and there is a positive change in economy."

Given the current cash crunch, Nepal Rastra Bank's decision to raise lending requirement for commercial banks toward productive sectors by 5 percentage points to 25 percent of their total lending is impossible to achieve.

By increasing the productive sector lending requirement, the central bank has disseminated a message that it wants the

banking industry to channelize more resources into priority sectors like agriculture, energy, tourism and small and medium enterprises, which are the major sectors of economic activities, to support the economic growth target of the government.

"It has provided guidance to the financial sector, but lacks optimism that remarkable assistance would be made to capital flow for boosting the economic growth," said Chairman of Nepal Bankers' Association, Anil Keshari Sah.

He, however, took positively the provision of some works of central bank to be available from all seven provinces in view of the federal set up. It has, as he said, ended the compulsion for the private banks to come to the central bank for any work.

Commercial banks were earlier required to float 20 percent of their total lending in productive sectors, including 15 percent credits on agriculture and energy sector combined. "As banks are failing to meet the existing requirements, there are doubts that banks will channelize additional resources in the productive sector," said Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, a former NRB Governor.

Similarly, the central bank has also increased the size of refinance fund so that priority sectors can borrow money from BFIs at a cheaper or subsidized rate. The size of refinance fund has increased to Rs 20 billion from Rs 10.84 billion in the current fiscal year. In the current fiscal year, the central bank has run out of cash stock at the refinance fund as more

businesspersons have lined up for cheaper funds in the wake of skyrocketing interest rates and shortage of lendable fund in the BFIs. Private sector leaders had demanded that the central bank increase refinance fund to at least Rs 100 billion. The NRB has scrapped the requirement to lend 2 percentage points of 5 percent lending to the deprived sector directly by themselves. Such requirement, which was introduced in the monetary policy for the current fiscal year, had drawn stiff criticism from bankers who argue that they do not have structure and expertise to lend to deprived sector on their own.

Now, they will have flexibility of channelizing such lending through microfinance development banks.

Similarly, the NRB has also allowed commercial banks a deadline of mid-October to bring their core-capital-cum-deposit (CCD) ratio requirement to the regulatory limit of 80 percent. While the NRB allowed the regulatory relief on calculation of the CCD ratio by deducting 50 percent of productive sector loans to expire, the flexibility of the deadline to bring the CCD ratio to regulatory limits means that BFIs would not be penalized for breaching such prudential lending limits until mid-October.

However, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has welcomed the monetary policy presented by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) for Fiscal Year 2017/18 as very positive for the private sector. ■

By Road Ko Bato

I am an oldie of sorts. I remember the good old days when able bodied travellers climbed up Thankot and reached Chandragiri panting. The old, the infirm and the children were carried up the mountain on a wolinkath. One had then to display ones luggage or packets to the military sentry and no female would be allowed past that point without a rahadhani. One then trudged on to have the mid-day meal at Kulekhani and called it a day after reaching the Dharmasala at Bhimphedi. The next day's travelling was on the bus to Amlekhganj and then on the Nepal Government Railway (NGR) to reach Raxaul. How things have changed. One now reaches the top of Chandragiri by cable car in comfort and in eleven minutes! The trip to Raxaul by car can be comfortably done in half a day!

With the ushering in of democracy into the country in Feb. 1951, a new age dawned for Nepal. One must be thankful that it was the engineers of the Indian army who were given the task of building the country's very first highway. Incidentally this was also the first major undertaking of the Indian army following India's independence in Aug. 1947 and a gift to Nepal. It was then a matter of great prestige. There was no shortage of comments were made regarding the Indian capability and experience. Questions were raised about the length of this first highway of Nepal, said to have twists, turns and bends in abundance. What would be the maintenance costs? These remarks were countered with the statement that the basic purpose was to open up as much of the country as possible. There was euphoria in the populace at large and led to songs as 'By road ko bato ma dhulo udawundia'. A spin-off advantage was that the capital's citizens were introduced to products such as 'Tennis shoe ko jutta' which up to then had been luxury items. Diet of the valley's populace improved with the coming in of fresh vegetables from Tistung and Palung. Whilst this was so, a relative of mine who usually drove helter-skelter in a jeep on this Tribhuvan Raj Path used to reach Hetauda in just four hours! A very extraordinary feat in those days.

On the debit side however is the fact that as the number of vehicles increased, the petrol and diesel bills started sky rocketing over the years. The shortcomings of this excessively and intensively used road lessened somewhat with the opening of the Chinese aided via Mugling route. What is still a problem is that transportation costs are high due to its length.

Road building and developments have changed over the years with the experience of the Indian aided Trisuli Highway, the Chinese aided Kodari Highway and Mugling sections of the roadway to the South. The Japanese aided highway to Bhatakpur and the BP Koirala Highway via Badribas have provided more sophisticated information. However there is gross negligence on



BY HEMANG DIXIT

our part too. How come that heavily loaded trucks were allowed on the Badribas road when it was meant for light vehicles only? Even when the road has been damaged heavy vehicles still continue of ply on it!

It has been said by many aid givers to Nepal that the Nepalis are good at formulating plans, but are very poor in implementing them. One has only to look at the track records of the roads and bridges making processes on a countrywide basis. The practice is to lay foundations, but the road or bridge for the use of the populace has been left in limbo or uncompleted for years. The truth is that politically backed contractors take the funds, start the process of construction and then feigning rising costs tend to disappear. Why is this occurring again and again? No one has

ever been bothered!

The Nepali Army has taken over this task of constructing the road from the capital to Nijgad. It has had some experience in such undertakings over the years and the completion of the Kamali Corridor road is held up as an example. True therefore that our army engineers and sipais have had some experience in such undertakings over the years, but one can't claim that work has always been completed satisfactorily and on time in all circumstances, even by them. Why does this lack-a-daisical attitude persist in the road builders and the

authorities who authorise them? The budget has finally been sanctioned for the road to be built over four years. The time clock is ticking.

It was in 2010, that the intention to build the Kathmandu - Terai Fast track by Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) was first thought about. Various proposals were invited and decisions taken which has been found in retrospect to be not beneficial to Nepal. The project which, as per the National Planning Commission was to start in 2011 and be completed by 2018 has seen only 7.8% completion.

Now that our army has been given responsibility for the task, one hopes that the work will be done. One anticipates that this 76 km highway to Nijgad will be

completed in the stipulated period. It is slated to have 99 bridges and six flyovers and the travelling time is forecast to be 59 minutes! What a saving in time, money and energy for our Nation and for all of us. Our petrol and diesel bills will reach rock bottom. In retrospect I am reminded of the one hour I spent as I travelled from the airport at Narita to the centre of Tokyo many years ago. If this envisaged Fast Track to Nijgad becomes a reality the common Nepali dweller will soon attain the objective of a developing Nation with some of the facilities that are available in countries of the developed world. Let us all hope that this comes to pass.

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NEPAL ARMY

On Air To Save Life

With a growing role in disaster risk reduction, rescue, relief and rehabilitation, Nepal Army needs to have its own effective Radio Broadcasting Station

By A CORRESPONDENT

When a river washed Khimti village of Ramechhap one night recently, killing a couple of people, the first to reach the spot for rescue and relief were Nepal Army personnel.

This is not the first time. Whenever small or big disasters have occurred, like the Gurkha Earthquake, Nepal Army has remained the first force to call for effective rescue and relief. Although Nepal Army is in the forefront of rescue and relief in disasters, it also needs effective communication tools to issue early warnings.

As there is an increase in the annual extremes of climate events, Nepal Army needs to have effective

their family. With an FM Station of its own, Nepal Army can convey the voice message to their family from civil war-torn places around the world where its personnel are stationed.

Currently, Indian Army and British Army have been using the radio to disseminate the message of their family members living in Nepal.

Given the importance for internal communication, Nepal Army recently applied for an FM station. Soon after Nepal Army submitted the application to the Ministry of Information and Communication, a group questioned the intention of such application.

In different countries of the world like United States, United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, all the armies have their own radio



communication tools. With a force of over 100,000 strong personnel, posted from east to west of the country and to many difficult peace keeping operations around the globe, Nepal Army also needs to have a way to communicate with its own family members.

Having no such facility on its own, Nepal Army's peacekeepers have now to use other expensive and unreliable tools to communicate with

broadcasting, which aim to serve the interest of military's own family.

The American Forces Network (AFN) is the broadcast service operated by the United States Armed Forces' American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) for its entertainment and command internal information networks worldwide. The AFN worldwide radio and television broadcast network serves American servicemen and women, Department

of Defense and other U.S. government civilians and their families stationed at bases overseas, as well as U.S. Navy ships at sea.

British Forces Broadcasting Service: The British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) provides radio and television programs for British Armed Forces, and their dependents worldwide. Editorial control is independent of the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces themselves. It was established by the British War Office (now the Ministry of Defense) in 1943.

Originally known as the Forces Broadcasting Service (FBS), it was initially under the control of the British Army Welfare Service, with its first effort, the Middle East Broadcasting Unit, with its headquarters in Cairo.

The Pakistan army has a radio station - FM 96 was set up to counter militant propaganda in the Swat Valley, but it is now expanding its broadcasts into the semi-autonomous tribal belt.

Given all these international norms and practices, Nepal Army has submitted application as per the National Broadcasting Act 1992 clause 6. This provision does not bar Nepal Army to seek a radio license.

Nepal Army is not the first institution to seek FM license. However, Traffic Police has been running its own FM Station to disseminate the traffic related news and other information.

Nepal Army, in a press statement, expressed the concern over the current media criticism against its decision to apply for FM station. "As a responsible and professional army committed to Nepal's independence and sovereignty, Nepal Army has no intention other than to serve nation and people," said the press release. "We need an FM station to maintain communication with our family and disseminate information related to Nepal Army, disaster management and early warning."

With a history of abiding professionalism and direction of the government, Nepal Army's FM station will be purely for its own internal communication and at the time of disaster.

Studies have shown that Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of water induced disasters and earthquakes. As a forefront organization in disasters, FM Radio station of Nepal Army can benefit all Nepalese. ■

The Great American Puzzle

United States of America is recognized for its mastery in several fields. While it has retained its unchallenged military and economic power for nearly a century, it has placed itself in the single seat of superpower in the post-cold war period. Creativity and innovations are the hallmark of this great nation that is governed under federal system of democratic governance. The constitution of the United States is considered as one of the best constitutions the world has ever seen and it has served the nation well-in good times as well as in bad times. The balance of power installed through the three branches of its polity, the executive, legislature and the Judiciary is well exercised by the elected representatives in most branches except some in the supreme court selected by the government of party in power. In today's world two countries are often cited when democratic governance is discussed-the US and India. While the US is generally accepted as a functional liberal democracy, India is known as the largest democracy having over 800 million voters. The United States is governed under a presidential system of governance which has done well in the past 200 years despite some aberrations such as impeachment of a president and other low level ethical/moral standard presented by some presidents. In terms of questions raised on ethics and morality of high level public officials the American public believes that they simply "elect a president and not a pope to govern the country and lead the world". Be that as it may, the United States is once again embroiled in the discussions of their current president Mr. Donald J. Trump.

