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**OPINION**  
Dr. Omkar Shrestha



**VIEWPOINT**  
Smita Gyawali  
Rajan Acharya



**ARTICLE**  
Hemang Dixit

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Feb 26, 2021

FORTNIGHTLY

MELAMCHI

## Bhagirath Prayas

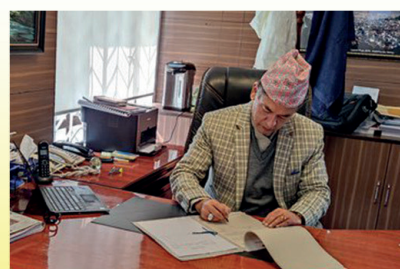
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**REINSTATEMENT OF HOUSE**  
Coalition Politics



**NEPAL-JAPAN**  
All-Weather Friends



**HITENDRA DEV SHAKYA**  
Strengthening NEA



# खर्गों ओदरु

## ॥ गोरुकरु

### गोरुकरु गोरुकरु

जसरुले अरुको भतरुईमा आफुको खुशी खोजुदछन्  
उसरुलाई वाइ वाइ सरुताम गोरुदछ ।



## दरुने तहका सरुकार गुरुओवारु:

### अनुय गरुँ नुदुकरु हसरु र दुुरुवहारु



नेपाल सरुकार  
सरुवार तथा सरुवना प्रतुगुठि मनुओलुय  
सरुवना तथा प्रसारुण वरुगुगु

**Editor and Publisher**

Keshab Poudel

**Contributor**

Sabine Pretsch

**Design/Layout**

Sahil Mokthan, 9863022025

**Marketing Manager**

Madan Raj Poudel

Tel: 9841320517

Nabin Kumar Maharjan

Tel: 9841291404

**Editorial Office**

Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 977-1-4430250

**E-mail**

spotlightnepal@gmail.com

P.O.Box: 7256

**Website**

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**Notes From The Editor**



With work delayed by almost seven months, Melamchi Water Development Board has started testing and commissioning of 27.5 kilometer long Melamchi Tunnel. Following the damage of one of the gates in July last year, the process of commissioning and testing was suspended. With inspection from experts and correction in the gate valve and improvement in tunnel, Melamchi Water Development Board has started diversion of the water. Although it took almost two and half decades for the tunnel to reach the present state, this is one of the miracles in infrastructure development projects in Nepal. Constructed to supply water to over 4 million population of Kathmandu Valley, Melamchi Drinking Water Project passed through several crises, one after another. Constructed under loan from an Asian Development Bank-led consortium, Melamchi project will supply over 370 million liter water per day to Kathmandu Valley. Under the leadership of Secretary Madhav Belbase and his strong team in the ministry, Melamchi is likely to pass this phase of testing and commissioning and start the supply of water to thirsty population of Kathmandu Valley. We have decided to report on the commissioning and testing of Melamchi project as a cover story for this issue. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations over 60 years ago, Japan has been providing Nepal with all kinds of support to develop infrastructure such as road, hydropower, drinking water and helped institution building process. As Japan celebrates its national day, we have decided to cover extensively the views from various scholars from Japan on Nepal Japan relations and other regional and global issues.

**Keshab Poudel**  
Editor

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# Operation Clean Mountain

*Nepali Army is getting ready to clean the filth from six mountain peaks this year*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Along with its major role to safeguarding the country, Nepal Army has been conducting several other activities to protect and preserve the country's heritage and natural sites.

Following the assumption of office of Chief of Army Staff (CoAS), COAS General Purna Chandra Thapa has announced that Nepal Army will also get involved in the cleaning of the mountain peaks and base camps all over the country.

In the last two years, Nepal Army has already brought a large volume of garbage from Everest Base Camp and other peaks. This year Nepal Army has decided to launch this campaign in six different peaks.

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the world, the number of climbers in this season will likely be much smaller. Given such circumstances, it is a good time to take a mission to clean the mountain peaks.

According to an estimate, many of Nepal's mountain peaks have seen filth and waste growing as a leftover of mountaineers. Nepal Army's move to start a cleanup campaign is a milestone against that backdrop.

Two years back, NA had cleaned Mt Everest. As per NA, it is preparing to clean Mt Everest, Mt Lhotse, Mt Pumori, Mt Ama Dablam, Mt Makalu and Mt Dhaulagiri.

The NA has targeted to clean the base camps and the areas above it of these six peaks. The NA has stated that it will collect at least 35

tons of garbage from the peaks, with around 18 tons of garbage from the areas above the base camps.

The Ministry of Forest and Environment; Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal Tourism Board; Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality; Thasang Rural Municipality; Makalu Barun Rural Municipality; Nepal Mountaineering Association; Himalayan Rescue Association; and Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee will be joining NA on this peak-cleaning campaign. According to NA, the campaign will begin from April 13 by handing over the campaign flag to the climbing and cleaning team. And the campaign will end on the World Environment Day on June 5.

The NA has stated that the non-perishable garbage will be brought to the capital by helicopter and land transport. It will then be handed over to a recycling plant. The cleaning climbing team includes 43

climbers from the army as well as Sherpa and other supporting guides.

For the cleaning campaign, the expedition team members are taking training in Jomsom. NA has estimated around Rs 125 million would be needed for the campaign, of which, the Ministry of Forest and Environment will spend Rs 100 million, while the remaining expenses will be borne by NA itself.

The army has stated that joint collaboration with various agencies is necessary to ensure that the mountains are not littered instead of conducting frequent cleaning campaigns. The mountain clean-up campaign was launched in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic; NA could not conduct a cleaning campaign last year.

Announcing the campaign to clean the mountain, Nepal Army has shown that it cares for the nature and conservation of Nepal's valuable asset.



## NEWSNOTES

### COP26 President Calls Upon PM Oli



Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has received a delegation of the Government of the United Kingdom led by Alok Sharma MP, the President-Designate for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

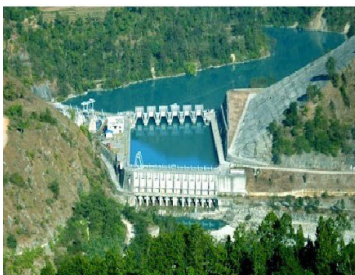
Views on Nepal-UK relations, collaborations on climate action and co-operation in energy sector, among others, were exchanged on the occasion. COP26 President Sharma briefed the Prime Minister about the priorities and plan in the lead up to the COP26 to be held in Glasgow in November 2021.

Prime Minister Oli expressed satisfaction over the increasing level of engagements with the UK on the matters of common interest, both at bilateral and multilateral levels. He assured Nepal's full support to the successful holding of the COP26. He conveyed his best wishes for all success of the conference.

The COP26 President was to pay a courtesy call on the President the following day.

Sharma also has paid courtesy call to foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and discussed burning issues of climate change, green recovery, renewable energy, mountain ecosystem, etc. Views were exchanged on making the upcoming #COP26 a great success.

### JICA Launches Hydropower Technical Cooperation Project



JICA has launched a new Technical Cooperation Project in Hydropower Sector for sustainable development of energy sector in Nepal

The new Technical Cooperation Project, "The project for the Integrated Power System Development Plan of Nepal" was agreed between the Japan

International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation. The project will contribute to the achievement of SDGs 7 "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all".

Nepal will be bearing a problem of accommodating the rapidly increasing surplus of domestic power generation in near future. The project aims to develop the capacity of the policy and organizational entities necessary for smooth and sustainable export of the electricity generated by domestic hydropower to neighbouring countries.

### Japan Provides Assistance For Rehabilitating School Building

Japanese Assistance Targets Rehabilitating School and Building School Resilience to Disaster in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal Phase II, 2nd Year.

The Government of Japan has extended US dollars 641,800 (about NRs. 74.4 million), to Child Fund Japan under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects Schemes.

Child Fund Japan, an international NGO based in Japan, will work with a Nepali partner NGO, TUKI Association Sunkoshi (TUKI) and Gramin Mahila Srijansil Pariwar (GMSP), to implement the rehabilitation of a school and provide disaster prevention training in Sindhupalchowk District.

A grant contract for this project was signed and exchanged on 17th February, 2021 by Saigo Masamichi, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal and Takita Hiroyuki, Project Manager, Child Fund Japan Nepal Office.

This project is to foster and strengthen the capacity of public schools in Sindhupalchowk District in safeguarding children from natural disasters.

This project is now in its second year. It plans to rebuild a school in Raktakali, which was built with assistance from JICA in 1990. It also aims to conduct disaster prevention training, make School Safety Plans, provide disaster prevention education seminar to teachers, have earthquake drills at schools, etc. Direct beneficiaries from this project are expected to number 328 people and indirect beneficiaries will be approximately 4,500 people in the district.

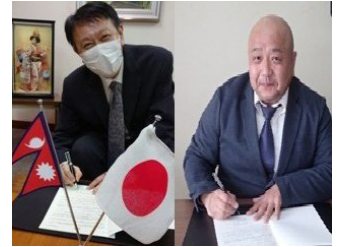
### Japanese Ambassador To Nepal Pays Farewell Visit To PM Oli

Outgoing Japanese Ambassador to Nepal, Masamichi Saigo, has paid a farewell visit to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at his Baluwatar-based official residence.

Ambassador Saigo is all set to return to Japan following the completion of his tenure that stretched for two years and nine months. On the occasion, Prime Minister Oli congratulated Saigo for his contributions towards bolstering the diplomatic relationship between Nepal and Japan.

Ambassador Saigo expressed his gratitude for the support he received from the Government of Nepal during his office here.

Ambassador Saigo had also met Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali at Singha Durbar prior to his departure.





## UNHCR Will Support Nepal To Solve Bhutan Refugee Problem: PM Oli



Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was given a courtesy call by Carolyn Spannuth Verma, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Nepal, reports The Rising Nepal.

During the meeting at the Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar, Verma expressed her concern about managing the problem of the Bhutanese refugees.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Oli thanked the UNHCR for its assistance in managing the Bhutanese refugees so far and expressed confidence that there would be continued support for the management of the remaining refugees.

He said that Nepal, a developing country which is struggling with its own problems, wanted to manage the refugee problem in a timely manner.

The Prime Minister said that the first priority was to create a favorable environment for refugees to return to their country with dignity.

If that does not happen, the government of Nepal is open to work on all three options-- relocating them to third countries and managing the remaining refugees in Nepal, said Prime Minister Oli.

He also expressed his confidence that the UNHCR would support Nepal for that, the daily reports.

## Australian Ambassador To Nepal Felicity Volk Presents Letters Of Credence

Newly arrived Australian Ambassador to Nepal Felicity Volk has presented her Letters of Credence as Ambassador to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari at Shital Niwas. She succeeds Pete Budd, who returned after completing his tenure in Nepal.

"On the 61st anniversary of Flag of Australia Flag of Nepal diplomatic relations, I'm honoured to have been appointed Australia's Ambassador to Nepal and look forward to building on the great work of my predecessor, Ambassador Pete Budd, to grow our close relationship with the Government and people of Nepal," tweeted ambassador Felicity Volk.



## India To Fund Rs.142M For Restoration Of Heritage Projects In Kathmandu

Three Contract Agreements were signed by the Project Director of CLPIU (Building) of National Reconstruction Authority and Contractors for conservation and retrofitting of Seto Machindranath Temple, construction of Dharamshala at Budhaneelkantha and conservation and development of Kumari Chhen and Kumari Niwas.

The signing event was witnessed by the Head of Development Partnership & Reconstruction Wing of Indian Embassy, Project Consultant INTACH, officials from CLPIU (Building) and other stake holders.

