

DAO Kathmandu Regd. No. 148/11/063/064  
ISSN: 2091-0711



**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**ENVIRONMENT**  
Batu Uprety



**GLOBAL VIEW**  
Abijit Sharma

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

[www.spotlightnepal.com](http://www.spotlightnepal.com)

June 04, 2021

FORTNIGHTLY



**COVID-19 CRISIS**

# Helping Hands



अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय नारा

**"Women in leadership:  
Achieving an equal future  
in a COVID - 19 World"**

राष्ट्रिय नारा

**“महिलाको सुरक्षासमृद्ध  
नेपालको आधार :  
सम्मान र रोजगार”**



नेपाल सरकार  
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय  
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

**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**

www.spotlightnepal.com

**Kathmandu DAO Regd. No.**

148/11/063/64

**Central Region Postal Regd.**

No. 36/067/068

**US Library of Congress Catalogue**

No. 91-905060, ISSN : 2091-0711

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

**Printing**

Megha Offset Printing Press P. Ltd.,

Dhapasi, Kathmandu

Tel. : 977-1-4363624

**Notes From The Editor**



With all our support and medical supply from neighbors and international friends, Nepal, which has faced an unprecedented level of human catastrophe and disaster following the second wave of coronavirus, is finally able to control the spread of disease and save precious human life. The recent humanitarian support given by the world community has shown that solidarity and cooperation are highly important at the time of major crises like coronavirus. On the call of the Nepal government, governments from different parts of the world responded quickly. Of course, Nepal has navigated a most difficult period. However, the country is not out of danger from the future waves given the nature of the virus. With less than 2 million people fully vaccinated, coronavirus can create havoc at any time. If there will be any lapses in following the restrictions, Nepal will face more devastating consequences in the future and Nepal is now better prepared in terms of medical supply and equipment. However, how Nepal uses the medical supply available from different parts of the world remains to be seen. For generous medical support to fight COVID-19, Nepal is grateful. Learning from the second wave, Nepal needs to walk tightly paving the way for a very gradual opening with strict implementation of health protocols. Following the decline of the cases, Nepal has now a sigh of relief. Although there are several issues to write about, we have decided to cover how the contributions of Nepal's neighbors and friends help to recede the second wave as our cover story.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

# CONTENT

## DIPLOMACY

Successful Testing 3

## BUSINESS BRIEF

4

## OPINION

Dipak Gyawali 6

## GLOBAL VIEW

v 12

## MCC-B NEPAL

EIA Clearance 13

## IFC

Supporting SMEs 14

## ENVIRONMENT

Batu Uprety 15

## DOCUMENT

KIKUTA YUTAKA 29

## OBITUARY

Ujjwal Thapa 30

## REVIEW

Prof. Bipin Adhikari 31

## OBITUARY

Hari Sharan Nepali 'Kaji' 34

## FORUM

Deepak Raj Joshi 35

## ARTICLE

Hemang Dixit 36



COVERSTORY: COVID-19 CRISIS: Helping Hands

17



NEW BUDGET: Health Focus

8



POLITICS: Left, Left, And Left

10



# Successful Testing

*Despite some hitches in early Upper Tamakoshi Successfully Completes Testing of Unit No 1*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Waiting for a decade, 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydro-Electricity Project has finally entered into a generation stage. With the successful wet test of first unit, the project is now ready to generate electricity within a few months.

This is the second major breakthrough in Nepal to complete the national priority project started a decade ago. How a coincidence both the projects were successfully completed under the leadership of engineers graduated from Rurkee University of India.

Madhav Belbase, who retired as a secretary last week, led the completion of Melamchi Project. A Rorkee graduate Belbase led the ministry of Drinking Water for almost 2 month.

CEO of the Upper Tamakoshi Company Bigyan Shrestha, who is also graduate of the Rorkee, has been leading the company for over 6 years.

The project has started the



testing and commissioning last months. “Despite some problem in Adit gates, we are utilizing water head of 700+ m and 4000+ m tunnel water to start Unit no 1’s mechanical wet test of Upper Tamakoshi HEP (UTKHEP),” writes Bigyan Shrestha in his face book wall.