The hot topic of the day is whether Mr. Trump and/or his staff made any contact with the Russian Federation government representative for damaging democratic party nominee Ms. Hilary Clinton during the 2016 presidential elections. From the ongoing investigation, at several levels such as congressional and senate investigations, special counsel as well as the FBI, it is known so far that Trump Jr. (son of the president) met the Russian representative who had promised of important information but later found to be of little or no value. President Trump had no knowledge of it. Nevertheless, the investigation continues. Trump's personal lawyer claims that the President did not breach any law. Nevertheless, there are several parallel investigations going on at the house as well as senate chambers of the US including house democrats attempting to initiate impeachment proceedings against the incumbent US President. These ongoing actions against a sitting president are not only weakening the moral authority of the global leader but the super power image is at great stake. For the good of the US citizens as well as the international community, this situation cannot be allowed to linger any further. Concrete actions are warranted, and soon.

While all these actions may be necessary to safeguard the democratic values enshrined in the US Constitution including the Executive Power that can be exercised by the US President,



BY BINOD P. BISTA

yet the core issue that emerged during the Presidential elections, particularly Russian Federation Interference in the US elections including allegedly helping the current President, is a tall claim that needs to be confirmed. This issue is quite sensitive and extremely important since it involves, among others, national security of the US. However, the other issue of President-elect involvement, directly or indirectly, with the Russian representative during election campaign, though highly sensitive, does not equate the former issue. The only matter that could be examined in this context could be whether the president staff breached any part of the sanctions

applied on Russian Federation. As it stands these issues, clearly separate and with differing degree of consequences, appear to have been mixed together solely for the benefit of the backers of the losers of the election. These investigations and everyday reporting by the media, particularly the American ones, are adding more confusion to the already unclear issue.

What are the civil authorities of the government as well as elected house and senate representatives trying to achieve at? If the American public wanted to know more about Hillary Clinton's private emails that may or may not have compromised national security before they went for Presidential elections, it should have been the duty of US's national intelligence agencies such as the NIA, FBI, CIA etc. to have obtained sufficient information and released them in time. If a competitor, in his/her bid to dig

It has to be clear and direct. At this stage everything seems to be confusing and without value. The United States of America cannot afford to continue this game for long especially at a time when important decisions are to be taken effectively and in a timely manner. This great American puzzle can only be solved by the Americans themselves as they have created this one willfully.

out factual information to outsmart the opponent, does take action for winning elections, where would he be wrong unless prevented by the codes of conduct? Are they discussing ethical or moral values in an election? Or, is it about national security breach by a foreign country-an adversary? What purpose would it serve by placing a duly elected chief of executive branch in a pathetic situation

when that person has to deal with important global players in a near regular basis? Is it being caused by excessive information generated by the internet? Or could it be simply a backlash by the media and other concerned public against Trump's impertinence and rough but direct handling of national issues? Or could it still be democrats' vengeance against the republicans for unwinding internal as well as external legacies set by Obama administration including climate change, Obamacare etc.?

What kind of message or lesson would the US offer to the world at large? It has to be clear and direct. At this stage everything seems to be confusing and without value. The United States of America cannot afford to continue this game for long especially at a time when important decisions are to be taken effectively and in a timely manner. This great American puzzle can only be solved by the Americans themselves as they have created this one willfully.■

Urmila, Former Kamalari, Wins Rights Award

In early July 2017, the city of Esslingen, Germany, bestowed the Theodor-Haecker-Price, an International Human Rights Award for political courage and sincerity, on Urmila Chaudhary. Urmila is the first South Asian prize-winner since its inception in 1995. In addition, the project HEROES in Berlin, that campaigns for equality and human rights within the so-called "honor cultures" (where women are underprivileged), received another award called the "Ehrengabe" (honorary gift).

The Human Rights Prize is awarded every two years in commemoration of Theodor Haecker, an author, philosopher, and cultural



BY SABINE PRETSCH

honour for their special commitment to human rights, freedom, peace, humanity, and democracy," it is noted.

Those who take a look at the

who have to suffer from discrimination and oppression," explained mayor Dr. Jürgen Zieger in his introductory speech.

Discrimination and oppression initially characterized the life of Urmila Chaudhary. Urmila grew up in Manpur, a village in Dang district. Until her age of six, her life did not seem all that different to the life of other Nepali children.

A decisive and terrible turn happened during the Maghe festival, which is traditionally celebrated in January. At this feast, young girls are sold to rich and influential families in the big cities. These children have to work as household staff from the early morning until late at night. They have to wash, cook, clean and perform other tasks. Violence and abuse are not excluded. This deal is often the only way for the poor and landless parents to earn money.

They cannot imagine the slave-like conditions they send their children to, far away from home. In Nepal, debt bonded labour can be traced back to the 18th century. The Kamaiya and Kamalari traditions, which are examples of debt bondage and serfdom, are mainly rooted in the West of Nepal. Reports indicate that the eradication of malaria and the promotion of national integration by the government in Kathmandu triggered a migration of hill people into the Terai region. The Terai is called the granary of Nepal. It supplies the inhabitants with staple food. Therefore, the new settlers took over the land cultivated by the resident ethnic Tharu group.

As the Tharus had no official land registration and records, the consideration for their property was very low. Thus, the new landowners employed the locals as agricultural laborers. The scant wages, additional loans and exorbitant interest led to a debt bondage, which has been passed down for generations. In Kamalari tradition young girls and women are sold by their parents for one or more years to higher caste families outside the Terai. The lord and mistress pay a



critic. He lived in Esslingen for the greater part of his life and was denied freedom of speech and shadowed during National Socialism. "In his name, outstanding personalities and groups should be prized with this

list of former prize winners immediately realize that it was mostly women who have received this recognition. "This fact is not surprising. In many regions of the world women find the courage for resistance. They are often the ones



puny price for the children. In most cases their promise to send them to school is broken. This is exactly what happened to Urmila. She was quite certain that she would go to school soon, after being brought to the next bigger city by her brother. It was not until Urmila had arrived in the huge capital city of Kathmandu - where she had to address her new mistress with "your majesty" and take the children to school, without going through the school gate herself - that she suddenly realized she was somehow different to other children. The confinement, the insult, and the humiliation of the second mistress, who was working as a government official at that time, must have been terrible. Even today Urmila feels guilty when she remembers how she had left her mistress and had not returned after a home visit.

Urmila has never given herself up during her time as Kamalari. In fact, she developed an indescribable will and fighting spirit. She learned to read and write with the help of the children living in the household. Her desire for education and further development is tremendous. Only after her liberation at the age of 17 and with support from organizations, Nepal Youth Foundation and Plan International, did Urmila's wishes of going to school finally come true. In the year 2000, the Kamaiya system was prohibited by Nepali government and the debt bounded labour was abolished.

The Kamalari tradition was in fact disregarded; however, the Nepal Youth Foundation was one of the first organizations to hold protests. The demonstrations showed their first successes in 2006. The Supreme Court announced the prohibition of the

Kamalari tradition. A further milestone was achieved in 2009 when the government assured financial support for former Kamalaris in school education. Just four years later, in 2013, the Government announced the official end and the abolition of the Kamalari system.

After her liberation, Urmila and her fellow sufferers freed other Kamalaris from bondage. They visited the surrounding villages. They informed and explained the inhuman situations in the households in the form of dramatic performance on stage to parents and villagers. The parents were shocked. They had no idea of the circumstances under which their children had to work. What other choice did they have? Fighting and struggling for pure existence and satisfaction of basic needs. Is this action comprehensible in the rich countries of the Western World? Urmila does not blame her father. This is not common in Nepal. Decisions made by the parents are highly respected and accepted.

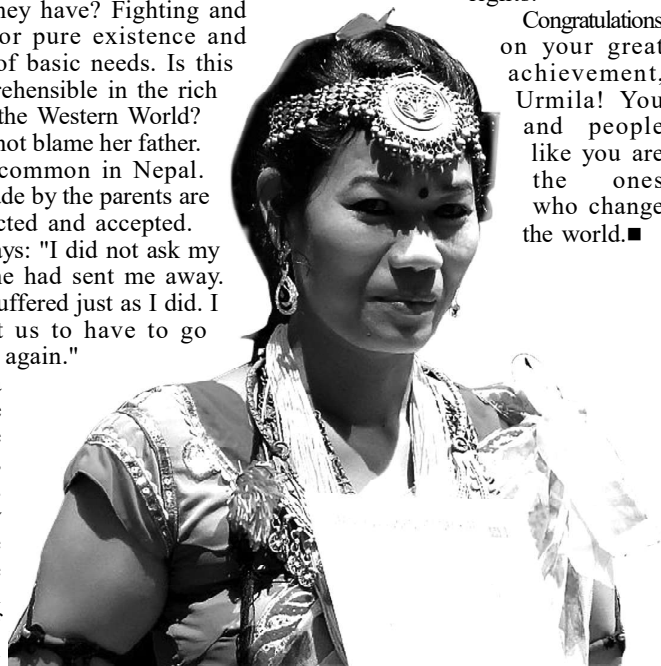
Urmila says: "I did not ask my father why he had sent me away. My parents suffered just as I did. I do not want us to have to go through that again."

As a consequence of the awareness and actions organised by Urmila, the revolt in the country and the efforts of national and

international organisations over 13,000 Kamalaris could be freed from slavery. Continuing programs run by these organizations help the girls to get an adequate education and live an independent life with opportunities to earn their living. There are still approximately 100 to 150 girls working as child slaves. Rescuing these children is still difficult. The lords and mistresses are government officials, teachers, and other persons of high social class. For the first time, the publication of the book "Slave-child" in 2011 drew the attention to the fate of now 27-year-old Urmila.

The film documentary "Urmila-my memory is my power" was published in 2016 and reports on her work and her fight for freedom. Now Urmila has been in the spotlight again. The award ceremony praises Urmila's outstanding commitment and dedication to the liberation, rights, and education of enslaved Kamalari girls. In addition, her work for the organization, Freed Kamalari Development Forum is highly esteemed. Urmila finished her college exams just before commencing her trip to the award ceremony in Germany. This graduation enables studying at universities and colleges of higher education. She would now like to study law to increase the ability to have more influence on people's lives, as well as on the compliance with and implementation of laws and rights.

Congratulations on your great achievement, Urmila! You and people like you are the ones who change the world.■



Sorry State of Metropolitan Kathmandu

Quality of life in Metropolitan Kathmandu is degrading. In General, there has been low level of satisfaction with services such as water, waste, health, education, road and transportation. Amongst, there are profound concerns regarding the road expansion, pipeline installation works of Melamchi Water Supply Project and waterlogging on the streets.

The road condition and water-sewage system are pathetic in the Kathmandu Valley. There are potholes, leakage of sewerage, broken roads and muddy waterlogged roads everywhere in the city. Hundreds of thousands of local people, pedestrians and school children have suffered everyday from this mess. Last week, a schoolgirl died after being swept away by sewerage drain. Another child was swept away by drainage water and was rescued by locals.

Is there government? Or, are there governments within the government so nobody is accountable? The current state of roads in the Kathmandu Valley is the microcosm of the functioning of the state today where the authorities lack will and capacity to serve the needs and interests of the people.

With the local elections, people have hopes for change and for betterment in the quality of their lives. It has been over one and a half months since the newly elected mayor, deputy mayor, ward chairpersons and ward members of the Kathmandu Municipality City have taken the oath of office and secrecy. We would like to congratulate each of you.

The newly elected office bearers in their first board meeting made an 11-point decision, including the launching of "clean the city" campaign. Recently the government had decided to build four smart cities on the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley.