Mayor of Lalitpur, Mathadish of Budhaneelkantha Temple, Ward Chairman of ward number 25 of Kathmandu, representatives of User Committees of the Project areas also attended the contracts signing ceremony.

The three projects are part of cultural heritage projects being taken up by the Government of India for post-earthquake conservation and restoration under a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Government of Nepal.

The projects are being implemented under US \$50 million grant assistance committed by the Government of India for post-earthquake reconstruction of the Cultural Heritage sites across 8 districts of Nepal.



The Seto Machindranath Temple is a significant living heritage sites located in Jana Bahal in central Kathmandu. It is one of the main shrines of the protector God of Kathmandu Valley and is worshiped by both Hindus and Buddhists alike.

The conservation and retrofitting of the temple will be carried out at a cost of NRs 626 million. Located inside Ratnakar Mahavihara, the Kumari Chhen is a historic house of the living goddess of Patan.

The living goddess is central to culture and traditions of Newār Buddhist community and the Kumari Niwas has an important place in the rituals associated with the living goddess. The conservation and development of Kumari Chhen and Kumari Ni was NRs 456 million.

Seto Machindranath temple and Kumari Chhen and Kumari Niwas will be conserved as per Nepal's Ancient Monument Preservation Act with an effort to restore the two living heritage sites to their past glory and traditions.

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has been appointed as the Project Management Consultant for supervising the conservation and retrofitting and construction of these two projects will be working closely with authorities of Government of Nepal.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### NIBL Opens its 87 Branch In Lahan



N e -  
pal Investment Bank Limited has expanded its operation by opening its 87th branch at Lahan municipality, Siraha, ward no 8. The newly opened branch was inaugurated

by the mayor of Lahan Muni Sah alongside NIBL Province Manager of province 2 Sushil Shrestha.

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

NIBL has been catering to its customer from 87 branches, 128 ATMs, 30 extension counters and revenue collection counters and 56 branchless banking counters. The bank, being the recipient of five Bank of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euromoney awards for “Best Bank 2018” from the international publication - Euromoney. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A+.

### Russia To Help Rail Service Expansion In Nepal

Russia has shown its interest in expansion of the



rail services in Nepal. Russian Ambassador to Nepal Aleksei Novikov while paying a courtesy call on Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Basant Kumar Nembang at the latter's office in Singh Durbar shared interest in investing in the expansion of the rail service in the country.

The delegation led by the ambassador has submitted a letter of intent from the side of the Railway Company at the Ministry.

On the occasion, Minister Nembang said that the bilateral ties between both countries have remained cordial since long, adding that the government was ready to share

the DPR prepared for metro rail in Kathmandu.

### Israeli Ambassador To Support Agriculture Centre

Hanan Goder, the Ambassador of Israel for Nepal, said that Israel is ready to help Nepal to modernize agriculture sector. Ambassador Goder expressed his commitment to make the project of establishing the Agriculture Centre of Excellence (ACE) a success.

While paying a courtesy call on Agriculture and Livestock Development Minister Padma Kumari Aryal, the ambassador said that the embassy will make all the possible effort to make the Nepal-Israel cooperation project effective and successful.

The ambassador also reaffirmed earlier commitment to provide technical support for the program. On October 3, Nepal government and Israel government had signed an agreement to run the program.

The government has already formed a steering committee led by a joint-secretary from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD) while the ambassador has also informed that they have also selected representatives from their side.

Minister Aryal expressed her belief that the program will help increase agricultural production in the country. With a concept of ‘Learn and Earn’, the Israeli government is providing 11-month agricultural technical training to more than 500 Nepali students through this programme.



### Japan Extends Assistance To WFP In Nepal

The Government of Japan has agreed to extend grant assistance of Japanese Yen 364 million (about US\$3.47 million / NRs.405 million) to the United Nations World Food Programme (UN WFP) Nepal for implementing the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition Programme in five vulnerable districts of Provinces 1 and 2.

S a i g o Masamichi, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Ms. Susan Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP Nepal a.i. signed a grant contract in Kathmandu.

At the signing, Saigo Masamichi said the grant





will improve the health and nutrition of children and young mothers in Jhapa, Morang, and Sunsari districts of Province 1, and Saptari and Siraha districts of Province 2, which are prone to extreme weather events and other climate change-linked disasters. “This partnership between the Japanese Government, the Government of Nepal, and WFP has the potential to improve the health and nutrition of 19,000 children aged 6 to 23 months and 49,700 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers through specialized nutritious food, while 25,000 households will benefit from the establishment of Community Food Banks equipped with food storage facilities,” he added.

“By investing in the capacity of the government at different levels to implement nutrition programmes, the support will boost the ability of 2,500 government officials and health specialists to provide improved health and nutrition services during pregnancy and childbirth, to monitor child growth, and to provide nutrition counselling at 100 municipal health facilities.

Ms. Susan Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP Nepal a.i thanked the Government of Japan for the generous support.

### India Helps Reconstruct School Buildings

Ms Namgya C. Khampa, Deputy Chief of Embassy of India, Kathmandu attended the ground breaking ceremony for reconstruction of Shree Kanti Bhairab Secondary School at Kageshwari Municipality, Kathmandu along with Sushil Gyawali, CEO of National Reconstruction Authority.

The event was at-

tended by Mayor of Kageshwari Municipality, Secretary NRA and representatives of Shree Kanti Bhairab School Management Committee.

Government of India has committed a total grant of US \$ 250 million for reconstruction projects in the education, health, cultural heritage and housing sectors.

For the education sector, India has committed a grant of US \$ 50 million. Under this grant, 71 educational institutions damaged during the 2015 earthquake are being reconstructed in 8 districts of Nepal.

Eight schools have been completed in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts and 56 schools are under construction, Tender for award of work for reconstruction of Tribhuvan University Central Library is also underway.

Shree Kanti Bhairab Secondary School is being reconstructed at a cost of NR 266 million and will be built as per earthquake-resilient reconstruction norms of Government of Nepal.

The new three floor building will have 30 class rooms, library and lab/practical rooms, separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls and also furniture, according to embassy sources. The Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, a premier institute in India in the field of earthquake-resilient reconstruction, will provide technical hand-holding for construction of these schools.

On the occasion, an Memorandum of Understanding between Indian Embassy and CLPIU (Education) of NRA was also signed for construction of six secondary schools at a total cost of NR 518 million. Of the six schools four: Kanti Bhairab Secondary School, Champa Devi Secondary School, Dhapasi Secondary School, Bishnu Devi Secondary School are located in Kathmandu district and two: Siddheshwor Secondary School and Harisiddhi Secondary School are located in Kavre district.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chief of Indian Embassy said that the ground breaking was a testament to the strong and robust development partnership between India and Nepal. She further said that India remains committed to continue collaborating with Government of Nepal and its agencies for socio-economic development of Nepal, including post-earthquake reconstruction projects in Nepal.

### Saurabh Jyoti Moto Launched

Saurabh Jyoti, director of Syakar Trading Company Pvt Ltd - which is contributing towards economic development of nation for more than 50 years - has established SJ Moto to provide unique experience to motorbike enthusiasts.

SJ Moto, which was launched recently, showcases commendable motorbike collection of some historic masterpieces related to the country's history along with superbikes as well, as per a media release.

Motorbike enthusiasts can visit there to witness marvellous collection of superbikes and drink coffee and have some Nepali cuisine in café located there. Established as Nepal's first motorbike gallery and café, SJ Moto also has a retail outlet where customers can buy brand new and reconditioned superbikes along with official merchandise and clothes of various brands.



# Covid-19: An Overstaying Visitor Without Visa



## New Year 2021 has Come but 2020 is Not Gone

The year 2021 has come but the year 2020 does not seem to be gone yet. The massive disruptions in daily life continue. The despair of the masses keep getting worse as many of them are driven to utmost hardships, not being able to afford even their basic needs including food. The long lines of food distribution are an immensely painful sight – be it in developed countries or developing. The reported cases of mental depression and suicidal or near-suicidal tragedies are on the ascend in a global scale. Domestic violence, exploitation of women, and inadequate care for the children go unchecked. It has been a very stressful year unlike any other years before in our memories and experiences. As someone said, there are decades when nothing happens; and there are years when decades happen. Decades of hard-won gender-related achievements have been shattered in a matter of months. Regaining them is going to be a tough and time-consuming hard task again.

Income disparity within and among the nations is accelerating in favour of those who are already in the top echelon. In its most recent report, Oxfam laments that the collective wealth of the world's billionaires increased from US\$ 8 trillion to US\$ 12 trillion within just nine months' time from March to December 2020, almost like in a casino. The World Bank at the same time is warning that the same world's 100 million people are at the risk of being driven to extreme poverty, and 72 million children to illiteracy. It makes a mockery of the rich; it underscores the humiliating agony of the millions of middle-income class professionals with their income stagnating for decades; it forewarns the pending social divides and difficulties ahead; and it emphatically displays major deficiencies in the system.

The problem does not lie in the making of fortune itself; the problem lies when the colossal wealth remains totally unshared with the less fortunate segments of the society. In Sanskrit, Atharvaveda says, "Shatah Hastah-Samaahara, Sahasra hastah Samkeera". When it comes to wealth accumulation, it indeed encourages us to go ahead and make as much fortune as possible with hundred hands as though our two hands are not going to be enough. The shloka (or the verse), however, also cautions us not to stop there. It invigorates us and inspires us to be hugely com-

passionate in sharing the accumulated wealth to the neediest and poorest in the society who have been denied of such opportunities in their lives. The shloka stresses that our magnanimity must be so mighty to be requiring one thousand hands for philanthropic charity work because our two hands are going to be barely enough. After all, it has been hammered out time and again that philanthropy is not charity; it is social responsibility.

The impressive surge in the stock market is belying the people's desperation in the real market. The shareholders' surging profits in Wall Street are only contrasted by the stakeholders' stagnating income on the main Street. Such a situation is being coined as "K shape recovery" where some sectors of the economy do significantly better (like technology, software, and finance industries) while some other sectors falter pretty harshly (like travel, aviation, hospitality, entertainment, and other service industries) leading to the splintering of the economy, and widening of the income chasm between the billionaires and the bottom-less poor. The fault line in the market economy under Capitalism is becoming increasingly obvious prompting CEO of AOL, Steve Case to stress that Capitalism for the poor and Socialism for the rich simply cannot sustain. It now needs rebooting. The pandemic continued since 2020 is exposing the structural flaws and weaknesses in the rich as well as poor economies alike.

As the year 2021 arrived, we all exchanged fake smiles and cheers amid our hardships, just to give a false pretension as if everything is okay with us. We ourselves have felt pain in the sufferings of others, as others may have felt the same way in our own sufferings. Now I understand why Maya Angelou must have titled her own autobiography book "I Know Why a Caged-Bird Sings". Pathogens are unequivocally demonstrating time and again how humans are so fragile and vulnerable. They neither care about the man-made demarcation of an old year and a new year, nor they bother to honour the artificial borders imposed by countries.

Perhaps very few new years have been awaited with so much excitement and anticipation than the year 2021. Yet no new year's excitements and anticipations have been as devastatingly overshadowed by the overhangs of the previous year as the year 2021. As the New Year 2021



unrolled, there were so many heartfelt prayers, longings, and high hopes for a better future, safer medical protection, and total emancipation from Covid-19. People craved economic security, and overall better days than in 2020. On the first day of the New Year 2021, I, like everyone else, following our grand old tradition, greeted many of my friends and family members with good health, progress, peace, and bliss. I dare say, that many others like me, were lying to some extent (with a good intention of course) while extending our mutual greetings to one another. Because it was only all too evident that the risks of ruins and fear from the viruses (old and new variants) that had started and spread during 2020 are still among us in 2021. Perhaps we all have been so fatigued with our cumulative harrowing experiences in 2020 that we simply wanted to be blanketed in some soothing comforts and assurances from one another, even if they were likely to be somewhat less true and less real. The year 2021 has come like false dawn – the dawn that has broken but the sunlight is yet to brighten the day.