“This wet test started from 29 May 2021 by worshipping Viswakarma Baba and this evening we could able to spin at its rated speed @600 rpm. Yes, it is one of the successful events of testing and hope to continue with our successful endeavors. “

“Thanks to all Andritz’s Testing and Commissioning Team, our consultant team JV Norconsult As- Lahmeyer Int and off course to entire UTK team. Hope to see you soon with successful

events.”

Earlier in April end, the reservoir of the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project – a national pride project—had been filled and water from the reservoir had been released in the tunnel. The project had filled the dam with water for the main tunnel and penstock test.

The project has started preparations to generate 76 MW of electricity from the first unit by mid-May. Successful technical testing of hydro-mechanical equipment such as dams, intakes and other civil structures including gates and stop-lugs has been successfully completed in the reservoirs and descender ponds.

The project will generate 2.28 billion units of electricity annually. The project will earn Rs 9 billion annually from the sale of electricity. The project was estimated the initial cost of Rs. 35 billion but due to various factors, including earthquake, border blockade, among other have tend to increase the project cost to nearly Rs. 80 billion.



## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Israeli Ambassador To Nepal Hanan Goder Visited B.P. Koirala Museum



Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, visited B.P. Museum at Sundarijal. Shrayesh Koirala, grandson of B.P. Koirala joined Ambassador Goder for the visit to the Museum.

Parsuram Pokharel, director at B.P. Koirala Museum talked about the time B.P. spent in the prison there. Ambassador Goder expressed his appreciation to B.P.

Koirala as a great leader and as a good friend of Israel. Israel will never forget that Nepal was the first and the only country from this part of the world that kept relations with Israel at the time.

Since the establishment of ties, the two countries have enjoyed deep friendship, demonstrated by many high-level visits, and many mutually benefitting cooperation.

Nepal and Israel are working together to further strengthen this already strong bond not only at the government to government level but at the people to people level.

Israel and Nepal celebrate 61 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations on 1 June 2021. The relations were established at the initiation of the two great leaders and Prime Ministers of their respective countries, B.P. Koirala and David Ben Gurion on 1 June 1960.

### NIBL And HBL Sign MoU For Merger

With the intention of strengthening the banking sector of Nepal and in line with Nepal Rastra Banks (NRB) encouragement through their Merger and Acquisition policy Nepal Investment Bank Ltd. (NIBL) and Himalayan Bank Ltd. (HBL) have jointly signed an MoU (memorandum of understanding) to go into a merger. The signing of the MoU was done by the Chairman of Nepal Investment Bank Mr. Prithvi Bahadur Pandé alongside the Chairman of Himalayan Bank Mr. Tulsi Prasad Gautam. This development

has officially paved the way to complete formalities before the process of the start of joint operations between the two commercial banks.

A f -



ter the merger the banks will be known with the unifying name of "Himalayan and Nepal Investment Bank Ltd.". Mr. Prithvi Bahadur Pandé will be retained as the Chairman of the bank while Mr. Ashoke Shamsher Rana will be the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Similarly, the Board members' post-merger will be comprised of 3 members each from both banks while also accommodating an independent member thus making a total of 7 members on the Board.

Nepal Investment Bank and Himalayan Bank are two A class commercial banks, therefore the mouthwatering prospect of a merger between the two will make it the biggest bank in the history of Nepalese banking industry. At present the paid up capital of Nepal Investment Bank stands at 16.26 billion whereas Himalayan Banks paid up capital amounts to 10.68 billion.

### Spanish Delegation Called On Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal

The Spanish delegation called on Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary, later this afternoon. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on bilateral relations, international cooperation and post-pandemic economic recovery, among others.

The visiting Director of the Spanish Development Aid Agency discussed the matters relating to #Nepal-#Spain relations, #COVID19 situation and international cooperation were discussed during the meeting.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal stated that Spain's timely support reflects the profound Nepal-Spain friendship. Director Soliman, conveying Spain's solidarity to Nepal's fight against the pandemic, hoped that the support would be helpful for the treatment of the affected people.

The support received today is in response to the request of the Government of Nepal to the Spanish Government, communicated both bilaterally and through the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism, for supporting Nepal with vaccines, medicines, equipment and supplies related to COVID-19.