All these promises are good, but first tell the citizens why would you destroy something if you cannot repair on time? Who is coordinating whom



BY DR. PRABIN MANANDHAR

on this road expansion, water supply and sewerage works? Who is accountable to the citizens and taxpayers?

Now I would like to ask these questions to the newly elected Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Sir, you may have clean the city or smart city dreams, but please work on the immediate priority to address pathetic road condition. You are leading the local government, so please step on. Attending meetings and making decisions have passed your 45 days, but we have not seen

any move on this important issue. Your remaining 55 days of your 100 days of making Kathmandu one of the best cities as your pledge during the election campaign will prove false, if you cannot address the road condition.

Given the coordination challenges, delays and massive of works remained to be done in the Kathmandu Valley, the (no)work situation cannot go on business as usual. We have seen for months that the current coalition of bureaucracy and contractors will not work to address the road condition and water-sewerage system. There might be an option of engaging the private sector under different modalities of public private partnership (PPP) where Kathmandu Metropolitan City coordinates, facilitates and monitoring the works.

The people of Kathmandu constituency are closely watching how the newly elected representatives will work to fix the problem. The time is running out.

Let's make Kathmandu roads potholes free!

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Dr. Manandhar is an expert of international development. Currently, he is working as Country Director of The Lutheran World Federation. He is the Convener of ACT Alliance Nepal

Forum. He is also a visiting faculty at the Kathmandu University. He can be reached at prabin.manandhar11@gmail.com ■

Sex And The City

Women are viewed as 'impure' and 'dirty' during their periods -- a bit nonsensical, right? But chhaupadi is indeed pretty common here

In the early morning of July 7, an 18-year-old Nepali girl Tulasi Shahi of Dailekh was found dead. During her menstruation period, according to a Nepali tradition called chhaupadi, she had been sent to a little hut, where a poisonous snake stung her twice. Separated from her family, she was unable to get help. The incident was shocking to me.

The next morning I shared the news with my Nepali friend Ruhy. She didn't show much of a shock. "Actually, even now, when I'm at my periods, my dad won't touch me or allow me to enter the kitchen. Women are viewed as 'impure' and 'dirty' during their periods -- a bit nonsensical, right? But chhaupadi is indeed pretty common here," she commented, shrugging rather sarcastically. Ruhy is my host sister. Staying at her house for nearly a month, I got a chance to fully observe and experience local Nepali's life, or more specifically, a Nepali girl's life. Get up at 6; cook breakfast for family; go to school; come back and cook lunch; wash the clothes or do some farm work; cook dinner; wash the dishes-cook, clean, cook, clean-the two verbs almost sum up Ruhy's daily routine. Sometimes I see men in the house cozily lay on the



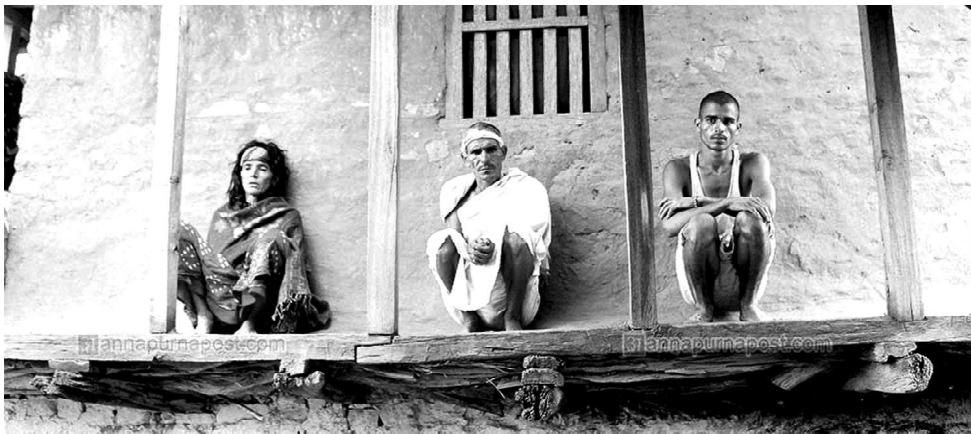
BY CHEN FAN

sofa, watching TV, and I asked why they didn't help with the housework. "Hah, that's the women's job," Ruhy's uncle answered carelessly, yawned and switched another channel.

Yet it seems to me that here women's "job" isn't just to cook and to clean, but also to serve and to obey. In remote areas like far-western Nepal, girl's marriage is always arranged by her family in order to follow the social norms, like same-

caste-marriage, which is why among the countless temples and shrines, there are many, like the Pashupatinath, for women to go and pray for a good husband, but not a single one for men to pray to have a good wife-deprived of the right to make decision herself, she could solely depend on the unknown "fate" or "fortune". Once I asked Ruhy's mother about her opinion about divorce, since her marriage is completely arranged by others and she hadn't met Ruhy's father before the wedding. It was just a guess, but she seemed quite confused and unfamiliar when hearing the word. Then she smiled, a bit embarrassed, slowly and firmly shaking her head, "Ehh, no...That's not possible." And not surprisingly, the typical Asian feudal idea of a family-son weighs more than daughter-fails to be dispelled in Nepal as well. I recalled that when I visited my Nepali friend Sunni's home, though he liked to stress how much he was satisfied with his five daughters, he still kept murmuring how much he wished to have a boy.

It is almost my natural inclination to care more about females, and it's almost my very first reaction to try to excoriate such tradition. Conservative, rigid, unequal-these



Family Members of teen Tulasi Shahi who died in hut by snake bite in Dailekh.

Photo courtesy : Annapurna Post

are words that I first came up with when I thought about the aspects of sex and gender in Nepali culture. However, the longer I've been staying here, the harder I find to just criticize-not because I tend to regularize such culture over time, but the culture itself had unfolded a far more complicated and extremely diverse nature, which I could neither simply regularize nor criticize.

In Nepali tradition, things related to sex and gender are always something obscure, even a taboo. Countless norms exist to make women behave "properly". In my host family, wearing pants or skirt above knees and getting home later than 6pm are considered "improper" for women, and I always felt constrained when walking among them. Yet it is totally different when I take a walk in Thamel, the most busy and welcome place for tourists, or the red light area of Kathmandu-the other name that it is famous for. Traditions are exiled here; instead they come in the open air here, mixed with the desire and a hidden invitation of sex. Erotic carvings in Durbar Square are made into souvenirs to attract tourists. Paintings of man having sex with woman in incredibly

various gestures are openly hung in shops. In the evening, sometimes till midnight, I still can hear the deafening music roaring in thousands of pubs and bars, streets away, and can sometimes see the tangling bodies dancing in extreme delight from the window from which the colorful disco lights spill out. Nights here are never quiet.

Thus, every time, I'm travelling between the local residential district

described this country as

"an isolated valley surrounded by endless mountains...there are countless temples here, decorated in precious jewelries...full of monks and pilgrims, people are remarkably religious and devout"(Shi Jia Fang Zhi, translated by me)

And thousands of years have passed since, now it is my first time in Nepal. Engulfed by the humid and exotic air, this Chinese girl felt a bit overwhelmed, yet more curious and enchanted to walk deep inside into this city. It is no more isolated; nowadays the country largely depends on tourism and is welcoming travelers from all over the globe every day. There are still a lot of temples, but more and more pubs and massage parlors are being built as well. Catering to tourists, hidden services provided by commercial sex workers like strippers and prostitutes are stealthily developed. It's been an open secret that some massage parlors in Nepal are in fact brothels-"there are hundreds of massage shops with beautiful Nepali women



Women heading to Pashupatinath Temple

Photo : Chen Fan

and Thamel, I feel like the bus is taking me from one extreme to the other. I can't help thinking about Xuan Zang, the first Chinese to land on Nepal, who

(prostitutes)," as written on the Nepal Nightlife Guide. What comes with these services is one of the most severe issues in current Nepal:

COVER STORY



human trafficking, or more specifically-girls/women trafficking. According to the International Labour Organization, around 150,000 to 200,000 Nepali girls and women, mostly illiterate and poor, are trafficked to brothels in India alone each year. Days and nights, among the stacked houses in the crooked narrow streets in Thamel, thousands of dark trades are taking place. People can sense the smell of danger in the dark sky.

The booming tourism, while extraordinarily beneficial for the country's economics, also brings in new and sheer cultures that stand on the other side of Nepal's tradition. The country seems to grow far from being completely "religious and devout"(Xuanzang), but generally forms a more complex, diverse and vibrant environment where various extremes encounter and clash. Kathmandu is the city that stands at the very center of all these tensions.

I've been wondering how people would live among these tensions that are all trying to tear the others apart, until I was taken by my host sister Ruhya to attend the Guru Purnima, the local Teachers' Day at her university. It was in fact a students' carnival in the name of teachers. Boys and girls were dancing the latest Nepali hit songs. In the dance, there were some

intimate interactions between the boy and the girl, and when they performed passionately on stage, students hailed jubilantly, while teachers and principals sitting in the front, on the contrary, all blushed a little and somehow shyly turned heads around to avoid eye contact with the dancers.

It was an unintentional glimpse on the audiences. Yet the difference revealed between these two groups

and forthright attitude towards sex and gender. They are people standing amid the whirl of the vibrant culture shock in the city, and trying to find a balance between the traditional and the modern through their own experiences. Ruhya is one of them. She managed to persuade her parents to not urge her to get married because she's still pursuing her college study. She's also working on her start-up of the homestay business and e-tourism. Ruhya has a boyfriend too. Although her parents object because her boyfriend is from another caste, she told me that she and her boyfriend wouldn't easily compromise since they both dismiss such rigid social hierarchy. The more I get in touch with Ruhya, the stronger I feel that even though Kathmandu appears to me as a whole in a bit mess, the city is slowly moving forward under various forces.

And I remember that morning, the end of our conversation was me casually asking Ruhya a question, "but when you become a mother, you won't practise the chhaupadi,



of people did make me realize that there are changes taking place in the younger generation, a generation that has a more open

right?" Ruhya laughed. In a confident and firm voice she said, ("Yeah, for sure") "No, I won't." ■

"Huge Progress In Family Planning"

Having worked for women's empowerment and in reducing maternal mortality through Marie Stopes Nepal and other organizations for over two decades, **KAMALA THAPA** is now the Chairperson of Sunaulo Parivar, an implementing partner of Marie Stopes Nepal. Thapa spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on various issues related to women's empowerment and role of Marie Stopes in Nepal. Excerpts:

How do you look at the state of women empowerment in Nepal?

If you look at the state of women over the last two decades, you can see a drastic change: the participation of women has significantly increased in various sectors. In this period, the government has provided adequate protection, promoted equal rights and made noteworthy investment for women's development. Of course, we can see certain changes for the better, however, there is still the need to do more and there are many areas for improvement.

How do you see the role of INGOs and NGOs?

Many NGOs and INGOs have been working in Nepal including in the field of women's reproductive health and empowerment, some producing the best of results. Sunaulo Parivar is one of them. Through Marie Stopes International, we have been launching nationwide programs which have been effective and popular as the service we provide is of high quality and affordable. I am very happy to say that the government has recognized us as one of the best organization in implementing the program targeting women and providing safe abortion, reproductive and sexual health services. In the areas of reproductive health and family planning, you can see tangible and praiseworthy progress. Marie Stopes and Sunaulo Parivar contributed significantly in reducing maternal mortality and meeting the millennium development goal. Even the Ministry of Health has recognized our achievements and has been helping us.

What changes do you see are important?