### **An Uninvited Guest Imposing Unwanted Rituals**

This pandemic has forced humans to alter structurally many of their rites and rituals, and norms and traditions. Suddenly, our basic ways of mutual greetings with handshakes have become unsafe.

Paying visits and respects to the elders in the family have become a health threat to them. Human congregations have been made taboo, and social distancing from one another, a compulsion, rendering human physical intimacy a fade memory. Once-in-a-lifetime events like wedding celebrations and university graduations of children and grandchildren now go unattended. Even the most heart-rending events like mortality and funerals now cannot be mourned in a decent manner with much-deserved deep respect for the departed souls. It is a great injustice indeed with no one to complain to, and nowhere to plead!

Face-to-face teaching between teachers and students is considered medically not recommendable. Virtual life led by tech-apps like zoom, live storm, join.me etc are replacing real human conferences and communications. Masking more than half of the face (which used to be the traits of terrorists, and bank robbers during the early days) is now mandatory. Working from home (WFH) has reduced friendship among our office-colleagues to the screen level. Business spaces are becoming not as important as before due to increasing automation. Likewise, workers' physical presence in their offices is considered not so critical because of digital instruments like emails, virtual conferencing, google docs, chat channels, etc.

The CEOs of big corporations, however, seem

to take satisfaction when they remark that their corporations are now seeing “productivity going through the roof”. However, there are also other CEOs like Staya Nadella of Microsoft who are concerned and feel that “Digital technology should not be a substitute for human connection”. Truly, it should not be ignored that there are many others who cannot resort to working from home either for their lack of skills, or simply due to the nature of their work as the frontline workers in the hospitals, and in many other basic service fields. So much of their services are demanded during the pandemic, and yet so less recognition is given to their works. Even lesser is their meagre income for their daily high-risk works. These people thus get hurt more in the increasing shift of work from the office to home.

Yet, several of such practices are going to stay with us, even after the COVID 19 viruses will be gone for good. Many countries are already making it clear that wearing a mask, conducting as many official meetings virtually as possible, maintaining physical distancing, allowing no more than half of the staff in the office at any one time, and encouraging work from home are going to stay with us in the short to medium term. We have already started to address it as the so-called “new norm” and have already

begun to adjust our life ahead accordingly. Interestingly, while the birds and beasts used to be, and are put to the cage in the zoos, humans now find themselves being increasingly caged at home as their official work confines them a large part of their time to home. These unfathomable changes are happening all in one year.

### **We All are in the Same Boat**

We are already being warned, lest we all be caught mentally unprepared, that the

elimination of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to take four to five years, and only after that, any good degree of restoration of the pre-pandemic normalcy could be expected. This seems realistic and understandable. There are various vaccine-related issues that will need to be addressed during this period. These include the issues of possible vaccine supply constraint (nationally, globally or both), people's shifting level of confidence in the efficacy of different brands of vaccines and their doses, their willingness or hesitation to take the shots, equitable distribution of vaccines to rich and poor countries alike, the institutional readiness of many developing countries to effectively handle the task of vaccines administration, etc. Addressing them is likely to take several years. Living in a shared world, no country can be considered fully safe until ALL countries are deemed safe.

*to be continue ..... / visit website*

**As the year 2021 arrived, we all exchanged fake smiles and cheers amid our hardships, just to give a false pretension as if everything is okay with us. We ourselves have felt pain in the sufferings of others, as others may have felt the same way in our own sufferings.**



## REINSTATEMENT OF HOUSE

# Coalition Politics

*After the reinstatement of House of Representatives by Nepal's politics enters into a new stage coalition politics*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As soon as constitutional Bench of Nepal's Supreme Court reinstated the House of Representatives, political leaders are working to develop new strategy to face the coming session of the House of Representatives.

Following the verdict of Supreme Court to reinstate the House of Representatives, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli announced that he will face the floor of the house and test his majority.

With the verdict of Apex Court, Prachanda-Nepal led faction of Nepal Communist Party summoned the parliamentary party

meeting to replace the leader of the parliamentary party.

These two decisions of ruling party showed that they are now in final stage of formal split. It is yet to know who hold the majority. As both the factions of ruling party are yet to formally split, the question now is who will lead the new government and how they will have a magic number for majority in 275 chamber House of Representatives.

## 1996 And 2021

In the parliamentary history, this is the second time Apex Court has ordered for the reinstatement

of the House of Representatives. Although the constitution and modality are different, the political repercussion of the reinstatement of the House of Representatives will likely remain the same.

As the verdict delivered by the Supreme Court under the leadership of chief justice late Bishownath Upadhyaya in 1996 ushered the era of uncertainty and opportunistic political culture, how the current court verdict that reinstated the House of Representatives will change the political course remains to be seen.



Delivering the verdict, the court turned Oli's move to dissolve the House is an unconstitutional. Spokesperson of the Supreme Court Bhadrakali Pokhrel said that in line with the verdict, the government will have to summon a session of the House within 13 days.

Five judges led by Chief Justice Cholendra Sumsher Rana, including Anil Kumar Sinha, Sapana Malla Pradhan, Tej Bahdur KC and Bishwombher Man Shrestha, took the decision.

In its unanimous verdict 5-0, the constitutional bench of Supreme Court of Nepal deemed Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's move to dissolve the House an unconstitutional move, thereby overturning the decision.

Along with the reinstatement of House of Representatives, the Supreme Court also directed the prime minister and the President to summon the session of House of Representatives within 13 days of verdict.



Chief Justice Cholendra SJB Rana read out the SC verdict to restore the HoR which was dissolved two years prior to its full five-year term. President Bidya Devi Bhandari had dissolved the HoR on December 20, 2020 as per the recommendation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

Given the structure of

House of Representatives, it will be not difficult to forecast the possible scenario with prime minister blackmailed by the members of parliament.

In a verdict delivered in 1996 by a bench led by chief justice late Bishwonath Upadhyaya against the dissolution by CPN-UML-led by prime minister late Man Mohan Adhikari, the Supreme Court had said that the minority government does not have the right to dissolve the House of Representatives.

The current bench of Constitutional Court headed by chief justice Cholendra Sumsher Rana, however, ordered that prime minister who holds the majority in the House of Representatives cannot call fresh elections and recommend the dissolution of the house of representatives.

However, the verdict of 1996 to reinstate the House of Representatives not only destroyed the parliamentary form of government but finally paved the way for the destruction of Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990.





### Political Fall Out

With the split of ruling party NCP, no single party will have the magic number of 138 to form a single-party government. In the scenario, there will be a hung parliament with Madhav-Prachanda led NCP or Oli led NCP, the two single largest parties then.

After the split, the status of Nepali Congress will change from the second largest to third largest party in the House of Representatives.

A rift had occurred in the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) after the dissolution of the HoR as a majority faction of the NCP led by Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Madhav Kumar Nepal had been protesting against the HoR dissolution by taking to the street. Except for the NCP faction led by PM Oli himself, no other political party

represented in the HoR supported the HoR dissolution.

The Constitutional bench comprising five members deemed the decision of the government void. With this decision, the House of Representatives has now been reinstated. In line with the verdict, the government will have to summon a session of the House within 13 days.

As many as 13 writ petitions were filed at the Apex Court against Oli-government's move, calling it unconstitutional. The court had earlier summoned all the writ petitioners for the final verdict.

Prepared in a hush and rush without debates and concept for the forms of government and backing of a group of lawyers and civil society leaders, political leaders pronounced constitution with parliamentary system with ac-

countable prime minister.

However, they are now demanding from the apex court to turn the present system as a system of fixed tenure for House of Representatives and uncertain tenure for prime minister.

As he is in power, prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who recommended the dissolution, argues that it is his right as per the provision of the constitution which gives the prime minister power to dissolve the house and go for a fresh poll.

Given Nepal's political situation, one cannot say for sure what the views of PM Oli would be in case he is out of the government. Backed by his lawyers and intellectuals, PM Oli is defending his decision as constitutional.

However, Nepal-Prachanda faction, Nepali Congress and other political leaders, civil society



members and constitutional lawyers are against PM Oli's recommendations. They were pleading for restoration of House of Representatives on the political ground.

PM Oli's constitutional insistence vs Nepal-Prachanda, Nepali Congress and other fringe parties' demand for political consideration to restore the House of Representatives had put pressure on the court. Even four former chief justices of Supreme Court, who were summoned in the court for defamation, were demanding the restoration of House of Representatives.

During the entire days of hearing, the lawyers from both sides pleaded the case of their own clients. However, no one has tried to define the constitution. It creates more confusion to the common people and foreigners.

"This is a very wrong precedent to dissolve the elected House of Representatives to avoid internal party politics. This is politically very incorrect. As per the provision of the constitution, the prime minister has the authority to dissolve the



house and seek fresh polls," pleaded senior advocate and renowned constitutional lawyer Badri Bahadur Karki. He argued that the PM's decision was politically fatal.

#### **Oli's Birthday**

At a time when all political leaders are celebrating the revival of house of representatives, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli celebrated his 70th birthday in the presence of his family members and close relatives at his Baluwatar-based official residence.

He celebrated the occasion at PM's residence in the presence of his father Mohan Prasad Oli, and spouse Radhika Shakya, along with a few others in his close circle. From his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party, PM Oli issued statement declaring that he will face the house.

#### **Coming Scenario**

PM Oli's stand has indicated that there is a little chance for unification of the two factions again. In this scenario, Nepal will enter into a coalition politics. With two communist parties holding a bigger chunk of members in 273-member house, Nepali Congress, which is in the middle, will be the king maker.

PM Oli might still go for the dissolution following the voting in the house. PM Oli will only be likely to tender his resignation after facing the floor of the house.

Following the recommendation of dissolution of House of Representatives and now the verdict of Supreme Court to reinstate the House, Nepal's political journey is headed towards an uncertain course.

- |                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| 1. Prachanda-Nepal | 90 |
| 2. Oli Group       | 84 |
| 3. Nepali Congress | 63 |
| 4. Madheshbadi     | 34 |
| 5. Independent     | 4  |



# The Central Government Is Very Strong In Nepal: Professor Nakamura

*Professor AKIRA NAKAMURA, Emeritus Professor of Meiji University, Tokyo spoke about Governance and system of local government to KESHAB POUDEL. Excerpt:*

**Given your own expertise and experience, how do you explain devolution of power and its importance to empower people?**

In the field of political science and public administration, there are three words which are often regarded important for the improving quality of democracy. They are: decentralization, devolution, and devolution, all of which deal with the transfer of power from center to local governments. If these three things are assured, the quality of democracy will perhaps be improved. For the sake of discussion today, let us use decentralization and , devolution interchangeably. Both decentralization and devolution involve four major political issues. They include political devolution, administrative devolution, economic devolution and financial devolution. In many countries including Nepal, you tend to focus your attention only on the administrative devolution. However, we often overlook the issue of financial devolution. This is quite common in a large number of countries. Even in Japan, a problem remains about financial devolution. The central government has not easily devolved the financial power to the local units..