The Government of Spain provided support of medical equipment and supplies to the Government of Nepal this afternoon. Magdy Marinez Soliman, Director of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), handed over the materials to Hridayesh Tripathi, Minister for Health and Population, at a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

In a meeting that ensued, Minister for Health and Population thanked the Spanish Government for the generous support of life-saving materials, which would help address the crisis caused by the surge of COVID-19 cases.

Dawa Futi Sherpa, Ambassador of Nepal to Spain, and senior officials of the Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present on the occasion.





## Himalaya Airlines Transports Vero Cell Vaccines For Free Of Cost

In the face of the second surge of COVID-19, Himalaya Airlines, in line with its CSR commitments, has yet again come forward to support the nation by bringing home 200,000



doses of Vero Cell vaccines donated by the Tibet Autonomous Region Government, PRC.

Himalaya's Airbus 319-115, 9N-AJK is operating four back-to-back flights to Kunming on Jun 01 & Jun 02, 2021 for transporting vaccines. Total 200,000 doses of SARS-CoV-2 vaccine (Vero Cell)

are being carried in 417 boxes for free by Himalaya.

Each flight will ferry a maximum of 105 boxes per flight. The first free cargo flight to Kunming had departed from Kathmandu yesterday, on May 31 at 20:28 hrs. which landed back at Tribhuvan International Airport today at 06:28 hrs. By operating these free flights, Himalaya contributed a total of US\$ 192,000.00 equivalent to Rupees 2.25 crores approximately.

Commenting on these philanthropic flights, President Mr. Zhou Enyong has stated "This is a historic moment for Himalaya and its team, towards supporting the Government of Nepal and the nation, in its fight with the pandemic. We are honored to operate these flights on humanitarian grounds at this crucial time."

Himalaya maintains a very high level of safe operation of flights for both passengers and cargo transport. For the safe transportation of the COVID-19 vaccines, H9 team has fulfilled all requirements for compliance and has followed well planned loading and transportation procedure to enhance the product safety.

## CG Communications Launches Internet Service In Kathmandu CGNET at half the market price

Kathmandu, June 1: CG Communications has today launched its internet service, 'CGNET' in Kathmandu. 'CGNET' will be available at half the price paid by consumers currently. The high speed internet service is expected to have a positive impact and improve the quality of services provided by public and private sectors.

CG Communications will provide 120 Mbps 'CGNET' at Rs 999 per month.

CG Communications believes the consumer-centric service will offer a new experience to consumers.

CGNET is a nationwide Internet Service Provider (ISP) providing internet services for both business and individ-

ual consumers. CGNET has used the latest technology to address the growing use and demand of internet for video, OTT platforms, work from home, and online classes.

We will launch IPTV and other popular services in the near future.

Initially, our service will be available in all three districts of Kathmandu Valley. For now, the service is available for residents of Jawalakhel, Jhamsikhel, Bhanimandal, and Ekanatakuna within 6 to 24 hours of placing a request. CGNET will be available in all the areas of the valley within 12 months. Further information on expansion is available at [www.cgnet.com.np](http://www.cgnet.com.np). We aim to extend CGNET across the country by the end of this year.

Our customer service centers will be located at CG Digital's branches in Jawalakhel, Kumaripati, Kirtipur, Nayabazar, Minbhawan and CGNET's Head Office, Trade Tower, Thapathali. Along with the network expansion, customer service centers will be added in other areas of Kathmandu Valley.

We have fixed a monthly fee of Rs. 999 for 120 Mbps internet service as a launch offer. The router will be provided free of cost for yearly subscription. Likewise, installation and cable is free for those opting for monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and annual packages.

## Chaudhary Foundation Announces To Construct Oxygen Plants In Bir Hospital, Dhangarhi And Surkhet Hospitals

With an aim to make Nepal's health system efficient to deal with pandemic, the Chaudhary Foundation has announced that it will support to add 18-bed ICU ward and an oxygen plant at Nepal's oldest Bir Hospital Kathmandu. The foundation said that this will contribute to ease the pressure of second wave of COVID-19 and to address the future challenges.

Similarly, the Foundation has also announced that it will support to construct oxygen plants hospitals in Dhangarhi and Surkhet Municipality.

According to a press release issued by the Foundation, this initiative will help to improve the health system in Nepal and supply of oxygens in the time of health crisis.