As family planning and safe abortion services are available, this has positively impacted the life expectancy of women, contributing to reduce maternal mortality. Along with this, women's participation in politics, social activities and education has changed. Number of elected women in recently concluded local elections is satisfying. As women consist of more than half of the population, they need to set their goals to achieve parity in all fields and be an equal partner in contributing to the development of the country. In this regard, I can safely claim the present trend is encouraging.

Don't you think discrimination still exists?

Women are the mother, sister, daughter, mother-in-

law and daughter-in-law who have a very important role to play in family and society. As such they are highly regarded and are to be respected and cared for according to our religious beliefs. It is unfortunate that they are still discriminated and neglected in practice. With awareness and improvement in education I feel and hope the situation will improve.

How do you see the difference in the priorities in the beginning and now?

When I started family planning program through Marie Stopes Nepal, the first and foremost priority of the organization was to reduce maternal mortality through the protection of reproductive rights. I led the organization for almost two decades as it focused on women's health and rights and quality service delivery. This is also an organization to protect the right to choice. Our goal is to provide women with choices so they can plan their own family and future. Now Marie Stopes has shifted its focus more to educating the youth population on reproductive and sexual health. Creating awareness of their rights will certainly help empower women.

What five programs do you suggest in the areas of women and reproductive health?

There is the need to increase investment in women's education. Along with mandatory education for girls there is a need for special programme regarding women and reproductive health in all educational institutions. Secondly, I feel the media and social media need to be encouraged to highlight and focus on the above issues. Third, our helpline programme 'Mero Sathi' where anyone can ask advice about reproductive issues has been very effective. Evaluating the result and increasing demand such programme need to be expanded. The third important area will be women's participation and exposure. We need to increase women's participation in all the sectors in order to ensure their rights and empowerment. The fourth programme I would suggest is encouraging women. They need support from family and society. Encouragement is the pre-requisites for women. Nepali women are very capable and they can contribute a lot for the country's development. The fifth programmed would be training opportunities. Women need to be able to stand on their own feet and help and encourage other women to do so.

How do you see the difference between the past and now?

In early days, discrimination against women was rampant, but now the situation is better and you can see many changes. I have to say, however, that there still exist such practices like Chaupadi and Devaki systems which should be abolished.

How do you see the level of awareness among women in family planning?



It has tremendously increased. Along with providing family planning method, Marie Stopes also provides the service. We do provide safe abortion, sterilization and distribution of various kinds of contraceptives. I am proud to say that my organization has been distributing contraceptives nationwide preventing unwanted pregnancy and giving women right to choice. We have also been providing education to create awareness on reproductive health. In this field we are proud to announce that Marie Stopes is regarded as one of the best organization in the world. With our dedicated efforts for more than two decades along with those of others, there is definitely an increased awareness among women in family planning.

What inspired you earlier to join Marie Stopes?

Realizing the dire health situation especially reproductive health of women in my country - mostly in remote areas I decided to be part of the program believing that the program would finally contribute to improve their health, bring awareness and consequently empower women. What I can say now is that after legalizing certain cases of abortion, Marie Stopes Nepal was the first organization that opened the safe abortion clinics throughout the country to

provide service to the needy women and save their life. Our nationwide presence has contributed to reduce maternal mortality rate of Nepal. Similarly, our clinics also protect the Reproductive Health Rights of women. This is a great achievement. It is the mother's decision whether she wants the baby, not anybody else's. Our mission is clear: children by choice, not by chance. In this sense, what I can say now is that Marie Stopes has also empowered women. Looking back at what we have achieved, I am satisfied and happy that I joined Marie Stopes.

How do you spend your time?

Since leaving as the country director of Marie Stopes Nepal, I am still involved with the programme as Chairperson of Sunaulo Parivar Nepal, implementing partner of Marie Stopes Nepal. There is still the need of a lot of work to do in the field of women's reproductive health and empowerment. I am also involved in social work as director of Hope for Nepal Foundation, an NGO which worked actively and provided relief supplies to the needy in all 14 districts affected by the 2015 earthquake. As I have a little more time now I often visit my children and particularly look forward to seeing my grandchildren.■

India China Border Conflict

No Headway

Despite over a month of stand-off at the tri-juncture border between India, China and Bhutan, there are no signs of the conflict being resolved anytime soon.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a face-off in the Donglang or Doklam region since June 16. India has said its troops acted in coordination with the Bhutan government to oppose the construction of a road by Chinese troops in an area which India claims that it belongs to Bhutan while the Chinese side asserts that the area is its very own. Soldiers from both the sides stand eyeball to eyeball just a few metres away in the conflict zone now.

Diplomatic maneuvers from the both the sides have failed to resolve the issue amicably. After failing to bring about any development in the stalemate, Foreign Secretary of India S Jaishankar speaking to a parliamentary standing committee on external affairs said that the two countries had settled many such disputes in the past and there was no reason why they couldn't do so again. He did admit that the Chinese side had reacted rather aggressively than earlier but appeared hopeful for a diplomatic solution.

But China once again reacted hotly to the non-controversial stance from India. During the daily foreign ministry briefing in Beijing, spokesperson Geng Shuan said the situation this time was 'utterly different in nature from the previous frictions between the two sides'. China even went further to poke India on Kashmir and said that China was ready to mediate in a 'constructive' way in the Kashmir problem. This marked the first official statement where China had



BYABIJIT SHARMA

deviated from its stated line on Kashmir being a bilateral issue.

The conflict has seen no headway despite leaders of both the countries, Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping meeting in Hamburg on the sidelines of the G20 meeting. Although 'a range of issues' were reported to have been discussed, it is unclear whether the stand-off at Doklam/Donglang was talked about. And even if it was, it seems to have been a futile effort.

In the escalating war of words, it remains to be seen how the two sides resolve the issue amicably. A solution to the problem seems challenging to devise. Backing out would mean creating a weak image of oneself for both the sides. Especially for India, which has acted in interest of its 'close ally' Bhutan, backing out would be particularly



India. China, on the other hand, with its aggressive rhetoric is less likely to budge from its current position. It appears adamant to its claim that India back out first and let Bhutan deal with the issue on its own.

The border drama, thus, is less likely to see an end anytime soon. ■

CHINA-INDIA DISPUTES

Looming Over Nepal

As China and India intensify their border disputes, experts believe there will be implications in various sectors of Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Nepal Government has maintained its neutrality over the border disputes between two of its immediate neighbors, the standoff will intensify their security concern in Nepal and an unexpected internal turmoil may be likely.

As Nepal has been passing through its own internal political disorder with restructuring of state institutions, including the local level administrative and internal security units, credible institutions to allay the concerns of the two neighbors are far from ready.

India, which has been always wary about Chinese activities in Nepal as a major threat to its security, has revived its intelligence wing to closely monitor Nepal's internal situation.

According to Indian media reports, India has revived its five-decade-old intelligence and combat units in order to keep a tab on Chinese maneuvers in countries like Nepal and Bhutan. The separate units will be part of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), which guards the borders with the two countries.

According to Russian Media Sputnik, in December last year, Sputnik had reported that the Indian government was considering to revive the 50-year-old SSB intelligence wing, following increased Chinese activities in New Delhi's extended neighborhood. The action was initiated after SSB had raised concerns before the government about China's project development and other activities across the border.

"The border [with Nepal] is very sensitive and the influence of elements of various types in these areas has mushroomed... we have proposed to have our full-fledged intelligence wing in the force," Archana Ramasundaram, Director General, Sashastra Seema Bal, said back then.

"The decision to raise combat intelligence services is based on the 54-year-old Special Service Bureau which worked on the principle of 'recruit locally, train locally and deploy locally'. The new service will have a larger objective than its predecessor and it is most likely that the forces belonging to this service would be deployed in the neighboring countries in quest," writes Sputnik.

Although Chinese have not officially announced deployment of any such security agencies, they will likely respond given their concern on the large number of Tibetan

Refugees living in Nepal and India and open border between the two.

Chinese security experts see Tibetan Refugees and open border between Nepal and India as a major threat to their soft security belly. With a long political interference, Nepal's only internal security wing is stuck in promotion row. Although new home minister Janardan Sharma Prabhakar promoted all the senior officers in vacant posts, it will take months to see the results in the field.

Given Nepal's growing international connections and open border over 1600 kilometers, Nepal's two neighbors will likely intensify the subversive as well as open activities.

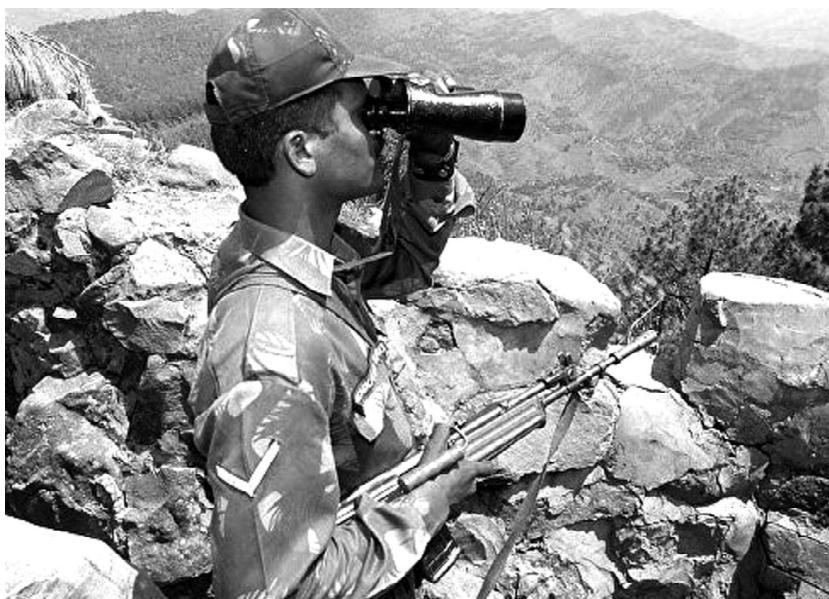
"In the fifty years long history of state building in Nepal, this is one of the most frazile

tight lipped.

Following the standoff in India China border, Nepal's foreign minister and deputy prime minsiter Krishna Bahadur Mahara paid an official visit to India and vice President Nanda Bahaur Pun visited China.

As the reports come out, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is preparing for his first visit to India upon the invitation of Indian prime minsiter Narnedra Modi in the middle of August.

"Nepal has good relations with both the neighbors. We hope that the border disputes between the two neighbors will settle soon and there will prevail peace and tranquility in the region," said a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking not be named.



Indian SSB at Nepal-India border

periods. As Nepal's political and internal security position is in the process of evolution, it will be natural for two neighbors to rely on their own apparatus," said a senior retired police officer on condition of anonymity.

Nepal's Position

With equally good relations with both the neighbors, Nepal has maintained its neutrality in these disputes. Despite the standoff taking place just a few hundred miles away from Nepal's border, Nepal has just remained is

Although officially India has not said anything about Nepal, Indian media see Nepal's position with suspicion blaming it for playing "China Card." Given the weak government and frazile political situation, Nepal does not have any one to assure credibly to India and China that Nepal cannot play onr against the other.

With suspicious remarks coming in the media, Nepal's position is much vulnerale in the present context. ■

Political Journalism, Or Weaponry?

Politics is the science and art of good governance dedicated to the service of the nation. Journalism is an activity that consists of collecting, synthesizing, hierarchizing and publishing information related to current affairs. To obtain such information, the journalist must resort to verifiable sources or his own testimony. Journalism should not be just transmitting information. Politics and journalism are two sides of a coin. Politics is a topic that has made journalism the most prosperous business.