**Is federalism is panacea for economic development and empowerment of people?**

No, federalism is not a panacea. Federal structure of the government up to this point remained as an ideal. (Pointing to the diagram on the PC screen). This diagram represents an ideal form of the federal structure of government, where central government is small. Underneath of the central government, many state and local governments exist, which are more often powerful and dependable. Under the ideal form of federalism, local units of governments including states ought to be financially independent of the central government. They are financially autonomous. The local units must enjoy autonomy. Thus, you have a very small central government and very independent provincial and local government. These two governments share resources and power. You may be able to find a federal form in several countries, which have reached very close to an ideal pattern. However, even then, those federal governments seem to have lots of problem. Let's take the Canada. Canada is highly decentralized country. Federal government in Ottawa is very small and state governments have huge power. One of the example is Quebec, where Montreal is. If a foreign national wants to work in Québec, you should get a Canadian passport and visa to enter Canada. In addition, if you want to work in Quebec, you ought to apply visa for the Quebec

state government. Otherwise, you cannot work in Montreal. Quebec has been seeking independence for a long time. In the referendums, a large number of English speaking people living outside Québec usually voted against independence. This is one of the examples to indicate that Federalism is not a panacea. In the case of Canada, the problem of Quebec has been a serious national problem and a bomb shell, which may perhaps lead to disintegration of Canada as a modern state. Another example is Australia which has a weak central government and strong state governments. Australian government at this very moment is facing a serious problem. The national government has been trying to control the spread of the coronavirus infection. The central government has issued many policy directives to mitigate the infection. The problem has been that strong state governments would not listen to the central guidelines. At the long last, the prime minister of the Federal government decided to start a new "National Cabinet." This meeting is chaired by the prime minister of the Fed. Government. The members of the National Cabinet come from the prime ministers of different state governments. In the National Cabinet, the federal governments intend to unite and coordinate different opinions among different state governments. By means of the National Cabinet, the prime minister of the Federal government wants to improve coordination and cooperation among state governments so as to facilitate the control of the pandemic..

**What about Asia and Nepal?**

In Nepal, the central government is very strong. In a country like Nepal, instead of 3 D (decentralization, devolution and deconcentration), three C's have been dominant. They are: centralization, control and coercion. The central government controls and manages provinces and local governments from the top. Even if you want to start a federal system of government, you will not be able to do so, because you do not have the local infrastructure. For one, you don't have a group of competent state leaders. You have to produce competent leadership and civil servant working for state governments. Without institution and leadership, you would not be able to initiate a federal structure of government. If you decentralize without dependable infrastructures, you will sooner or later see disintegration of the country's politics. If you have already federalized, one of the most important issues is to train government officials as soon as and as many as possible. Integrated Capacity Building is the issue which hinges on the success of federalism in this country. Without a group of state government officials with discipline, chances are that you would be spreading corruptions to



all over the country..

### **What Nepal needs to do to improve the governance system?**

The Transparency International Report rates Nepal's position very low. Under the current circumstances, even you have state governments with a high incidence of corruptins, the people would begin to lose trust in state governments. One of the very important issues that Nepal should undertake as soon as possible to mitigate the "Cancer of Corruption." Transparency International has ranked Nepal to be 173 in the degree of corruption control. My suggestion to Nepal is to initiate the Integrity Capacity Building before you would think of a federal structure of government. Integrated Capacity Building is made up of 5 R's: Recruitment, Reward, Remuneration, Reeducation and Retirement., Recruiting public officials should be based on fair, open and competitive civil service exams. No nepotism and money should work in the recruitment of competent officials. Reward means to provide psychological satisfaction to the officials. They feel that they are a part of the system. Remuneration is to provide monetary compensation of public officials on par with the salary one receives in working in the private sector. Reeducation connotes that public officials should receive education for every three years and realize that the corruptions would damage your own professions. Public officials ought to have a pride being a part of government and working for the welfare of the general public.

### **How do you share Japan's devolution?**

Japanese government decentralized in 2000. Concurrently, the number and size of the government reduced to current 1700 units. Now the forms of government have changed from centralized to decentralized forms of government. Unfortunately, many local governments are facing problems of fiscal deficit. They are downsizing local government officials. A Number of employees at local government have been reduced. I always tell Japanese public officials : Don't look up. No money would come from the central government. Don't look back: Always be innovative and do not think to continue an old method of public management. Look around: you look for any good idea to have been developed in other regions or countries. If you find one, try to copy and incorporate the approach to your method of governing.

### **Why local government matter?**

Ten years ago, we had a big earthquake. The day after the disaster, two photos appeared in different newspapers around the world. These photos impressed many people outside of Japan. Two pictures showed that a large number of victims from the disaster lined up to get relief aids and drinking water. There was no confusion and mayhem. In the middle of confusion at the aftermath of the big quake, in Japan, law and order were kept and no cases of looting. So you ask why? This is because many Japanese trust the integrity and work of local government officials. In regard to the trust scale, in Japan, the people trust local governments more than the national governments. To that extent, the public trust in local government is important and has been well entrenched in Japan.

### **How innovative the local governments are?**

Japan's local governments have traditionally been highly innovative. Two examples. Almost all local governments provide a service called "A Bath in the Bus." The local



governments provide a number of vans equipped with bathing system. These vehicles visit both handicapped and elderly families, who cannot take bath. The bath in the bus comes to one of these needy families and help them to cleanse their bodies. You may find the same service in Denmark or US. The difference is that in Japan, the service is extended by local governments, and not by Christian churches or NPO. Likewise, many local governments in Japan distribute an electric pot with sensor. The pot is handed out free to both handicapped and elderly families. How this pot work? If you do not use the pot for a week, the attached sensor begins to transmit signals to the local governments. The governments after receiving the warning signal will then send a social worker to see to it that the resident is safe. Why multilateral and western donor countries have been pressing for devolution power?

In 1989, the World Bank started the campaign to eliminate the corruption through devolution of power, which is one of the best ways to eliminate the corruption. Therefore, many countries started devolution and tried to implement the decentralize form of government. However, it does not work and the World Bank changed the mind. In 2000, instead of talking about devolution, they are now talking about "good governance." They also provide good governance indicators. If you clear 109 indicators, you will be qualified to receive the aids from WB. The number of good governance indicators have been increasing to 300. This is a good idea but no many countries will be able to clear these numbers of indicators. Nepal is now in changing from one system to other, but the process should be slow and steady. Only taking steady and stable methods, you will be able to transform your government with a full of good governance qualities.

### **Do you think Nepal can change the system as Nepal's western friend says?**

It is good for Nepal to change the outlook of the government. You cannot change the whole system in a short period of times. The changing process is strenuous and call for hard work on the part of the nation's leaders. I am sure that Nepal would receive a lot of pressure from different donors. But as often said, Rome was not built in a day. Hard work and deep thinking would lead you eventually to a construction of the new system of government.

# Nepal Has Always Extended Its Valuable Support To Japan

*MRS. HITOMI SATO, Senior Regional Coordinator, Southwest Asia Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, spoke to KEHAB POUDEL on diplomatic relations between Japan and Nepal via zoom. Excerpts of the interview*

**Nepal and Japan established diplomatic relations over 60 years ago, how do you see Nepal-Japan relations at present?**

Since 1956 when Japan and Nepal established diplomatic relations, both countries have maintained traditionally cordial relations through people-to-people exchange of all levels and cultural exchanges.

Japan has been contributing to Nepal's development. Japan has extended its assistance in various fields such as agriculture, health and medical services, transportation, electricity, democratization, and peacebuilding, and so on. Recently, to assist Nepal's efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, Japan also extended assistance for providing medical supplies and capacity building through international organizations, and grant aid for providing healthcare and medical equipment and for strengthening healthcare and medical systems in Nepal.

As both Japan and Nepal are natural disaster-prone countries, two countries have mutually assisted when one country faces a natural disaster. When Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, Nepal sent relief supplies such as blankets and Nepalese food, and donations. In 2015 when the great earthquake hit Nepal, Japan sent an emergency relief team and extended its assistance for the recovery and reconstruction of public infrastructure including houses and public schools under the concept of "Build Back Better". Today, there are about 95,000 Nepal is living in Japan. Many of them are students or technical trainees who are studying the Japanese language, learning skills or techniques, and working. These days, in Japan we see growing interest

in receiving human resources with specialized knowledge and skills from abroad.

There have been continued visits in political level between our two countries. In January 2019, then Foreign Minister Mr. Kono visited Nepal as the first Japanese foreign minister in 7 years. During the visit, FM Kono signed the exchange of notes regarding the amendment to the schedule to the Air Services Agreement between the two governments. In March of 2020, direct flight service between Kathmandu and Narita was resumed and the convenience of travel by air between our two countries has been greatly improved. Although we have been affected by coronavirus pandemic for the last year, we hope our bilateral exchanges in various areas will be improved in the coming years.

**Nepal has been supporting various international fora, how do you expect Nepal for the UNSC reform?**

We appreciate that Nepal has always extended its valuable support to Japan as a friendly nation in various international fora as well as support for our efforts for UNSC reform. We hope Nepal will continue supporting us in the UNSC reform process.

**Nepal has been supporting Japan in various international (fora), how do you expect other support from Nepal to Japan?**

We appreciate that Nepal has always extended its valuable support to Japan as a friendly nation in various international fora. Regarding "other support" from Nepal in your question, I would like to mention possible support to Japanese small and medium private com-



panies. Most of the Japanese companies which wish to invest or expand their business in Nepal are small or medium-sized companies. Japanese companies are known for their world-class technology and the quality of the products. For those to be utilized, we hope a more investment-friendly environment is formed in Nepal, which also facilitates Nepal's development.

**At a time when the global and regional scenario is changing, how will Japan see South Asia particularly Nepal?**

Japan promotes the realization of the vision "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" which aims to facilitate peace, stability, and prosperity of the region through establishing an international order based on the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and promotion of free trade.

Japan is strengthening bilateral cooperation and assistance with the countries in the regions concerned for peace and stability of the whole Indo-Pacific region. In this context, Japan also intends to promote its cooperation with the countries in South Asia.

Our support to the development and stability of Nepal leads to our contribution to the stability in the whole of South Asia which is politically and economically important. Therefore, Japan will promote its cooperation with Nepal from the vision of contributing to the stability and prosperity of the region.

**Based on our over 60 years of relations, how Nepal and Japan move forward in the future?**

As I mentioned earlier, Nepal is not only a friendly nation of Japan but also an important country for stability and prosperity in the region and international community. Japan will continue working closely with Nepal for stability and development in the region. Japan will keep supporting Nepal for economic and social development, and encourage Nepal's efforts for graduating from LDC status and then achieving the status of a middle-income country. Between Japan and Nepal, not only exchanges or interactions at the government level but also among the peoples such as mountain climbers are active. In recent years, there is an increasing number of Nepal's who stay



in Japan for a much longer time than before.

We hope more and more Nepalese people will come to Japan as technical trainees or specified skilled workers and then learn and bring back the Japanese skills and technologies, and experiences in Japan to Nepal to be utilized for the socio-economic development there.

At this moment, people-to-people exchange stagnates due to the coronavirus pandemic, however, usually many Japanese tourists visit Nepal every year. Once the pandemic is over Japanese and Nepalese people will use the direct flights between Narita and Kathmandu and enjoy visits with each other, and people-to-people exchange will become more active so that our mutual understanding will be deepened.

**For almost a decade, there are not high-level dignitaries visited Nepal, is there any possibility of a high-level visit in near future?**

Looking back on the past few years, in January 2019, Foreign Minister Kono visited Nepal and in January last year (2020), Parliamentary Vice-Minister Suzuki visited Nepal. Our bilateral relations have been steadily strengthened through political level visits. I hope that, once the coronavirus pandemic is over and normal life comes back, both governments will resume the consideration of a high-level visit.