With the capacity to produce fifty cubic liters per hour, these plants will fill 150 cylinders of oxygen with a capability of 40 liters a day.

The Chaudhary Foundation has said that it will support local municipalities to construct the oxygen plants and import equipments.

Binod Chaudhary, President of the Chaudhary Foundation and the member of the House of Representatives, said that COVID-19 epidemic has affected the livelihood and health of the people. He said that the foundation has taken the initiative to save the life of people.



# Reflecting On My Covid Experience



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

Despite my sisters' and uncle's families as well as adjacent neighbours suffering Covid infection in the first 2020 wave requiring hospitalization and intensive care, overall, we had ridden out the crisis without serious consequences. My 90-year-old mother and I had received our first jab of Indian vaccine for senior citizens above 65 years on 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 and my son had the Chinese one for those under 50 about a month later. My wife, however, fell between two stools – too young for the Indian and too old for the Chinese jabs.

Life had started to return to normal, we felt fairly safe and I was able to take my masked evening constitutional around Patan while offices I was associated with had resumed doing field work. A junior colleague checked into a hospital for minor surgery but tested positive for Covid and was sent home into isolation. She had no symptoms for all of two weeks of home isolation, nor did her family members test positive. Life seemed normal. My last field visit was to Hetauda, interacting with the municipality on our ongoing work on water-induced disasters and the need for the municipality to begin its planning with a systemic water balance study. My colleague and I flew back to Kathmandu from Simara on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

The infection surge in India was already on, but authorities in Kathmandu were reluctant to impose another lockdown as the economy had started its recovery to normalcy. Ten days after we were back in Kathmandu on 29<sup>th</sup> April, lockdown was imposed in Kathmandu after a massive surge in infection cases. On this day, I developed symptoms of what I considered was normal cold, my colleague with whom I had travelled to Hetauda having developed it a couple of days earlier. By 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, I had recovered and felt quite normal but the rest of my family began to show cold symptoms. However, we were warned that it was not a flu season and that we should get a Covid PCR test, which we did on 4<sup>th</sup> May. All of us tested positive except our domestic help who tested negative and whom we sent home.

On the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, I developed high fever (103°F) and low oxygen level. I was rushed to hospital where I spent a night and much of the next day in its emergency with supplemental oxygen and medication, some of it directly into the veins. I was then shifted to an intensive care ward, and soon did not require supplemental oxygen while the fever took a few more days to come down. On 11<sup>th</sup> May evening, the day after prime minister Oli lost his vote support in parliament, I was deemed fit enough to be discharged.

At home, although the rest of the family developed relatively mild fever and both wife and mother had to be taken to hospital for chest X-ray and scans, they suffered no high fever or precipitous drop in oxygen levels and hence did not require hospitalization, only medication at home. A further PCR test on 20<sup>th</sup> May found us cleared of Covid, which doctors said was what would obviously happen two weeks after infection. My mother's cough persisted for a bit longer, possibly due to age.

We have to thank Merciful Providence, and good medical help with support from family and friends, for being fortunate to avoid the worst-case scenario. Friends of friends and relatives of relatives have not been so lucky; and almost everyday we do get some bad news. The last one as I write this was Nepal's bright young political star Ujjwal Thapa, who held the promise of an alternative clean politics, tragically passing away.

I had written three pieces previously in this magazine related to Covid. The [first was in March 2020](#) at the start of the pandemic where I argued that the model of Loktantrick governance we had adopted was failing the country in its hour of need. The [second was in May 2020](#) where the political quagmire was examined further to show that the federal structure we had adopted had simply not worked to manage the crisis, but was instead a resource-sucking black hole. And the [third was in September 2020](#) that was a philosophically more critical piece where I looked at the uncertainties behind Covid science and its practice.

In this piece, I am opting for a very personal reflection, first my own and then my family's. This second wave Covid is almost reminiscent of Biblical plagues and pestilence that strike without warning and at a mass scale. It has hit those who have stayed very isolated and observed all the protocols, but it has spared some of those who have gone about more or less with normal everyday work. It has not spared even those who were vaccinated, although the going opinion is that having one jab earlier must have had an ameliorating effect.