Journalism, which is the fourth estate, is also called the fifth pillar of democracy. It has become a lucrative profession. Journalists will not get the freedom to write as long as we cannot build a strong society. Journalists should write in such a way that society can find an innovative and right direction. Journalism and politics are two professions that are linked for life, since they are the intermediaries between government and public opinion. On the one hand, journalism serves as the most recurrent channel to keep the public informed and on the other, politics serves as the agent of modification and transformation. Journalism is a profession that leads all who exercise a permanent contact with power.

Showing social reality is an ideological and informative commitment that the journalist assumes with the population. Commitment is sustained with professional ethics on which depends the credibility of the communicative environment for which it works.

The basic principles of journalism are Truth, Precision, Independence, Equity, Impartiality, Humanity and Responsibility. A sure sign of professionalism and responsible journalism is the ability to take responsibility. When we make mistakes, we must correct them and our apologies must be sincere, not cynical. Let us listen to the concerns of our audience. We cannot change what readers write or say, but we can always rectify when we have been unfair.

Political journalism, principally the one that has sufficient entity to form public opinion, is found to be lacking. This is so simply because it has not had the strength to contain, confront or channel the populism that is settled in politics, adjusting its editorial project to a news style that has shown not to consider the superior interest of the country as the main principle of its editorial position in the national political event.

When countries are experiencing growing social storms, Nepal is no exception. Political journalism, conscious of its power, has a moral responsibility to articulate the different interests at stake, including those of political nature and to become a collaborator of peace and social stability.

Today more than ever, political journalism must be transformed into an entity that articulates the stability and social peace of Nepalese, which contributes to the process of transformation that is underway and will not stop until injustices are rectified. A journalist must have harmony with respect to the public issue, political authority, religiosity, party system, democracy and cultural diversity that exists in Nepal.

In any democratic society, there is no doubt that the impact of media treatment on political dynamics is fundamental. Although this remains a view of the mind, the objectivity of the media is theoretically a cornerstone of the proper functioning of the democratic apparatus.

In journalism, ethics is not an unreachable precept but an indispensable tool to achieve the trust of its public. Credibility that



BY DEEPAK RAJ JOSHI

people have in the media will depend on the degree of commitment assumed by the journalist.

Journalism is honesty, transparency and humility to recognize errors in information which now pass the immediate examination of watchers with the ability to rectify them instantly. The role of the mass media in politics is fundamental; alluding to this that every journalist must have the responsibility in reporting and every government must have the responsibility to respond to the society it is leading.

The functioning of the political system in Nepal is not normal. There is a vacuum; people stopped trusting the state and the parties long ago. This vacuum is filled by the media. If there is a crisis in politics, then there is one in the media too. They are somehow related. Journalists

must return to the basic values and tenets of journalism.

Journalism is the search for the truth and the loyalty of the journalist is exercised towards the citizens. Journalism is primarily a discipline of verification. Most important thing is that there is no journalism without an exercise of personal conscience.

Ethics has always been linked to the professional recognition of journalists and directly involves its relations with the public and society. It is the necessary expression of media self-regulation and journalistic ethics. It dictates the inevitable conditions for building and restoring the pact of trust and communication with the public. It is thus based on the critical and self-critical capacity of the media.

There are more than 8,000 media persons working in all areas of modern media- print, electronic and online- across the country. Is it possible to find a free press in a society that is not democratic?

Conversely, can a democratic society exist without freedom of the press?

The media are the subject of numerous accusations because of certain practices in the processing of information and often their connivance with certain powers without counting the negative effects of a people approach. Journalists must scrupulously respect for ethical principles and ethical rules in order to gain legitimacy to produce and

disseminate credible information.

The Internet is changing the public circulation of information and opinions. The decisive turning point was the emergence of social networks. The public is now involved, and every citizen can play a role in today's media landscape. New actors, such as bloggers, vloggers, and any one who has the domain have appeared on the scene. Online media challenges the very values and practices of journalism. What is journalism? Who is a journalist? These questions have already come to the forefront at the advent of the Internet. True Journalists have lost their privileges. Freedom of information is common in democracy. The sharing of responsibilities between journalists and the public could lead to participatory ethics.

Actually, politics and journalism are just two different words today, but their meanings and objectives are exactly alike. "Get your work done and the public can go screw themselves". The truth is that Nepalese journalism is stuck in a quagmire between the periphery of power and market. What we have in Nepal now is not journalism, it is a political heavy weaponry.

The author is a lecturer and IT consultant. He also writes fiction under the name of Kapeed Joshi. He can be reached by email at info@dipakjoshi.com.np. ■

When countries are experiencing growing social storms, Nepal is no exception. Political journalism, conscious of its power, has a moral responsibility to articulate the different interests at stake, including those of political nature and to become a collaborator of peace and social stability.

NEPAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

Saving In Billions

Having lost a huge amount of money in the past, Nepal Electricity Authority has now reduced its annual loss from Rs 8.89 billion to Rs 1.5 billion this year

By A CORRESPONDENT

If an organization has a good manager with commitment to positive changes, there is nothing impossible. NEA's managing director Kul Man Ghising has proven this, turning a loss-incurring entity into a profit making organization.

Until a year ago, it was unbelievable for the people to sleep in a load-shedding free Kathmandu. Through his managerial skills, Ghising reduced the power cut in the valley and other parts as well.

Although almost 100 MW of power was added last year and new transmission lines connected Nepal and India, these two are not the only reasons for the improvement of the situation. Had Ghising not reduced the power loss; the situation would not have changed much. His hard work did the magic, which was virtually impossible a decade ago.

After continuously suffering from heavy losses, Nepal Electricity Authority drastically reduced the amount of loss this year, while almost wiping out the load-shedding hours.

Although the government cleared NEA's loss of Rs. 27 billion in 2010, NEA's loss was rising every year. Last year, NEA suffered a net loss of Rs.8.89 billion. However, it reduced the loss to Rs.1.5 billion this year.

"When I was appointed the Managing Director, my aim was to turn in profit for NEA. Although I am still unable to take NEA to profit, I have been able to reduce the loss," said MD Kul Man Ghising. "The burden was added this year because the salary was increased by 25 percent as well."

According to NEA's annual report, NEA's income increased by Rs. 5.5 billion following revision of tariff and Rs. 2 billion by reducing the technical loss. Other reasons include increase in internal production, reduction of loss in

from selling electricity compared to Rs.32.47 billion in previous years. The income from selling electricity increased by Rs. 14 billion.

After write off of loss of Rs. 34 billion, NEA is suffering from loss since 2001-2. After appointment of



NEA MD Ghising

dollar PPA projects, weaker dollar and Japanese.

According to Managing Director Ghising, operating profits used to be low but this year NEA was able to make a profit of Rs.2 billion. Last year, there was a loss of Rs. 3 billion in operation costs. But this year, the operation cost was just 1.88 billion rupees.

According to MD Ghising, last year NEA's total income was Rs.50.02 billion and its expenditure was Rs. 52.04 billion. In foreign exchange fluctuation, NEA got projects of Rs. 490 million.

Nepal Electricity Authority generated Rs.47.05 billion revenue

MD of NEA, Ghising presented second round financial reform proposal to Ministry of Finance.

According to the proposal, NEA will increase the present equity share of Rs.50 billion to Rs. 125 billion. As per the Mahakali Treaty, Nepal has been receiving 70 million units of electricity from India at the price of Rs. 5.41 per unit. The government is requested to convert Rs. 3 billion due of NEA as a share. This proposal has already been endorsed by the cabinet.

As is said, if there is a will, there is a way. MD Ghising has shown that things can turn right if all work with commitment and dedication. ■

"What If Education Enabled People To Analyze Possibilities?"

DR. SHABNAM KOIRALA-AZAD, the first Nepali woman dean of an American university, is the daughter of the renowned Magsaysay award winning journalist and media educator of Nepal, Bharat Dutta Koirala. Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Education. She received her Ph.D from the University of California, Berkeley, in Social and Cultural Studies in Education. She began her career as an assistant professor of international and multicultural education at the University of San Francisco (USF). Within a few years, she became the department Chair and Associate Dean of the School of Education, where she now is the Dean, which is a very prestigious position in the American education system. Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad talked with **DEEPAK RAJ JOSHI** of **NEW SPOTLIGHT** about her education, career, experience and home country. Excerpts:

How do you relate with your university and your home country?

My interest in education and my passion for social change originated in Nepal. Much of my research as a doctoral student was focused on the Nepali higher education system so I continue to be rooted in the Nepali context. The School of Education at USF has a legacy of training education professionals who understand that pursuing a career in education means being aware of the social, cultural, political and economic forces influencing educational institutions and those they seek to serve. Many of our current students and alumni demonstrate the power of scholarship combined with informed practice. Promoting social justice in education has been a mission of our school and I hope to continue this legacy.

How do you empower and retain excellent faculty?

When I was considering taking this position in the USF, one of the factors that excited me was the opportunity to work with the excellent group of faculty currently in the School. Most, if not all, of the current faculty members are well respected and recognized scholars in their respective areas of work. The knowledge being produced in the School of Education is known to be pushing the boundaries of educational and interdisciplinary research. Since many of the faculty have experience teaching in primary and secondary schools, they also come with excellent teaching skills. I value these contributions immensely and hope to continue recruiting faculty who are not only excellent in their work but also understand that students look up to them as mentors and role models. Retention of excellent faculty involves many factors—a genuine validation of their work, a recognition of their diverse and unique contributions, mentorship of junior faculty by more senior members and support from leadership. We have some of these practices and systems in place but we can always do better.

Your field of research is pretty interesting; as I gather, you have done research on globalization, immigration, education, cultural theory, gender, social change and so on. What is the key role of education in all these sectors?

My scholarship is interdisciplinary and falls in several different fields. The way I see it, the main role of education is to raise consciousness. Much of what we see and experience in our realities often go unquestioned because we have seen or experienced education as a simple consumption of knowledge but what if education actually enabled people to question various aspects of their reality and gave them the tools to both analyze possibilities and to work towards alternatives? Much of what we see as problems in society at large or education specifically are problems that have persisted through time. If we don't see education as essential to breaking these cycles and disrupting the reproduction of these issues, then we will continue to promote a type of education divorced from actual social realities.

Privatization in education is increasing rapidly in Nepal. what is your take on private education versus public education in a developing country?

Yes, when I first conducted research on Nepali higher education in 2000, I was struck by the number of private schools that were emerging alongside a strong perception that private schools were the only educational institutions that offered quality education. During my visit this time, it felt like there was a private school sign after every other home. In many contexts where governments have not been able to prioritize quality public education as a human right and a national priority, we see this type of takeover by the private sector. I tend not to judge people for their choices but what I think is important to understand that the privatization of a public good, like education, is part of neoliberal policies and changes affecting the entire world. What this does to a country like Nepal is that it creates bigger opportunity and access gaps where these gaps are already pretty large. People who can afford to pay can have access to quality education and those that don't are left without choices. Education also becomes a business enterprise rather than a public enterprise critical to the project of democratic social change.

Our current education system focuses on a goal being achieved. How can education experts improve schools and the whole education system and what will be your role?