# All-Weather Friends

*Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, Japan has remained a reliable friend supporting Nepal's development process*

By KESHAB POUDEL

"Japan and Nepal can both contribute to world peace and prosperity by deepening our good, long-lasting friendship further. Japan would like to continue supporting Nepal in economic and technical cooperation, investment, and preservation of cultural heritage for the future generations," writes Masamichi Saigo, outgoing Japanese ambassador to Nepal in his message.

From first Japanese ambassador to Nepal to current ambassador Masamichi Saigo, their policy statements towards Nepal have remained the same. As Japan celebrated the Emperor's Birthday on February 23rd, 2021 limiting it online due to COVID-19, the relations between Nepal and Japan have strengthened further.

Japan has been providing technical and financial support to Nepal to build infrastructure like road, hydropower, agriculture, health and other sectors, including the transfer of technology. Along with the state to state relations, there is a strong bond between people to

people binding the two countries.

"The high-level exchanges between Japan and Nepal, and people-to-people exchanges in various fields, have contributed to our long-lasting friendship.□Early last year, there was a visit by NAKAYAMA Norihiro, then Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs to Kathmandu. It was after President Bidya Devi Bhandari's visit to Tokyo in October 2019, the President attended the Ceremonies of the Accession to the Throne of His Majesty the Emperor and a summit meeting with ABE Shinzo, the then Prime Minister of Japan, where they discussed the bilateral relationship between our two countries," said ambassador.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for all of your kindness and friendship during my stay in Nepal for 2 years and 9 months. Upon leaving, I would like to convey my very best wishes for your good health and happiness."

"Nepalese side also highly

values its friendly relations with Japan and sincerely appreciates Japanese assistance for the economic and infrastructure development in Nepal. Japanese economic cooperation has remained a symbol of true friendship between the two countries and peoples. Nepal appreciates Japan's role in maintaining stability in Asia and her genuine contribution to the nurturing of peaceful world order," Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal told to New Spotlight.

"We appreciate that Nepal has always extended its valuable support to Japan as a friendly nation in various international fora as well as support for our efforts for UNSC reform. We hope Nepal will continue supporting us in the UNSC reform process," said Mrs. Hitomi Sato, Senior Regional Coordinator, Southwest Asia Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "Since 1956 when Japan and Nepal established diplomatic relations, both countries have maintained traditionally cordial relations through people-to-people exchange of all levels





and cultural exchanges.”

The people to people relationship between the two countries is further strengthening with the exchange of visits. There are about 95,000 Nepalis living in Japan. Many of them are students or technical trainees who are studying the Japanese language, learning skills or techniques, and working.

Similarly, individual Japanese citizens have been immensely contributing to uplift the life of people providing support in health and education system.

#### **Dr. Narato Kenjiro**

Recently, ambassador of Japan to Nepal Saigo Masamichi awarded the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Dr. Narato Kenjiro for his contributions to support medical services in Nepal.

Dr. Narato is an experienced Japanese family doctor who has been working for the community-based medical services in Hokkaido, Japan. He visited Nepal in 2005 as a Member of the NGO Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooper-

ative (JOCS) and started working at Chaurjahari village in West Rukum District.

At that time Chaurjahari had a population of approximately 5,000 and the hospital had only about 30 beds. With Dr. Narato's continuous efforts, the hospital now has 60 beds and is able to provide services to 65,000 patients per year.

After his retirement from JOCS in 2011, Dr. Narato works with a Japanese NGO, DOSANKO Community Health International as its representative in Nepal. He actively has been involved in introducing public health programs, fund-raising for the medical sector, and educating medical and health-care professionals.

He contributed immediately after the Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal in 2015, and still supports the education of children who became orphans by the earthquake.

On February 27th, 2019, Dr. Narato attended a ceremony to lay a cornerstone for the construc-

tion of an emergency department building at Chaurjahari Hospital, which was funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government, for the Human Development and Community Services, a local NGO that runs the hospital.

Dr. Narato's contribution has been significant in promoting mutual understanding between Japan and Nepal, and his generous support of medical and health professionals as well as students of both countries is highly appreciated.

In his remarks at the online ceremony, Ambassador Saigo praised Dr. Narato's long-term contribution to Nepali people's health and his great contribution to our bilateral relations.

From big highway to community level support in health and other areas, Japan has proven itself as an all-weather friend of Nepal.

“People in Japan associate Nepal with more or less two or three things. First and foremost is the Himalayas landscape. Second, many Japanese know Hindu gods and Buddhism both are worshiped in Nepal and that spiritual root has commonalities with the spiritual root Japan has had. So Nepal and Japan are bound by spirituality. There have been long-term commitments from Japan in terms of developing infrastructures, water facilities, education, health and others,” said Professor Tomohiko TANIGUCHI, who works in the Graduate School of SDM, Keio University, was also a Special Advisor to the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

# Hydro Meteorological Events Increasingly Becoming Dangerous Not Only In Nepal But Also Here In Japan: Professor Satoru Nishikawa

*Having extensive knowledge of disaster mitigation, PROFESSOR SATORU NISHIKAWA, University of Nagoya, Disaster Mitigation Research Center (DMRC), has visited seven times in Nepal after the earthquake 2015. He is a widely respected expert on disaster reduction in Japan. He spoke to KESHAB POUDEL via zoom meeting.*

**How do you see the state of natural disaster in the context of temperature rise?**

Because of so-called climate change, hydro meteorological events increasingly becoming dangerous. It is not only in Nepal but also here in Japan. The situation is similar to other countries as well. However, the reality is that the climate always changes over history. We know that. We need to adopt these changes. That is the reality we face. We have recently witnessed a glacier lake outburst in India. It was a tragic event and that can happen any time in similar countries.

**Can we control hazards?**

I want to emphasize that we cannot control the hazard but we can improve our societal conditions and reduce disasters. That is the most important thing. Many of the governmental focuses lie on the response but we have to emphasize on pre-disaster phase. Right after major disasters, we have to save lives. As usual, the rescue activities always catch the headlines of the news but actually how many lives can you save in rescue activities? It is much better to invest in prevention, mitigation and preparedness. That is what I simply believe.

**How do you view the disaster?**

Disaster is not only a matter of life or death as it gives a heavy blow to the economy as well. For example, the 2010 Haiti Earthquake killed a lot of lives. It took away a huge amount of the economy of Haiti. It overwhelmed the annual GDP of the country. We have to realize that disaster is not only a humanitarian tragedy but we have to see the disaster as a great threat to sustainable development. Especially in the context of hydro-meteorological disasters, we need to keep in mind the land & vegetation conservation and sustainability of livelihood. If there is no proper land and water conservation, rainfall easily induces flashfloods and shiny days easily induces droughts. Afghanistan in the 1950s was green and they had a lot of vegetation but now it looks yellow and brown. It means that it has lost the vegetation and farmers fell into poverty. It invited a lot of disasters. The problem with Afghanistan is that they did not have sustainable water resources management plan.

**What do you suggest for the reduction of disaster?**

We have to realize that we need to reduce disasters by improving our societal conditions. We have to relieve human suffering but we have to see the disaster as a great threat to sustainable development. In terms of hydro-meteorological point of view, land and vegetation conservation, the stability of livelihood and disasters are closely linked. The root causes of confusion in Afghanistan lies in poor water resources managements and lack of land conservation. Because of the land degradation, many of the farmers abandoned their cultivation and relied on over herding of sheep and goats; this will further aggravate the land degradation. We have to cut this vicious cycle. When this happens, degradation of agricultural land in rural areas means, high influx of population to urban areas. Huge numbers of people flow to metropolitan areas. As most of the people who migrated to urban areas are poor people, they again settle in the disaster vulnerable urban fringes. They settled down at the foot of the hills and banks of the rivers. When there are disasters, they are more vulnerable as they lose life, houses and livelihood options. Living below the poverty line, the disaster pushes them into a worse situation. We have to cut this vicious cycle. Unless we decrease the economic damage from a disaster, we cannot be on the track of economic growth.

**Is disaster only a humanitarian issue?**

I have been emphasizing that when we deal with disaster in the long term, it is not just a humanitarian issue but is a development issue. Japan is in a very harsh position regarding disasters. We have a lot of earthquakes, floods and landslides and typhoons. We have a long history of coping with disasters. And a long historical record of all disasters. In the 7th to 8th century, a Buddhist monk was a civil engineering teacher he made earth dams for flood control and irrigation. He was highly respected. A war lord developed embankment technology in the 16th century to control floods and increase paddy production diverting the flood water in the paddy field as a cushion.

**How do you explain your own experience in Japan?**

In the 1940 and 50s, Japan used to lose thousands of people, every time typhoon hit. In 1947, a major typhoon hits Tokyo and eastern half of the city was inundated in the water. This had taught a lesson to the government. The result was that they built a multipur-



pose dam upstream. And in midstream they made flood ponds as a cushion or absorber. This time Japan faced high population growth and industrialization and urbanization. This increases the demand of water. After 1945, there was huge household demand. A disorderly land movement led to landslides and flashflood. Japan has a system of recording and learning from each disaster. Before the 1950s, there used to die over 1000-2000 people in each typhoon. However, the number of casualties have drastically declined because Japan took a more mitigative approach to prevent the loss of life. Over the years of learning from the experiences, Japan is now following from a responsive approach to a preventive approach. No matter how many blankets and tarpaulin provided after a typhoon, you cannot rescue the people who already died. That was really a point.

### **How about earthquakes in Japan?**

We do have a lot of earthquakes in Japan. We had a big earthquake last week. However, the damages were always negligible. This is because Japan regularly revises its building codes based on the damage. After previous serious earthquake damage, major revision took place in the building code. Announcing building code alone is not enough; people and construction companies have to follow it. I am sure Nepal has a building code like India and Turkey. The reality is that how much percentage of building built according to the code. That is the problem. Japan had also faced that kind of problem in the early 1950s. During that time quality of the house in Japan was poor. I really admire our predecessors who invented the incentive scheme. You don't need police to inspect the building construction, people themselves abide by this.

### **Why building code matter during the earthquake?**

Constructions of seismic safety houses can save life and property of people. That is the way to risk reduction. Thus, we have to make strong house. Nepal does have similar situation. Like Japan, Nepal does have a lot of earthquakes and you need to learn from Japan in implementing the building code and make your houses are safe and seismic resistant. There need to have multi-stakeholder approach to deal with disaster. During the earthquake safety of houses and buildings are very important.

### **What other things do you suggest?**

Warning systems also avoid damage and loss. If people pay attention to such a warning, there will have a very nominal casualty. The damage can be prevented by combination of public action, mutual action and self-action. We need self-help action by individuals, mutual actions from local communities and strong public action from the government. We cannot only rely on public action we need a good combination. The nationwide movement for disaster reduction action. I tried various approaches. There need to have awareness of the safety of at all level of society. Seismic engineering, local. There need various elements to ensure safety. A culture of prevention needs to prevail. Then necessary elements can fit together and they would function as part of the cycle. How to do is an elastic band and how to prevail the culture of prevention. This is what about so-called disaster risk reduction. It is not an isolated element. It needs to incorporate in health, education, transportation and urban planning. Regarding the climate change issue. It has a huge relationship with urban planning and land use planning also agriculture planning.



### **How important the land use to avoid disaster?**

I would like to emphasize on land use issues to deal with climate change. Especially agriculture and city planning sector they have to pay real attention to flash flood, drought and landslides. Because, agriculture or new development urban area or construct the highway, you change the geography, you have to pay attention on it. You have to see whether such action will reduce or increase the future risk. Japanese experience says disaster risk reduction is a process of enlargement of participants. There are so many lessons on building construction in the rural areas. JICA introduced training for mason and building instructor in Nepal to make earthquake safety building.