Having been rushed to the hospital in the early stage of oxygen loss and high fever, the first few days were a kind of stupor, possibly due to all the medicine being pumped into me. The emotional terror hit only after recovery started. The ward was 24-hour white lit and completely isolated with no natural light, impossible to tell if it was night or day, since I did not have my watch or





alize it over breakfast as suppressed emotional fear playing out in the dream stage; but I shudder to imagine what the state of my family would have been if he had seen this dream when I was still in hospital!

Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras and Kapila in his foundational Samkhya philosophy maintain that one is made up of five bodies in sheaths inside each other, much like those Russian dolls: *anna-maya kosh*, the outer “food body” centered on the *muladhar chakra* at the base of the spine; *pranamaya kosh*, the body of vital forces at the *manipura* (navel) *chakra*; *manomaya kosh*, the mental-emotional body at the *an-*

mobile with me. One would wonder what prisoner cells in Abu Gharib must have been like. No visitors from home or friends could come to see me, and the doctors and nurses were covered head to toe in protective gear with only eyes visible behind glasses and visor. There were moments when they seemed like white-and-blue angels for all the care they showered on us. One nurse told me she had earlier spent 17 days as a Covid patient in the bed next to mine, but then here she was running around doing 16-hour duty looking after two wards. At other times, when feverish and worried if this was it, the final moments, I could not help wondering if these were really Yamadoots come to take me to the other shore!

Worry about what was happening at home was another wrenching issue. They also had been infected: what was happening to them? It was only when I got my mobile phone days later and was able to talk to them that I could calm down. But it was not the same with my family: unlike a hospitalization in normal times with say a heart attack or something similar where you could visit your patient, in the Covid case, the family had to live with total uncertainty, even as they were coping with their own infection. Was I really recovering or getting worse? Would they ever see me again?

Of course, like everybody, one suppresses these nasty thoughts but they do live inside the body emotional with consequences for the body physical. A few days after I had returned home, my son woke up in terror from a bad dream. He saw his late maternal grandfather walk into our living room and ask where I was since he had come to pick me up! One could talk (and even laugh) about it and ration-

*ahat* (heart)*chakra*; *vigyanamaya kosh*, the discriminative wisdom body at the *aagya chakra* between the eyebrows; and finally the *anandamaya kosh*, the bliss-filled body at the *sahasraracrown chakra*.

Unlike other diseases that attack the “food body” (say a fungus attacking the skin), this version of Covid seems to attack the *pranamaya* vital body with sudden viral pneumonia attacking the lungs and its oxygen intake capacity. And then there is a cascading effect: the heart has to pump more to make up the difference, the kidneys have to keep the blood even cleaner to carry more oxygen and so on. If these organs are weak because of pre-existing conditions or even age, it quickly becomes a negative feedback downward spiral. Unlike the materialistic Western reductionist approach that tries to build an understanding of complex life processes from the “food body” upwards, Patanjali, Kapila and other Eastern thinkers explain the human body more holistically from the inside outwards. This is where what Schopenhauer called the Will, and what Eastern philosophers have called *Ichhya Shakti* and its condition in the *manomaya kosh*, probably matters in explaining how recovery occurs in some but not in others, despite the same medicine being administered.

One positive result of surviving this ordeal has been that it has forced me to re-focus on important things to do in the days ahead and incidental or frivolous ones to avoid. Hopefully, it won’t be a temporary thing!

# Health Focus

*Giving high priority to health sector focusing on COVID-19, Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel Unveiled Rs 1.65tn budget for 2021-22 allocating Rs. 26 Billion for purchasing vaccines*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Critics including opposition Nepali Congress termed, the new budget for fiscal year 2021-22 as a document of populist agenda of the election government. However the budget presented by finance minister Poudel, a non-technocrat, has some positive side as well.

Unlike his predecessor technocrats like Dr. Yubaraj Khatriwada, the budget presented by Poudel is more realistic and touched the day to day difficulties of the common people.

Finance Minister Poudel on Saturday (29 May) announced a budget of Rs 1.647 trillion for the upcoming fiscal year 2021/22. Minister Poudel announced that of the aforementioned amount 41.2 percent has been allocated for recurrent expenditure while 22.7 percent, 12.6 percent and 23.5 percent have been designated for capital expenditure, debt financing and transfer to local to the provinces and local bodies, respectively.