This is a larger project. Education has become synonymous with credentials and degrees. There is nothing inherently wrong with this but what has been lost in this understanding of education is the role that education can play in raising critical consciousness, in promoting civic engagement, in empowering individuals



to serve their communities, in offering the knowledge and tools necessary for advancing democratic communities. What we are trying to do at the School of Education at USF is to challenge some of the ways in which education has been used to uphold unequal power dynamics that benefit a powerful few and instead to promote the idea that education can be truly transformative in all the ways I mention above. This shift in understanding and implementation will take time but I remain hopeful and committed.

Recently nationalism has been a widely-discussed topic in Nepal. As someone born and brought up here, what are your take on nationalism? What can you do to stay true to your Nepali roots?

Nationalism is healthy to the extent that one can feel rooted in a national identity but can embrace other nationalities, ethnicities and races. I'm always inspired by friends who practice a type of nationalism that is funneled into productive change efforts in Nepal. As you all know, my father and the type of commitment he has shown to empowering some of the most marginalized communities in Nepal continues to be my biggest inspiration. However, I am cautious and critical of staunch nationalism that alienates us from others and stagnates our movement forward. Our vision has to be world embracing even if we are deeply embedded in a local context.

As a mother of two children, how do you think a woman can successfully balance her career and personal life?

I'm not sure balance can ever be achieved and I'm not even sure how I would measure balance. I had both my kids while being a professional--while going through grueling tenure processes at the university, while serving as Chair, Associate Dean and now Dean--so I've never thought of raising them as separate from other aspects of my life. When I decided to have children, my husband and

I were committed to raising two human beings who would contribute to building a better world. For this reason, we have teamed up, quite well if I may say so myself, on raising them. The journey has included sleepless nights, long hours at work, sick days at home with kids so I'm not sure about "successfully balancing" but for me, it has certainly involved an intentional prioritizing of responsibilities and time. My kids have always been on the top of that list.

You are the first Nepali female to hold such a prestigious post in the American university system. What's the key to this successful career?

I'm not sure I'm in a position to offer insights on how to lead a successful career. In my experience, it has been very important to know myself as a professional, to strive for excellence, to build authentic relationships in the workplace and most importantly, to maintain integrity.

Is there any advice you would like to give to women who want to follow your footsteps?

More than advice, I would like women considering similar professional paths to know that there are many of us who would be happy to provide guidance, mentorship and accompaniment. Since there are so few Nepali women in academia and higher education administration, it's often hard to find people who understand our identities, our cultural contexts, our struggles and while I've been lucky to find colleagues and mentors from other backgrounds with whom I connect closely, it would be nice to have a network of strong Nepali mentors. Please feel free to reach out. In many of my professional experiences, I've had to figure out institutional cultures, expectations, norms on my own. There's no reason why we cannot be more proactive in providing support for future generations of Nepali women. ■

Climate Change Adaptation Learning



BY BATU UPRIETY

Nepal has established a good foundation to advance Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) at national and local levels. Adaptation communities are tracking experiences and lessons of NAPA-prioritised adaptation actions through LAPA framework, and NAP process. Nepal's NAPA and NAP formulation is both process and product oriented. Self-motivated and government nominated 201 members of nine working groups led by nine competent ministries are fully engaged in the NAP formulation process. Events are frequently organised for sharing the CCA experiences. Within the last one and a half month, five major events held in Kathmandu have shown that Nepal can be a 'learning centre' for CCA.

At a time when the NAP process is in a 'neutral gear', MoPE, in collaboration with UK-Aid ACT initiative managed by OPM and Practical Action and with support from ICIMOD, organised an interaction, 'review, reflection and consolidation workshop on NAP formulation process' on 1-2 June 2017 in Kathmandu. Presentations were made on key activities and outcomes of 13 months, climate trend analysis, and preliminary analysis of climate scenario of Nepal. ICIMOD is likely to come up with a complete climate scenario for Nepal by July 2017, and meteorological extremes by September 2017.

Active engagement of inclusive working groups, 'leave no one behind', and transparent and gender-sensitive approaches are considered very effective in bringing multi-stakeholders in the mainstream of the NAP formulation process. Thirteen months have been effective to clarify and adopt approaches to reach the 'destination' on a timely basis, establishing a very good foundation to address medium- and long-term adaptation needs of the country.

MoPE in its annual event (WED on 5 June 2017) released three useful documents to advance the NAP process, namely synthesis of nine working group-based stocktaking reports, vulnerability and risk assessment framework and indicators for all working groups, and observed climate trend analysis of Nepal (1971-2014) in the last 44 years.

On 21 June 2017, the Central Bureau of Statistics released a Report on National Climate Change Impact Survey 2016. The report provides data and knowledge on impacts of climate change on people and resources along with 32 (farm and off-farm) adaptation practices. This Survey conducted by a mandated institution provides 'perception-based' reliable information from 5060 respondents of age above 45 years who live in the same locality for over 25 years. Interestingly, about 70 percent of respondents (households) reported that they have changed 'food consumption habit' to adapt to climate change impacts. This survey provides a basis to advance the NAP process using practised adaptation options to adapt to climate change impacts in climate vulnerable areas.

ICIMOD organised a 'science-policy roundtable on climate change adaptation' on 29-30 June 2017 in Kathmandu to discuss on scientific evidence generated at regional/national level but having relevance for action at local level, adaptation solutions identified under ICIMOD's research initiatives, and future research areas and capacity needs.

Senior officials of State Government of India, namely

Himanchal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Uttarakhand, and experts from India, Nepal and Pakistan, including ICIMOD experts participated in the event designed to share CCA experiences in Indian States with focus on State Action Plan on Climate Change. Nepal's NAP process was shared with initial experiences. Enhanced consultative processes within and beyond 201 members of nine working groups coordinated by nine ministries are excellent platforms to work with and benefit from multi-stakeholders. This experience provides multiple opportunities to advance the NAP process in Nepal and other countries may wish to follow Nepal's practical and proven approaches.

On 11 July 2017, Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation organised a workshop on 'climate change-friendly water supply and sanitation infrastructures' to inform multi-stakeholders on study-based impacts of climate change on water sources and livelihoods, and local innovative approaches in rehabilitating water supply systems. Studies confirmed that local communities are experiencing temperature rise along with irregular and high intensity rains and extreme weather events, observed drying-up of water sources and groundwater depletion, increasing of prolonged drought, and dysfunctional water supply systems. The study team proposed to, inter alia, use less water, harvest rainwater and develop water storage system, dig recharge pits and protect water springs, including implementation of LAPAs. Participants were

also informed about the state of NAP preparation in Public Health (& WASH) working group. The Ministry has launched an online (khanepani.news.com). Enhanced interest in integrating climate change would contribute to make water supply and sanitation infrastructures climate-resilient.

Adaptation for Smallholders in Hilly Areas (ASHA) Project organised a workshop on 'CCA capacity building for the staff of line Ministries' to inform key multi-stakeholders about project objectives, approaches and activities; understand experiences and

lessons from other similar projects such as building climate resilience of watersheds in mountain eco-regions project, hariyo ban programme, and share LAPA preparation experiences from ASHA project, including gender and social inclusion. Reflection and input from partners is expected to streamline activities to benefit climate vulnerable poor people of target areas of Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Jajarkot, Dailekh and Kalikot districts.

CCA integration is gaining importance and momentum in planning of climate impacted social and economic development sectors in Nepal. Implementation of people-centric NAPA-prioritised adaptation actions through LAPA framework and climate resilience activities has been instrumental in integrating CCA into relevant policies and programmes. Initial learning from LAPAs and other activities would provide a solid basis to advance the NAP formulation process. About 7-8 years of concerted effort on CCA informs that multiple opportunities exist to make development climate-resilient and make Nepal an 'open museum for adaptation learning'.

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MIGRANT WORKERS

Threatened Jobs

Despite assurances from countries with Nepali migrant workers, their environment is no longer conducive as it used to be

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although ambassadors of Gulf region, including Qatar, have issued assurances to Nepal government that it should not worry about the future of almost half a million migrant workers, working in Qatar, the threat to their jobs remains.

The growing tension in the region will have a major setback to Nepal's migrant workers. According to Ministry of Labor and Employment, almost over 1.5 million Nepalese are in the Gulf region.

Following the cutting of oil prices, the demand of Nepali migrant workers has already declined in the Gulf. Department of Foreign Employment is receiving few work permit applications in the recent months, particularly from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, two largest destinations for Nepali migrants.

Ambassador of Qatar to Nepal Yousuf Bin Mohammed Al-Hail, in his recent meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Minister of Labor and Employment Farnulla Mansoor, assured that there is no threat to Nepali migrant workers.

"Governments of Gulf countries have assured us that Nepali migrant workers are safe in their countries and current disputes will not bring any trouble to them," Minister of Labor and Employment Mansoor told the New Spotlight. "We are monitoring the situation carefully. If there is any crisis, we will evacuate Nepali migrant workers safely."

As the flow of remittances

continues to decline, Nepal's banking sector, which has been relying on remittances, is facing a severe cash crunch. As there is a shortage of cash, banks are borrowing money with high interest rates.

The recent crackdown on illegal migrants in Malaysia is likely to have impacts on remittances with the future of 40,000 Nepali people there at stake.

The Malaysian government's recent move against illegal migrant

Bank said that large-scale outbound migration and remittances inflow contribute in the erosion of competitiveness, fuelling consumption, sustaining low-productivity agricultural activity and reducing pressure to generate more productive employment at home.

"Though migration and remittances have delivered gains for Nepal, it has also compounded the long term-problem of the country,"

said Damir Cosic, a senior economist with the World Bank.

"Remittances are providing safety net so people do not fall into poverty, but are not being used to leverage rapid growth and greater opportunity," read the report. "Large-scale migration is rapidly, and in many cases, permanently, depleting the country's stock of human capital," it added.

"And, while remittances are helping boost household expenditure. They are doing little directly to improve public service delivery. Consequently, the quality of education, health care, and infrastructure remains abysmal," stated the report.

According to the report, large-scale migration and the ensuing remittances have also contributed to the steady loss of competitiveness (through appreciation of real exchange rate) and have enabled the growth of the low-productivity services.

Out of the total workforce of 14 million, some 4 million (28 percent) are working abroad, an estimate shows. ■



workers may hit Nepali laborers in the Southeast Asian nation, which is among the most preferred labor destinations for Nepali outbound workers. Currently, around 500,000 Nepali people are working in the region.

With the growing problems in different parts of the region, the World Bank says comprehensive reforms must be made to become lower-middle-income country by 2030.

The World Bank has said that the remittances and outmigration at a large-scale is accentuating existing challenges of the country, which is in 'a low growth, high migration trap'.

Releasing Nepal Country Economic Memorandum, the World

Safety For Students With Disability

It is a very basic imperative that all the children who go to school must have access to safe and a healthy education environment which is free from discrimination and abuse. This is of importance especially to children with various kinds of disabilities who are very vulnerable and also indisposed to a huge risk of being discriminated, left out, or uncared for.

In Nepal, there are very little accessibility options, for instance infrastructural support or other kinds of support that make it convenient for children with disabilities. A study conducted by Norwegian Federation of Organizations of Disabled People found out that out of the total number of children with disabilities (5-18 years) only 41.3% of all benefit from some sort of educational opportunities. This means that about 60% of the children with disabilities which are largely intellectual, psychosocial, physical, and even multiple disabilities are deprived of the opportunity of even basic education.