### **How do you see the culture of safety?**

I would like to emphasize the need to have culture of safety. It is a key factor to reduce the risk from disaster is the culture of safety. There are many monuments in Japan to remind the disasters and its effect. Our ancestors left this moment showing that don't forget the tragedy they faced. In Nepal too, you have similar monuments in Bhugol Park in Kathmandu. I learnt that the monument show how difficult was it to reconstruct Kathmandu after 1934 earthquake. However, people do not pay attention to these. If you can draw the attention of people saying very important cultural heritage, I am sure that it will raise awareness among people. We have to make a public cycle. There are ideas and science and technology for disaster reduction. There is high return in the investment in risk reduction. By investing in risk reduction, we can reduce the number of disasters.

### **How do you see the awareness level of people on environment?**

Fifty years ago, only a few people concerned about environmental issues. Now people all over the world are concerned about the climate change and environmental issues like plastic waste etc. We have to encourage people to do the same to disasters as well, especially the countries like Japan, Nepal, India, Philippines and Indonesia as those countries are in harsh condition regarding the disasters. There is a famous proverb by a Japanese scientist who investigated the Japan's great earthquake of 1923, he said that natural disasters will hit us by the time people have forgotten about it. This has shown a way by the importance of disaster. There need to have people's awareness.

## MELAMCHI

# Bhagirath Prayas

*Although transferring water from its source to other parts is always difficult, the Hindu Philosophy places a bet on Bhagirath Prayas to complete such tasks. Nepal's Melamchi Water Project has shown a similar Bhagirath Prayas at work. Conceived in late 1980s and championed in early 1990s by former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Melamchi Drinking Water Project has seen several leaders coming and going. As the project suffered mishandling at different levels, Minister for Drinking Water Mani Chandra Thapa and Secretary Madhav Belbase, who is at the last leg of his tenure, have finally seen the diversion of water of Melamchi through a 27.5-kilometer tunnel to Kathmandu valley*

BY KESHAB POUDEL IN GALTHUNG, HELAMBU

After jointly switching on the head works at Ambathan, 60 kilometers Northeast of Kathmandu, Minister for Water Supply Mani Chandra Thapa, Minister for Youth and Sports Dawa Lama and State Minister for Urban Development Ram Bir Manandhar, finally diverted a portion of water

flowing towards Indrawati river to a 27.5-kilometer tunnel heading to Kathmandu on 22 February. It will take almost 15 days to fill the tunnel for test.

For Secretary of Ministry of Water Supply Madhav Belbase, who was watching the events quietly with his colleagues of the

project, technicians, contractors, local leaders and local community, diverting water for testing was a matter of great satisfaction, as Bhagirath effort.

Unlike in the first failed testing, the project also chose an auspicious day of local Hyalmu community to divert the water.





With the advice from the local religious gurus, February 22, the tenth day (Dashami) of Loshar, was chosen as a highly auspicious day of Padamsambhaba to divert the water.

Along with worshipping the local Hindu deities, Buddhist Monks from nearby Monastery also chanted the hymns and worshiped Guru Padmsambhaba and other Buddha.

At the function organized cautiously after learning a lesson from the devastating incident of July 14, the Ministry of Water Supply and Melamchi Drinking Water Development Board took every precautionary measure to prevent any disaster. Thus, the tunnel was made to fill up at the pace of 250 liter per-second. With the installation of Skoda smart systems, the technicians can see any faults and obstructions in the tunnel.

For testing purposes, Sino-hydro released water into the

tunnel via a temporary pipeline and the temporary dam erected on the Melamchi River on July 5, 2020.

Nine days after the release of water on July 14, 2020, gate 17 at the end of the Ambathan adit failed, bursting open and allowing water in the tunnel to flood out in a torrent sweeping away two, an engineer and driver of the project, with the vehicle on July 14. Two others were left injured.

Recognizing the sacrifice made by the two staffs, secretary Belbase called for one minute of silence to pay respect to those who died. "Although we cannot bring back the human loss on the incident, it has taught us a great lesson. We are taking all possible technical precautions this time," said secretary Belbase.

#### **Belbase in the ministry**

Transferred at the Ministry in November 2019, taking charge from Deependra Nath Sharma, who retired after completing the

process of selection of new contractors, Balbase had to clear the hurdle and mess created in December 2018 incident and conciliation of the contract agreement.

Cooperativa Muratori e Cementisti (CMC) di Ravenna an Italian Contractor, which had completed one of the most difficult parts of the project, was kicked out from the project in humiliation by the decision of then minister Bina Magar and secretary Gajendra Thakur.

Almost at the stage of completion, the termination of contract agreement by the government with CMC put this pride project of Nepal in uncertainty.

With his skills and working capacity, secretary Belbase, who took the baton from his colleague Sharma, put the project into a current stage with almost 95 percent of construction work of overhead already completed by Chinese Contractor Syno Hydro.





With so many dramas, turmoil and change of political leadership, Melamchi now enters into a testing stage and is likely to come up with water to fill in the empty buckets of thirsty residents of Kathmandu Valley.

“This is a great day for all Nepalis not only for the residents of Kathmandu-Valley and people in Melamchi. Completion of this project will boost the morale of the Nepalis living all over Nepal,” said Minister Thapa, who expressed his full commitment to fulfill all the rightful demands of the concerned stakeholders.

Addressing the function, with local leaders, minister Thapa expressed that this is the happiest day in his life that the completion

of the project conceived by saint leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai happened during the tenure of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. “The project is now linked with the prestige of the country. Failure of this project at this juncture means failure of Nepal.”

First conceived in Nepal Government’s policies and programs of 1988 and addressed by late King Birendra as an alternative drinking water project for Kathmandu Valley, the project found Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the first democratic prime minister following the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, as its champion pledging citizens of Kathmandu Valley that he would divert the water from Melamchi that would

be enough to clean the roads and streets of Valley.

With PM Bhattarai losing the elections in 1991, the pace of Melamchi slowed. The project was revived during Bhattarai’s second tenure in 1998. During his 11 months tenure, the project made a breakthrough with Asian Development Bank agreeing to lead the consortium.

From Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to present prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli, the project has faced many hurdles. For the sake of political compromise in 2018, Prime Minister Oli also did not take any action against Minister Bina Magar and secretary Gajendra Thakur for their blunders.

**Bhagirath Legacy**



Hindus believe that water is life and it is also a part of religion and culture. Water is sacred and pure. They believe that water was brought down to earth from heaven with a long sacrifice and effort of Bhagirath.

To pay respect to Bhagirath, there is a tradition and practice to erect the statue of Bhagirath beneath stone spouts. People who visit the stone spout for water donate the first part of water to Bhagirath.

According to this long legend, Bhagirath spent ten thousand years of hard and difficult efforts to woo Ganga (Mother of water) to come down to earth from heaven and to salvage his ancestors who died due to curse of Saint Kapilmuni. Impressed from hard efforts and dedication of Bhagirath, Ganga came to earth from heaven.

It was not ten thousand years this time, but it took over 3 decades or two generations to see the water finally being diverted from Melamchi to Kathmandu Valley. “I do think that Melamchi is heaven for over 5 million population of Kathmandu Valley as they will get the water from here. It is like Bhagirath prayas to get the water,” said Ram Bir Manandhar, minister of state of urban development and elected leader of Kathmandu valley to House of Representative. “I feel Ganga is coming to us from Melamchi.”

Bhagirath's wish was simple and unselfish. He wanted to



provide pure water to salvage his ancestors and salvage people. Religiously, it was justifiable for 100 years.

However, the case with Melamchi is different. Melamchi project was delayed because of mismanagement and lure of money of people and incompetence at policy levels.

Whatever the reason, Melamchi did not find any one like Bhagirath. Had some one made Prayas or Effort like Bhagirath's, it would have completed a long time back.

Bringing Ganges to this

earth was one of the most difficult tasks for humans. King Bhagirath made some extreme efforts to “persuade” Ganges to come to this earth from heavens.

It's been said that he meditated for 1000 years to finally persuade the great river to descend to Earth. Such was his obligation that the original name of Ganges, from Gangotri (it's source) is known as “Bhagirathi” ie. “Of Bhagirathi”. So, whenever someone makes prolonged or extraordinary efforts, those efforts are known as “Bhagirath Prayaas”

Bhagiratha is a legendary





king of the Ikshvaku dynasty who brings the Sacred River Ganges, personified as the Hindu River Goddess Ganga, to Earth, from the Heavens.

It is said that after Bhagiratha became prince of Sagara Dynasty, learning the awful end of his forefathers, who were unable to attain region of gods, he regretfully made over his kingly duties to his minister and went to practice austerities in the Himalayas.

On the advice of his guru Trithala, he did penance for a thousand years (according to god timeline) to please Ganga, to gain the release his 60,000 great-uncles from the curse of saint Kapila.

#### **Melamchi's Effort**

Following the diverting of water from Melamchi river to 27.5 kilometer long tunnel, over three decades of planning and work to bring the water to Kathmandu is coming closer.

"If things go technically

well, people of Kathmandu Valley will receive the water within two months," said Executive Director Melamchi Drinking Water Board addressing the program. "We are ready to address all the grievances of local people. Following the release of water, we will begin the most challenging task of testing then commissioning of the project."

Although Melamchi river has provided immense economic benefits to the local people with access to road, livelihood scheme, guaranteeing of 30 percent of water to release downstream and levy to the affected Rural Municipality, there are still voices of concern.

"We are proud to share our Melamchi with the residents of Kathmandu Valley. However, local residents of the affected region also need to be compensated well and their concerns need to be addressed," said Sher Bahadur Tamang, former member of House of

Representatives.

The testing was conducted to divert water in the tunnel from Melamchi River to Sundarijal of Kathmandu. The water from the Melamchi River would reach Kathmandu after the testing of the tunnel is completed in three phases by diverting the water. It will take at least two months to complete the test.

The project aims to supply 170 million liters of freshwater/day to the capital city. Drill blast excavation of the 27.5 km long tunnel had progressed, in addition to works at the portals, from 18.4 m 2 intermediate adits, the main ones at Ambathan, Gyalthum and Sindhu.

The project has decided to water-up a tunnel from the Melamchi River test its hydraulics and operating mechanical equipment. The aim was to complete the long-awaited and urgently needed project by the end of the year.

There are a total of 29 con-



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

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

Gate 17 is at the end of the first adit from the upstream end of the waterway. The adit is about 800m from the intake portal

of about 300m long. The waterway tunnel has a gentle gradient with a head of about 13m over the 27.5km of the tunnel. The tunnel is designed to run full and under pressure to operate the outlet pipe in the tunnel crown at the downstream end.

For the test, the tunnel was being filled at a rate of about 0.26 liters/sec, or about 20% of the designed inflow at the intake during inaugurated operation. At this rate, it would have taken an expected 15 to 20 days to fill.

According to tunnel testing protocol, it will take 15 days to fill the tunnel or the tunnel will be filled with water by 14 of March. As per the protocol, water needs to be stored for 10 days inside the tunnel. Similarly, it will take another

17 days to empty the tunnel and 7 days will be spared to inspect the tunnel. Then another 17 days will be for filling the water for the distribution to Kathmandu. The testing and trial period will take 51 days. It means water will arrive in Kathmandu for distribution on second week of April.

Although it will take a certain time to start the distribution of water all over the valley, a few lucky costumers having old connections will receive the water of Melamchi from the second week of September.

Started on 21 December 2000, the Melamchi Water Supply Project is assisted by the Asian Development Bank to bring 170 million liters of water per day to Kathmandu. The construction work of







the project started in 2008.