Almost all of the parents of children with disabilities were said to have lamented about how their children felt humiliated, ignored and discriminated within and outside the school by friends and sometimes teachers. Also, half of them complained about the kind of difficulties they faced because the environment was not suitable for easy movement and this really hindered their other every day activities, like reaching to class on time. This is noncompliance of the Special Education Policy (1996) which exclusively mentions that the school infrastructure and teaching learning materials should be accessible for ensuring and promoting access to education of children with disabilities. Many children do not attend schools even if they wish to and also drop out at alarming rates owing to the provisions not being implemented.

Resource classes were established in Nepal to provide support in the education of children with disabilities. Many students with different kinds of disabilities are supported in various mainstream schools by such resource classes. These students also benefit from the scholarship provided by the government. However, despite these resource classes, the so called inclusive educational institutions almost never set up the appropriate environment to incorporate children with disabilities. There also do not exist special facilities, like a different evaluation mechanism or make-ups for activities they cannot participate in.

Another major concerning issue is that a lot of parents are clueless about ways of handling children with disabilities. This is also linked directly to people living in communities with extreme poverty who do not know how to go ahead with the proper nurture and care required for



BYADITIARYAL

the children with extra needs. In schools too, the teachers are inadequately trained. This also does not make up for the lack of attention and care they have been deprived of. The infrastructure including means of transportation and roads, are poorly built and not at all feasible for children with disabilities. These factors induce drop outs along with non-inclusive classrooms and disabled friendly material and assistive device.

There are a lot of provisions made under various legislations in order to protect and promote children with disabilities, for example they are exempted from paying fees

up to the higher secondary level, and they have a reservation of five percent of the total seats in government organizations that provide vocational training.

In accordance with the Education Act of 2000, the government is not barred from making special provisions for disabled children. However, we need to keep in mind that there have been provisions that have been made but not implemented from a long time. Countless suggestions have been given by people across the years but have always remained in the pipeline. The mere existence of these provisions have not helped over the years.

The reason these plans have failed and the provisions have not been accepted despite being mandatory and binding is because creating an inclusive community for the disabled requires a lot of resources. The money is scarce, and scarcity of money is a huge hindrance to any form of development. It is very less plausible that a school in a rural village in Nepal will have all resources required for students with disabilities. Rather than going for a lot of big changes,

they should probably start with small changes. For example, instead of focusing on greatly designed disabled-friendly buildings, more stress should be laid on acceptability and the feeling of responsibility towards people with disability. Trainings and orientations can be conducted to raise awareness about the kinds of disability and how other people can be of help. Inclusive curriculum can be designed to ensure everybody is aware and accepting towards people with disability like it is a normal part of people's lives. Lastly, parents and family members, especially belonging to economically and socially backward communities should be able to receive help on the kind of requirements of children with disabilities and how they should be dealt with. Sensitisation could be one small mechanism but it is probably the most essential mechanism to eradicate discrimination against disabled children and to make their lives easier. ■



MARIE STOPES

Contraception Matters

New data reveals the 1.6 billion reasons contraception matters

By A CORRESPONDENT

New data released by Marie Stopes Nepal has revealed the 1.6 billion reasons why we need to act now to ensure modern contraception and family planning services are an option for every woman. Lack of access to family planning is a major cause of maternal deaths in the developing world, exposing women to unsafe abortions and risky births.

As policymakers, donors, and advocates gather for the Family Planning Summit in London, research from Marie Stopes Nepal has highlighted the 1.6 billion reasons why contraception could transform women's lives around the world.

According to a press release issued by Marie Stopes Nepal, if each of the 69 FP2020 focus countries provided contraception to every woman who want it by 2030, as agreed under the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs), family planning would prevent 1.6 billion unintended pregnancies, over 500 million unsafe abortions and 1.5 million maternal deaths. In Nepal, this equates to 14,600,000 unintended pregnancies averted, 4,43,000 Unsafe abortions averted and 8,600 maternal deaths averted.

Sophie Hodder, Country Director of Marie Stopes Nepal, says, "These figures show the incredible effect that contraception can have: 1.5 million lives saved, 1.6 billion lives transformed. This is why family planning matters and why this

summit is so vitally important. "The goal of getting contraception to every woman that wants it is ambitious, but it has to be because the stakes are so high. Without access to contraception, women are more likely to have a large number of children in quick succession, putting significant pressure on their health, their family finances and their prospects for the future."



Over the last five years, the world has made impressive progress in expanding access to modern contraception. Despite population increases, for the first time in history, unmet need for contraception has fallen, with a record 300 million women and girls across 69 of the world's poorest countries now using modern contraceptives. But huge numbers of women are still missing out, particularly the young, people in humanitarian crises and women in the

hardest to reach places on earth.

Why now? This Family Planning Summit is a response to an urgent global need. Today, more than 60% of sexually active adolescents in developing regions who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraception. With one of the largest generations of adolescents in history entering their reproductive years - 1.2

billion, our actions today could mean the difference between poverty and prosperity for entire nations.

"Marie Stopes Nepal provides contraception and safe abortion services to women every day and we see with our own eyes the transformational effect these services have not just on women's lives, but on their wider families and communities and national stability and security," said Sophie Hodder, Country Director of Marie Stopes Nepal. "It is a smart investment."

The case for investment is even more compelling when you realise how cost-effective family planning is and the huge savings it can bring. Expanding and improving services to meet all women's needs for modern contraception in developing regions would cost \$11 billion per year, or \$1.75 per person per year with every additional dollar invested saving countries up to \$120. ■

Misinterpretation Of Communism In Nepal Or Populism To Reach Out To The Voters?

It is widely known that the Nepali government has not been very stable recently and probably will continue changing in the foreseeable future. Firstly, it must be noted that it is not easy for a foreigner with no knowledge of Nepali to get clear updates from local parties' websites since their English versions are not being updated. For instance CPN-Maoist center's last English update on their Home page goes back to 2013 and many sections of the CPN-UML website say 'Coming soon'. Regarding the Nepali Congress and the RPPN, their effort to inform English speakers about the history and ideology of the party may seem slightly better but many sections like their Constitution, manifesto or press releases remain untranslated. One may argue that the majority of voters are Nepali speakers and that there is no need for English translations. However, there are more than 123 languages spoken in Nepal. According to the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 the official language is Nepali in Devnagari script but any language spoken by the nation should be recognized. Therefore, in such a multicultural country, parties should attempt to reach out to everyone and English is probably the best way to do it.

On the other hand, it could be argued that there is a bigger problem which is internal and concerns the illiteracy levels in Nepal. There is still a high percentage of the population, especially in remote areas with no access to schools where people don't read Nepali.

Justly, this is more serious than having political websites up to date in English. However, having more material available in English would certainly ease the communication with the Embassies and the world. Having the communication eased could result in receiving more international aid.

Currently the majority in the parliament is held by the Nepali Congress. The party is center-left, followed by far-left CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Center. Putting the numbers together, far-left parties have a majority at the moment - more than the social democratic Nepali Congress. In such case Nepali government can be considered communist even though the two parties' agendas differ and they do not cooperate much. There is an important issue I want to raise here. Is communism the real ideology in Nepal or is it an overcome



BY PETRA MATOUŠKOVÁ

tradition that is used in a populist way to reach out to the voters?

Considering the fact that Nepal suffers from high levels of poverty, it is understandable that communism gives people hope for a better life. The problem observed here is that parties use communism in a populist way to reach out to the voters and distinguish themselves from the majority held by the Nepali Congress. Implementation of essential characteristics of a communist state such as abolition of private property, collective ownership are not on the state's agenda.

There is no censorship and people can freely travel when visas obtained. Previous centralized system has also changed into federalism which makes it easier for regions to implement their policies and administer their budgets. Center-left policies such as elimination of unfair gaps in incomes by for instance introducing a minimum wage system

or provisions of necessities of life is hardly seen either. There is no limitation on working hours and local businesses are being supported.

Another element that has surprised me is that the government has issued public holidays on 26th July for Eid al-Fitr even though there is only a small minority of Muslims living in Nepal. In the Soviet interpretation of Marxism religion was banned and whoever wanted to practice religion had to do it in secret. After the CPN-UML party posting a picture with Eid Mubarak on their website it can be seen that communism in



Nepal has been in a way revised. But can communism really be liberal? The world knows that communism as we knew it has failed and even in China it has started intermingling with capitalism and religion. One paradox that strikes me is the ideology of abolishment of exploiter class against the exploited as a basic feature of communism. Is it not this exactly what the caste system in Nepal is based on? It is not only communism that needs to stress the abolishment of caste system on a political and cultural level. At the moment social democracy is a great middle way for Nepal. People need social security and a government they can trust. My only concern is that communist parties acting as social democrats can mislead the voters about the real ideology behind it.

(She is an intern) ■

"Vigilance Checking Illegal Drug Trade"

As the issue related to abuse of drugs is growing in Nepal Joint Secretary and head of Narcotics Control Division of Ministry of Home Affairs **KEDAR NEUPANE** spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on related issues. Excerpts:

What is the level of problem related to narcotics?

Narcotics have become a global problem now. Generally, addition of alcohol and tobacco, which are not considered narcotics, is growing among children and youth. From use of tobacco and alcohol, many children and youth have turned to narcotics and got addicted to it. Given their nature, alcohol and tobacco also need to be treated as drugs. According to a survey, there are more than 200,000 addicts of narcotics and illegal drugs.

How do you look at trafficking?

Drug traffickers sometimes use Nepal as a transit. However, such incidents are negligible due to strong vigilance of the law enforcement agencies. Nepal's law enforcement has a very good record in tracking the illegal drug traffickers. As Nepal has zero tolerance, our enforcement agencies are very vigilant all the time.

Despite your claim, there are frequent reports of Nepal Police nabbing the drug carriers. How do you look at it?

As I have mentioned to you that the local drug addicts, mainly youths, are growing in number. A few local groups are in illegal drug trade. However, Nepal Police maintains a strong vigilance and they often foil their efforts.

What are negative results of the uses of narcotic drugs?

Narcotics and other drugs have all kinds of negative impacts in our society. They increase social crimes, suicides, social disintegrations, and feuds and decline in the productivity. There is rampant disintegration of families in society due to drug addiction. It is also destroying peace and harmony in society. Its impacts not only last in family but spread in society, country and beyond the boundary or international level. It has badly hurt children, youth, elderly, men and women and all the regions.

What plan does the government have for rehabilitation?

Our policy is also to encourage rehab centers to treat the drug addicts and bring them into normal life. There are a number rehab centers providing services to the people having addiction problems.

What are the reasons behind illegal drug trafficking?

Poverty is the main reason behind drug addiction and drug trafficking. Poor people start to use illegal drugs to get a respite from poverty. Other reasons are bad friends, extra spending, failure of guardians to take care of children, frustration among the youth, low level of awareness and open border are reasons behind this. Parents need to give adequate time to their children and understand their difficulties. Even the children of those parents who use alcohol and tobacco are easy prey for abuse of drug.



How do you see national commitment and National Policy?

Nepal is a signatory to International Commitments and Agreements to control the Narcotics and illegal drugs. The government is committed to control and contain illegal drugs and substance. Nepal is a party of UN Agreement against Drugs. They include the single convention on narcotic drugs 1961, the single convention on narcotic drugs, convention on psychotropic substances, 1971, The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and SAARC Illicit Traffic and Narcotic Drugs Convention 1993. To fulfill the international convention, Nepal has Drug Control Act and Narcotic and illegal drug control policy.

What about legal punishment?