However, the second phase of construction of the tunnel to Yangri and Larke to bring an additional 340 million liters is still in the planning phase. Although the water is diverted by constructing a temporary cofferdam, the construction of permanent structure including diversion weir, river-training structures, and sediment exclusion basin is at final stages.

In 2000 AD, a loan agreement was signed between the government and the Asian Development Bank for the completion of the project by 2007. As the work could not move ahead as expected, the project was restructured in 2008 AD.

As the Italian contractor left in December 2018, the work halted till October 2019 before the government awarding the contract again to a Chinese company. With the surge of coronavirus in 2020 and 80 days of lockdown from March 24, the pace of work slowed down. From the ini-

tial period of late Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel as a project chief, Melamchi Water Supply Board got 14 directors in the last two decades. All of them have contributed to carrying out the project.

Having worked for a long time in the project, Executive Director Tiresh Khatri is able to push the project even at lockdown. As water is now in the process of filling the tunnel, minister Thapa, secretary Belbase, executive director Khatri, technical staffs, consultants, contractors and local residents stood together with enthusiasm, Bhagirath Prayas will bring the fruit only after the water transfer happens in the basin of Bagmati. Four months away from his retirement, completing Melamchi will be a jewel in the career of secretary Belbase.

#### Timeline

1970 -A committee to address the water crisis in Kathmandu Valley formed

1988- British Company identifies Melamchi River as a top priority

1997 - Formation of Melamchi Water Limited

1998 -Feasibility study, DPR and formation of Melamchi Water Supply Development Committee

2000 - Loan agreement of Rs 120 million signed with ADB with a completion target of 2007

2008-Project restructured

2009 - Contract agreement with China Railway 15 Bureau for tunnel work

2012- Chinese company announces unilateral contract termination, government scraps contract subsequently

2013- Italian contractor CMC appointed for remaining tunnel work

2016 - New deadline of June 2018 set

2019, Nepal Government terminated the agreement with CMC

2019 October Contract Agreement with Syno-hydro signed to complete the remaining work including headwork

2020 July Tunnel bursts during the testing

2021 September Experts team inspects and examines tunnel

2021 February 22, Testing begins again

# Why Upstream And Downstream Linkage In The River System Can't Be Ignored?



BY: PRATEEK PAUDEL

From time immemorial rivers have helped develop human race. Many civilizations have started in the river bank. In Nepal, all of the major rivers (Gandaki, Mahakali and Koshi) are glacier fed. That means it starts from the Himalayan glaciers upstream and flows downstream. While flowing from upstream to downstream it creates many social, geographical areas. Therefore there is a linkage among the upstream and downstream areas of the river system. Since there are communities on every areas right from upstream to downstream, it has social linkage as well. Among many large rivers of Nepal, this article is mainly focused on Koshi river which is one of the largest contributor to the Ganges river of India.

Koshi basin is the referred to those areas where Koshi River is the main source of livelihood. It drains an area of 92,538 sq. Km. and supports 10 million people upstream and 30 million people downstream. There are very less research conducted with regards to the upstream, downstream linkage in the Koshi basin. Especially, with regards to freshwater ecosystem of the Koshi region, the depletion of freshwater resources in very prominent. Therefore, the conservation of freshwater ecosystem upstream will also affect freshwater ecosystem downstream which affects the vulnerable populations. A study found that out of the people living in the Koshi Basin areas, the people from the mountain region were more vulnerable followed by mid hill and terai region. This shows the linkage in the vulnerability of the population living in the basin. The vulnerability in the Koshi basin is relatively high but the source of vulnerability is different in different ecological zones.

During the Jure Landslide in 2014 which was caused by the erratic rainfall in the Sunkoshi river, various infrastructures such as roads and hydropower project in the Sunkoshi river got damaged. Around 150 people lost their lives. The loss due to flashfloods in the downstream area could be huge. But the loss was minimized when the excess water was inundated in time from the Sunkoshi dam. Therefore due to the upstream/downstream linkage losses could also be minimized. Therefore upstream/downstream linkage necessitates development of a shared river system in an integrated and collaborative manner. Water related infrastructure projects can help in intensifying upstream/downstream linkage both in terms of risks and advantages. Structures like dams and reservoirs can store water during flood periods, which can be available during dry seasons and provide necessary water for necessary irrigation, provide electricity and also provide inland navigation.

Fig. 4: People collecting woods which came in the

Koshi River as a result of landslides or destruction of forests upstream. Source: (<https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/landless-locals-collect-wood-from-koshi-for-a-living>)

A study states that the Koshi has a theoretical hydropower potential of 23,000 MW out of which 10,000 MW is economically viable. In 1985, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) identified 11 potential hydro projects (seven run-of-the-river and four storage type) along different tributaries, and various surveys have suggested that more than 6,000 MW of hydropower could be generated, but current hydropower generation is less than 200 MW. Out of the proposed projects in the Koshi basin, JICA gave high importance to Saptakoshi High Dam Project which has the storage potentiality of 8500 million cubic meter (MCM). Similarly it also states that the proposed large reservoir at Chatara in Nepal could supply year-round irrigation in the downstream areas. A proposed barrage on the Saptakoshi about 8 km below the dam would regulate water for irrigation and navigation. The proposed water storage in Saptakoshi could store more than one-fourth of the total annual water flow. Monsoon flow is 70.8% of the total flow and provides around 34 km<sup>3</sup>, which means that almost 40% of the monsoon water could be stored (if the reservoir is emptied before the onset of the monsoon), which would have significant impact on flood moderation downstream. Similarly, development of a 165 km navigation canal from Chattara (downstream of Barahachhetra) to Kursela would link Nepal to India's Inland Waterway No. 1 along the Ganges, facilitating the import and export by both countries at low prices using water for transport.

Therefore, this clearly indicates that there is an upstream/downstream linkage regarding river system. People living in both upstream and downstream areas have benefitted from the river. There are not only social linkages but religious linkage as well. People from the downstream region go to upstream region for worshipping. There are many temples in the higher altitude region such as Muktinath, Kailash Parvat, Gosai Kunda etc. which Hindu and Buddhist worshippers

from various regions go to worship. However, while developing water infrastructure projects people from the other areas are completely ignored. Thinking from a single perspective (in this context, power perspective) is not enough while making water infrastructure project. We have to think from a multipurpose perspective. Similarly, we should also think from the perspective of every people living in the region (upstream and downstream people) while developing the infrastructure.





HITENDRA DEV SHAKYA

# Strengthening NEA

*Newly appointed MD of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Hitendra Dev Shakya has put expansion and strengthening of distribution system in his priority*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every NEA employee may aspire to be the managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Nepal's largest government undertaking. However, only a few get the opportunity to lead Nepal's largest public utility. Hitendra Dev Shakya is one of the few NEA's cadet to get the opportunity to lead the organization.

Although his predecessor Kul Man Ghising was also groomed in NEA, there was generally a trend to make political appointment as well. By appointing Shakya as MD, the government has given continuity to promote NEA's employees at the top. This step will encourage other NEA employees as well.

Giving up its own promises to select the new MD through open competitive announcement, the government led by K.P. Sharma Oli has appointed Shakya on a promotional basis.

As a person who knows the ins and outs of NEA, Shakya can make a lot of difference to the organization taking the right decision at the right time. However, it is not easy to

for him, given a lot of vested interests around NEA.

A Cabinet meeting appointed Hitendra Dev Shakya as the chief of the Authority.

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

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

Shakya, newly appointed Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), said that his priority is to increase Electricity consumption rate to 500 units per individual in the next four years.

Assuming the office of Managing Director of NEA, he made it clear that his main priority for coming four years will be to strengthen and expand transmission line to increase the

consumption and to provide reliable and quality electricity to consumers. He also said that his other priority is also to explore the market for surplus energy.

A Cabinet meeting on February 8 this year had appointed Shakya to the post for four years tenure.

Addressing an event organized to welcome and congratulate him, Shakya pledged to increase power consumption rate to 500 units per individual in next four years.

He also committed to complete under-construction projects, streamline transmission and distribution projects and press ahead with the construction of hydropower projects like Dudhkoshi Hydropower Project and Upper Arun Hydropower Project.

He said that he will work for reduction of electricity leakage, expansion and strengthening of transmission system for the distribution of quality electricity to consumers.

Signed under a take or pay PPA, the selling of electricity generated by hydropower during the summer is challenging. "I will give priority



to increase internal consumption and work to export surplus electricity to India,” said Shakya, addressing the gathering of officials.

“We have enough electricity for the distribution. However, there is a lack of resources as well as obstructions at the local level to change the old structures,” said Shakya. He said that NEA will address all these challenges using information technology at optimum level.

Deputy Managing Director Lekhnath Koirala said that distribution management is a critical challenge of NEA. Official Trade Union Leader of NEA Rameshwor Poudel said that there is the need for the leadership to keep the success achieved by NEA in the past intact.

#### **Challenges Before Shakya**

Unlike his predecessor Kul Man Ghising, who was appointed with an agenda to end the load shedding,

MD Shakya has now other challenges. Following the completion of his four-year tenure, Ghising left the NEA completing various projects with surplus of electricity during the rainy session.

In addition to well built infrastructure of transmission line and surplus energy; MD Shakya has now challenges to search a market for the electricity. As MD Ghising had spared much of his time to end the load-shedding, completing incomplete hydro-power projects, transmission line project, newly appointed MD Shakya will spend much of his time to search for a reliable market for surplus energy and reduce the leakage.

Having worked several years in NEA in different capacities, MD Shakya, an electrical engineer, is not new for the organization. He has seen all different phases of NEA including prolonged periods of load-shedding

and no load-shedding.

With the ending of load-shedding, former MD Ghising willingly and unwillingly became a popular figure. Frustrated by decades of power cuts, of up to 16 hours, people saw MD Ghising’s effort at ending the load shedding as a miracle.

As NEA has now several options including the cross border transmission line to import up to 900 MW and growing numbers of the projects under final phase of completion, MD Shakya has enough tools in front of him. As the Upper Tamakosi project is at the final stage of completion, MD Shakya will have enough surplus electricity.

Capable as his predecessor Ghising, his performance will be determined by his actions and implementation of his plan of actions.

# How Effective Financial Reporting Started With An Initiative In The Education Sector



## Introduction

An innovative approach in the education sector in Nepal has helped the government to overcome a challenge that threatened to hamper progress in public financial management. For More Development Asia.

A program funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Embassy of Norway in Nepal (link is external) to strengthen public financial management in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology facilitated the development of a financial expenditure reporting system that is being used by the Government of Nepal in all sectors.

This was a significant step forward in managing fiduciary risks as the country moved to a federal system of governance in 2018 after the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in 2015. The federalization process devolved state functions to 7 provinces and 753 local governments.

The new constitution mandated the management of public education for pre-kindergarten to grade 12 levels by the 753 local governments of urban and rural municipalities. It was previously managed through district education offices. Since July 2018, the budget has flowed directly to the local governments from the Ministry of Finance as public school financing with federal grants was directly transferred to them.

## Challenges in Financial Reporting Under a Federal System

In the past, the financial comptroller general office prepared a consolidated financial statement of the federal grant every trimester. This report helped development partners and other government agencies to monitor progress of the programs. Moreover, it helped keep track of how and where the funds were being used to maximize development impacts.

However, in the federal context, as the local governments did not have a system for reporting expenditures, the financial comptroller general office was unable to prepare the report. This posed a major fiduciary risk since the federal government could not assess whether the funds released were used and if they were used for the intended purpose. It also hampered, to some extent, the release of

more funds in the education sector.