Nepal has a strict punishment against the drug traffickers. According to the Act, the punishment ranges from one month's prison to 15 years, going up to life imprisonment and up to 2.5 million rupees in penalty. As per the act, the person involved in using marijuana will receive up to 30 days in prison and two thousand rupees in penalty. Similarly, those involved in trafficking and planting marijuana will receive up to ten years' prison and Rs.100,000.00 penalties, depending upon the quantity of marijuana. The person involved in trafficking of narcotic products will receive life imprisonment, depending upon quality of drugs.

How about the future program?

Government is well aware about the situation. We are fighting an all-out war against the drug traffickers, internally and internationally. As a party to UN conventions and agreements, Nepal has its law enforcement agencies and Ministry of Home Affairs working in collaboration with other countries to fight against drug abuse. ■

The French People Have Clearly Chosen An Open France

I am pleased and honored to celebrate again in your company the French national day, the "Bastille day".

On the same national day last year, I told you that the value of fraternity was challenged. Unfortunately, a few hours later, a cruel act of terrorism in France confirmed the threat. Let me tell you how moved I was with all the messages of sympathy I received on that unfortunate occasion.

But today, we have all the good reasons to rejoice from the bottom of our hearts.

French citizens have elected a young and energetic President, Emmanuel Macron, who won the popular vote by a non-ambiguous margin including in Kathmandu. Thanks again to all of you for congratulating me for that election!

The French voters have also elected a deeply renewed Parliament, with 75% new members, 5 years younger on average than in the previous House. It strongly supports a government based on strict gender parity and a balance between senior politicians and non-politicians.

By their votes, the French people have clearly chosen an open France, open to the world, open to the European Union, open to movements of people, open to free and fair trade based on strengthened competitiveness.

Together with our German partners, our leaders aim at building an active European Union which protects better our citizens against terrorism and climate change as decided by the Paris agreement in 2015 and endorsed last week in Hamburg by the G20; an Union which promotes free and fair trade of which the signing of an EU-Japan economic partnership agreement is a recent example.

By a striking coincidence, Nepal successfully went through a parallel political renewal. The local elections, on 14th May and 28th June, have been an undisputable success. I will never forget the atmosphere of enthusiasm, seriousness and joy expressed by the Nepali voters in the polling stations we visited. That was a historical event in your democratic process.



BY YVES CARMONA

So it is with great confidence that I wish continued success to your peaceful transition, including the next electoral steps.

Peace and stability go hand in hand with economic progress. France is exporting to Nepal this year even more planes and helicopters made by Airbus and ATR.

We just celebrated the production by OT-MORPHO of 5 million MRP passports and the same company is also involved in launching smart identity cards for the Nepali citizens.

Building a cable car, based on a French-Nepalese consortium, can be a success story responding to the strong wish of Kathmandu citizens for a better environment and a better managed public transportation.

In that regard, I am happy to announce that the French Ministry of Culture has decided to provide funding to UNESCO in order to send experts to Nepal to support the rehabilitation of your exceptional heritage.



France is also continuously funding NGOs actions such as rebuilding of schools in cooperation with their Nepali counterparts, as you can see on photos we project tonight.

(Yves Carmona author is the Ambassador of France to Nepal. This is an excerpt of the Statement Delivered at the French national day, the "Bastille day").■

Finding Passion Will Take Work



BY SHRADHA GYAWALI

Figuring out what to do in your twenties is not easy, at all! We have so many options and so many expectations to meet (especially the ones we set for ourselves). It is no wonder we all feel lost and confused.

Sometimes I feel like I totally get this whole adulthood thing. My room is clean, and I can even cook my own food (yay!). And then suddenly, I lose my balance. In those moments, I begin to question every little thing. It feels like I am overwhelmed with a wave of self-doubt.

Life's big questions that I thought I already had my answers to start coming back to me one by one. Am I in the right direction? Am I actually doing something that I love? What am I most passionate about? Is this what I have wanted from life? Where does my happiness lie?

We all want to find our passion. We ache to find a job that wouldn't give us the scares every Sunday night. We are waiting for one of those moments, when we'll finally feel good about our job and our passion will be lurking right around the corner. Well, I hate to break it to you (and myself!), but constantly wishing for everything to fall into place is just delaying reality. We all have to go down that hard painful path of figuring out what our passion really is.

It's so easy to get bogged down in the details. We can wrap our minds around being in a certain role and going through the daily grind. But, what do you dream of doing every day? And what are you really, really good at?

As we get older, we forget about the things that made us really excited when we were younger. But often, those could be the biggest clues to finding our passion as an adult. However, just because your parents always told you that you were an amazing writer in the first grade doesn't mean that you have to write and publish a novel by the age of 25. Passion for me is the magical crossover of what I've always done by choice and what's missing in my life at the very moment.

Until I had found my passion, I felt like I was floundering around in my career. I just couldn't make sense of everything that I had learned in college, and this new weird job wasn't challenging me to do anything that I actually cared about. Once I let myself be free, and see where my interests really were, I realized a bunch of things about myself. Good tasting and looking food was always important to me as a kid and I love using my imagination. This didn't necessarily change as I got older, but maybe it got lost a little along the way. College, job right out of it, and between all the other hustles bustles I had forgotten my love for good food until I connected the dots and started a bakery with a friend.

It's completely fine to not have your life figured out, I am sure most people don't have it figured out either. Enjoy the present moment, get to know yourself, and be curious to try new things that excite you. In the end, we are all trying to find our way.

So here's something for everyone trying to find their passion, it's going to be hard. It's going to take work. Finding your passion won't be easy, but, it will sure be worth it. ■

ILO

Program With Partnership

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched a new partnership to promote sustainable development and inclusive growth in the country. The ILO organized the launch of the partnership with thirty Advocacy Challenge Fund (ACF) grantees under the larger UNNATI program funded by the Government of Denmark.

The partnership launch aims to highlight the importance of improving advocacy for responsible business, including rights and good corporate governance in four value chains: orthodox tea, ginger, dairy and cardamom in seven hilly districts of eastern Nepal.

The event was chaired by Suresh Babu Tiwari, Officiating Secretary, Ministry of Agricultural Development. The event included participation from across the government, donor and implementing partners of the ACF, including employers and workers organizations, media organizations, and civil society organizations. Among the dignitaries present were Valerie Julliand, UN Resident Coordinator and Ingrid Dahl-Madsen, Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of Denmark and Richard Howard, Director of the ILO Country Office in Nepal.

In the opening remarks, Richard Howard highlighted that this inclusive partnership has been carried out in an exemplary way. Binod Bhattarai, Senior Agriculture Economist from the Ministry of Agricultural Development shared that the selection process was transparent and meticulously planned. Ms Ingrid Dahl-Madsen expressed that the inclusive growth program is a milestone for the country. She stated, "Increased productivity and happy employees can and should go hand in hand." In her remarks, Valerie Julliand stated, "As Nepal works toward "leaving no one behind" in its implementation of the SDGs, this is the time to ensure "Decent



work for All."

Ram Chandra Lamichhane, from the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters and an ACF grantee shared that they are optimistic about the project and that this project has helped touch the lives at the grassroots. In the closing remarks, Mr. Suresh Babu Tiwari expressed hope that the program will contribute to the development of agricultural sector in Nepal.

The UNNATI program is guided by the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning the Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) which provides guidance to governments, employers' and workers' organizations as well as to MNEs on responsible and sustainable workplace practices. The MNE Declaration was most recently revised in March 2017, and will contribute towards Nepal's efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ■

Nothing New Under The Sun: The Loss Of Ethics In Society!

We often heard from our elders that 'There's nothing new under the sun'. It didn't matter how shocking an event took place, how crooked someone you'd known all your life turned out to be - for instance, the sweet little housewife down the lane who post-mortem you discovered was a slum landlady covering for a husband who was carrying out insider trading on decrepit properties; or the town clerk who lived next door and who was one of the very 'top bananas' in the Province, a real pillar of the community kind of bloke but, as it turned out, had been fiddling the municipal books all along. White collar crime, it's called.

Compared to the 'more sophisticated' 'Rest of the World' (ROW) our white-collar crimes seem small; in degree that is. The difference is the same everywhere - today a petty thief commits a small white collar crime, he she short changes a customer; you take more than you're entitled to - maybe innocently at first but since you weren't found out you continue. I am thinking of the price of fruit and vegetables; or the price of fancy creams and shampoos in the supermarkets; books in the bookshops and I could go on. Anything that comes in from the outside receives a whopping rise in price, which most of us pay! Is there any harm in that?

Well the harm lies in the habit of not settling on fair prices. But then again, fair prices need fair wages; and who gets fair wages in our part of the world? It's something that ought to be looked at. It's one thing to say 'well the item you pay Rs 4,000 for here is selling for 400 pounds in London', and to copy an item (known as duplicating), stealing the brand and flooding our markets with 'duplicates', thinking all along that it won't harm because the originators earn much more than us, but it by no means keeps things in balance.

As you all seem to notice time and again 'things are so expensive' in one or other of the many capitals Nepali globe trotters seem to visit!

When foreign travellers visit our shops it's almost painful to watch many of our inexperienced traders trying to wring out every last halfpenny from them, deluded about the probable circumstance of the customer. Every foreign face is a 'rich' face for us and we continue down the line from merchants to taxi drivers, to pleasure trips and so forth.

It goes on and extends into the government and development sectors. After all a little slice off the total price for you or me is hardly going to make much difference in the long run! But then greed takes over and the little slices grow until their results are obvious in luxury vehicles and huge houses, so much spent on building them but not enough on visible maintenance such as washing the



BY GRETA RANA

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windows and so forth.

It's being going on since before the advent of the motorcar, that very obvious sign of male dominance. There are, too, collateral impacts. Young women have to keep up with fashion and to do so the poorest among them go to all kinds of means to acquire the cash that buys that fashion. Young men may well follow the same path to acquire the latest motorbike and the roads are overloaded with noise and pollution.

Meanwhile people become angry, angry with overtly greedy politicians and blame them for the way things fall apart. It's time we looked at where all the corruption comes

from: it starts with the smallest aberrations like accepting overpricing food items as a norm; over pricing services as a norm; and in this I don't leave out some of our more luxurious hospitals where service staff are under paid and patients have to pay the prices for rooms that they'd pay for at starred hotel.

In many hospitals in Asia today, the health sectors are using the maintenance of human life as an item of blackmail. Distress over the health of a loved one opens up an avenue of opportunity to those who would milk

the ill of whatever they can afford. Not all hospitals do that; some are quite reasonable, considering the burdens of debt they bear from governments and banks that are not particularly interested in social entrepreneurship.

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fence of course; but are the skills better there? Maybe we are delusional by a network that rewards a referral!

In the decades since I settled in Nepal, I've witnessed the growth of the health sector. I have met some remarkable men and women of both my generation and the upcoming one-all medical professionals. Many of the brilliant among them have left for that greener grass, but many have stayed back. Perhaps they would vouch for my surmise that our doctors are as well educated and skilful as anywhere else, the problem lies with the facilities, particularly facilities provided to government hospitals. The kerfuffle over the procurement of a new MRI machine for Bir Hospital is a case in point. Parties who will neither use the machine nor maintain it want to profit from it, after all the patients will bear the cost! What makes them think there is nothing unethical about this in a poor country like ours?

Well, let me say the profiteers are always the middlemen; and it all begins with the prices affixed on our everyday foods! ■