BY: SMITA GYAWALI AND RAJAN ACHARYA Mobilized for the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, the public financial management support

team struggled to consolidate financial statements incorporating expenditures of 753 local governments on public schools using federal grants. All possible means—from communicating with the local governments to publishing public notices to collect data—proved futile in getting the required information for the report.

The public financial management support team soon realized that the problem was not limited to the education sector. The government also struggled in managing the financial reporting in all sectors in the new federal context. Therefore, seeking solution for the education sector alone would be too restricting. It required a policy change in the overall financial reporting system of local governments.

## Breakthroughs in Report Collection

ADB and the public financial management team engaged in a series of policy discussions with the Government—including the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology—to understand the importance of having a system of financial reporting from the local governments and to come up with possible solutions. In early 2019, the government agreed to develop templates for financial management reports based on the Nepal Public Sector Accounting Standards, a version of cash-based International Public Sector Accounting Standards. The template covered all federal grants released to local governments.

The Office of the Auditor General then approved the hard-copy templates for use by local governments in reporting expenditures to the federal government. However, challenges remained on the timely submission of the required financial information.

During the same period, the financial comptroller general office was developing a software system—the Sub-national Treasury Regulation Authority—that will be used by the local governments on all financial transactions. By early 2020, the approved templates were embedded in the system. It allowed local governments to generate monthly, quarterly, and annual financial reports. It also enabled





the financial comptroller general office to extract required and reliable financial reports automatically. This integration transformed the entire expenditure reporting system of all federal grants by local governments.

#### **Capacity Building at the Local Level**

Once the Subnational Treasury Regulation Authority system was modified to accommodate expenditure reporting templates, capacity development of local government accountants followed. In view of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation, the financial comptroller general office and the public financial management team developed online training modules. Accountants and relevant staff of the local government offices were trained starting in November 2020.

Participants reported that the training provided them with a better understanding of financial management requirements and expressed confidence that their reports will have minimum error.

#### **Toward 100% Compliance**

The support for Nepal's education sector made a significant impact on larger public financial reform in the country. It enabled the federal government to receive financial reports for all expenditures made by the local govern-

ments in a timely manner.

Actual expenditure reporting from the local governments to federal government has now jumped to more than 95% compliance from 0% in 2018. The financial comptroller general office expects it to reach 100% by end of the first quarter of 2021 as financial management reports can be generated with much ease.

The local governments also recognized that the system helps them prepare financial statements easily, allowing then to report back to the federal government and promptly provide the required information to all stakeholders.

A solutions-oriented initiative from public financial management has enabled the national government to receive financial reports for all expenditures made by local governments. It has developed capacity at the local level and at the same time, strengthened governance and accountability in the country.

*Smita Gyawali, Senior Education Officer, Nepal Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank and Rajan Acharya Project Analyst, Nepal Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank*

*Credit: Development Asia*

## COVIDSHIELD VACCINE TO NEPAL

# Indian Generosity

*With a great generosity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the first consignment of one million vaccines procured by Nepal has arrived in time*

BY KESHAB POUDEL

As there is a shortage of COVID-19 vaccines globally, many countries are facing huge challenges in procuring vaccines. Produced in its close neighborhood and having a politician with high generosity towards Nepal as prime minister, Nepal is among a very few lucky countries in the world to start vaccination campaign earlier with high efficacy world class vaccine.

Although India, a close neighbor with shared civilization, has always been the first to come to support Nepal whenever the country faced the crisis, India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been more generous offering humanitarian support to Nepal much earlier this time.

Providing one million doses of vaccine in the first consignment, India supported Nepal to prevent the infection among the frontline workers including doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, journalists and employees.

District-based government employees, local level office bearers and employees, financial institutions' staff,

journalists and front line workers are taking vaccines during the ongoing campaign. So far, 384,000 have taken the vaccine.

As the first million doses of vaccine are close to finish and Nepal is planning to launch the second phase of vaccination targeting the people above 55, Serum Institute agreed to deliver 2 million doses procured by Nepal in short notice.

"On a side note, India's first major diplomatic success in Nepal since the disastrous blockade of 2015 has been its Covid vaccine diplomacy. Please, please don't mess up those gains with another Babudom-Spookdom-BRB misadventurism! A friendly neighbourhood is a secure neighbourhood," tweeted Dipak Gyawali.

Although he worked quietly from behind the scene along with Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Minister of Health and Population Rhidayesh Tripathy has ventured the move successfully.

At a time when vaccine shortage has alarmed people all over the world, Nepal is able to continue to roll out the vaccination campaign. Under the

leadership of Minister Tripathy, Minister of Health and Population has been handling the most complicated phase of vaccine distribution smoothly with no such controversy as earlier in the first phase.

Procured by the government of Nepal, one million doses of Covishield vaccine produced by Serum Institute of India arrived in the Kathmandu February 21.

This was the first of the two batches of two million doses in total, brought via Air India's New Delhi-Kathmandu flight. The vaccines will be stored at the cold storage unit in Teku.

This lot of vaccines would be used to inoculate people above 60 years of age, which is 8.73 per cent of Nepal's population, in the vaccination drive that will begin on March 7.

The Ministry of Health and Population said that there are 2,652,258 elderly people above 60 years in the country. "The remaining doses of the vaccines will be obtained according to the agreement with the vaccine producer SII and the timetable proposed by the Department of Health Service,"





said the Ministry.

Nepal has signed the agreement with Serum Institute to purchase 2 million doses of vaccine.

With this 2 million additional doses, Nepal is now in a very safe position to provide the jab to the needy population and prevent casualty and panic in the second wave likely beginning from March.

As Nepal is moving ahead with this new vaccine, Nepal is also working to secure the vaccine through COVAX. The present supply of three million vaccines will support Nepal's drive up to middle of March or first week of April, Nepal is considering using the vaccine received through COVAX for another round.

#### **Vaccine from COVAX**

As the Ministry of Health and Population is preparing the plan for vaccine roll-out in phases, the government is making its final preparation for

importing the anti-coronavirus vaccine, Covishield, through COVAX facility within mid-March.

The Ministry of Health and Population is all set to bring in the vaccine through COVAX facility in a way that it would be adequate to inoculate 20 per cent of the total population.

In-charge of Child Health and Vaccination Section under the Department of Health Services, Dr Jhalak Sharma Gautam shared that the 'Covishield' vaccine would arrive by the end of March as all the processes required to that end have been completed.

The vaccine manufacturing company, COVAX, will send the vaccines to be administered to 20 per cent of the population in different times, he added. The World Health Organization (WHO) and Global Vaccine Alliance (GOVI) are providing the vaccine to the less-income countries free of

cost.

COVAX is sending the 'Covishield vaccine as it is approved by the WHO for administration. The government few days back proceeded towards the procurement of two million doses of Covishield vaccine and the vaccine will come in the next few days and it will be administered to people above 55 years of age from coming March 7.

Similarly, the Government of China has announced to provide 500 doses of anti-COVID vaccine to the government. The vaccine named 'Vero Cell' has been already listed by the Department of Drug Administration (DDA).

With a neighbor with high generosity and well managed internal system under a competent leadership at the ministry, nothing is impossible. This is what Nepal has shown from the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

# Theek Chha? & AI



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

When the British were ruling in India, they, because of language difficulties needed some persons who would do the procedural matters or ‘Donkey’s Work’ and furnish a document which, once approved by the officer-in-charge would be official as per the wishes of the Colonial masters. Thus, Lord Macaulay created a force – the ‘Babudom’, the members of which after scrutinising through the pros and cons of any matter, presented a document as suggestion to the Angrez overlords to ponder over and decide regarding implementation. The Angrez, after the briefing would then ask “Theek Hai?” Following an affirmative reply or a nod from the Babu, he would give his stamp of approval.

This culture, left behind by the British in India is not only prevalent there, but because of the existing conditions has been copied in Nepal also. King Tribhuvan, after his return from India in February 1950 requested the Indian authorities for support to set up an administrative system in Nepal. A special team arrived and trained local Nepalis to set up such a unit. This was done with the establishment of the Public Service Commission (PSC). In course of time the commission took up its duties and established the administrative set-up. This was the trend in practice in the Fourth Republic of France (1946-58) and in Japan in Asia to run the administrative services of a country.

Thus, a set up came into being in which there would be a group of gazetted officers who had passed the criteria set up by the PSC and others to serve under them. It is these large, unknown and unrecognised non-gazetted (NG) workers who would prepare the official documents pertaining to any case or problem and presents it to his/her superior of that department. This individual, giving the paper a cursory glance would ask “Theek Chha?” and seeing a nod or a reply from the subordinate, sign it. Such a system functioned when there were not many decisions to make and NG personnel had worked in that particular department for a longish period of time.

Following Andolan I of the 1990s, the incoming government feeling that Gazetted Officers appointed by the *ancien regime* would be a security risk, decided to reduce the retiring age from 60 years to 58. The action was taken. Was the hidden agenda to fill the posts with one’s supporters?

With frequent elections or changes in government – left, neutral or right oriented; accompanied with the transfer of both gazetted and non-gazetted personnel from place to place, perhaps even erratically, the system was bound to develop flaws. The ‘Tippanis’, if written by the newly posted, perhaps untrained political appointees may be incorrect or sometimes even knowingly done so. The departmental boss who has to affix his signature of approval could be a novice or a smart-Alec able to pull a fast one. With the traditional query of ‘Theek Chha?’ he would append his signature. The now official document would progress as a ‘Kagachi Ghoda’ to the higher echelons of power of the department who would then enquire, knowingly or unknowingly from

his immediate sub-ordinate if all was in order. The nod or assurance from a sub-ordinate, whether genuine or feigned, usually resulted in the final approval.

With the enormous expansion of knowledge many people in positions of decision making are in fact now relying on matters prepared by personnel working under them. The recent spurt of knowledge from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century being a blessing in disguise has resulted in great steps forward in many fields. The development of the computer, the capability to store knowledge in micro chips and the ability to recall it as and when required is a great step for mankind. Information which was restricted in the domains of the developed countries, has because of information technology (IT) now become accessible to those living in Third World nations.

Following the changes of 2006, in the age of Republicanism there has been an upsurge of IT activity in Nepal with entities such as Deerwalk, Hawkeye and Leapfrog training many Nepali youths. One can now be confident that young Nepalis so facilitated will work diligently as per accepted norms for the sake of the Nation. Being well equipped and competent with the latest technological advances, they are in positions of being harbingers of change and the standard bearers of a future Nepal.

Yuval Noah Harari in his ‘Twenty-One Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ has even queried the existing educational system saying that some of the medical professions may be obsolete by 2050. The implication is that radiologists and pathologists who have to decide on diagnosis looking at slides or X-rays have a computer which can scan very much more quickly a vast storage of material and come up with a possible diagnosis in a vastly quicker time. Sadly, even now it has become more regular to look at the laboratory and without even properly examining the patient to come to a line of treatment. It is even prophesied that the family doctor or the General Practitioner may be replaced by a ‘Black Box’ which after being fed some of the findings of examination plus laboratory and X-ray results will come up with the most likely diagnosis. Such is the world that we the current inhabitants have in the foreseeable future. Should doctors pay more heed to cold technology than to the warm personal interaction? The human touch in the practice of medicine which sadly is being neglected by many medical practitioners is likely to be further abandoned in the years to come. Can this be forestalled or stopped?

I worry what the future hold for all of us. Invitations abound to live life in the fast lane with 5G powered technologies. *Expecting tremendous changes*, the powerful nations of the world are with trepidation proposing that artificial intelligence (AI) should be forbidden in future wars. A good thought but is it likely to be accepted? I doubt it as I watch my grandson enthralled by films displaying a likely future scenario.



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Email: [spotlightnepal@gmail.com](mailto:spotlightnepal@gmail.com)

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