He said that the new budget that aims to attain an economic growth of 6.5 percent in the upcoming fiscal year plans to collect Rs 1.024 trillion through revenues and Rs 63.77 billion through foreign grant while the remaining amount will be covered through foreign loans and domestic borrowing.

To achieve the target, the government has increased all existing security allowances by 33 percent in line with which the elderly (70+) citizens will now receive Rs 4,000 in allowance per month.

To tackle the looming COVID-19 pandemic, government has allocated Rs 26.75 billion for procurement of vaccines while Rs 4 billion will be spent on purchasing COVID-19 related medical supplies. Similarly, in an attempt to revive the tourism sector the government has decided to allow 10 days of paid leave to civil servants.

The government in a bid to encourage the use of electronic vehicles has decided to waive renewal and road tax of EVs for next five years while another plan

to replace fossil-fuel vehicles in the next 10 years has also been stipulated.

## Size of Budget

The size of the federal budget presented through the ordinance by Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Poudel is 11.73 per cent bigger than the budget of Rs 1,474.64 billion announced for the current fiscal year, 2020-21. The budget for the current fiscal was, however, reduced by around nine per cent to Rs 1,344.68 billion during the half-yearly budget review in February.

Thus, compared to the revised budget size, the budget for next fiscal year is even bigger at 22.52 per cent. While the earlier budgets used to factor in grants to be distributed to the lower levels of the government as recurrent budget, the budget announced for next fiscal has allocated that amount separately.

Therefore, the allocation of Rs 678.61 billion to be utilised as recurrent expenditure for the next fiscal is significantly lower than Rs 948.94 billion allocated and later revised to Rs 914.78 billion for the current fiscal. The allocation for capital budget is Rs 374.26 billion, while Rs 207.97 billion has been earmarked for financing, which is 22.7 per cent and 12.6 per cent of the total budget for the fiscal 2021-22, respectively.

Minister Poudel announced that Rs 386.71 billion would be transferred to the provincial and local governments, which is 23.5 per cent of the total budget. Of the grant distribution, Rs 325.74 billion or 84.2 per cent will be equalisation grant, while 60.97 billion or 15.8 per cent will be conditional grant. Meanwhile, the government has set the revenue collection target



for the next fiscal at Rs 1,024.90 billion. It plans to seek foreign grants and loans of Rs 63.37 billion and Rs 309.29 billion, respectively. Furthermore, the government plans to finance its expenses through domestic loans amounting to Rs 250 billion. The annual economic growth of the country has been set at an optimistic 6.5 per cent for the next fiscal year 'as the government will make efforts to control the COVID-19 spread and help revive businesses and the economy'.

Vowing to ensure that all citizens would be inoculated against COVID-19, Minister Poudel said Rs 26.75 billion has been allocated to procure vaccines. Similarly, Rs 37.57 billion has been earmarked to curb the pandemic, while Rs 5.60 billion has been allocated to purchase medicines and equipment to control the pandemic.

A budget of Rs 122.77 billion allocated to the Ministry of Health and Population, however, pales in comparison to Rs 180.04 billion allocated to the education sector - the biggest chunk given to any particular sector. To provide some relief to COVID-battered industries, the government has announced waiver on the demand charge for electricity throughout the lockdown period to hotels and production-based industries.

Also, the government has announced 100 per cent waiver for consumers consuming only 20 units of electricity



per month during the lockdown/prohibitory period and 100 per cent waiver on the drinking water bill for consumers consuming only 20,000 litres per month during the same period.

The finance minister also announced licence and renewal fee waiver for sectors such as films, handicraft, aviation, media, advertising, health clubs, among others. In addition, the government will contribute the amount to be paid by organisations and workers to the Social Security Fund for the months of mid-May to mid-June and mid-June to mid-July.

To encourage entrepreneurship, the government has announced a 100 per cent rebate on income tax for start-ups for up to five years from the date of commencement of operation, a onestop system to facilitate the establishment and operation of such start-ups, among other provisions. In an attempt to revive the badly battered tourism sector, the government has decided to allow 10 days of paid leave to civil servants and free one-month visa to tourists. Moreover, the government has increased social security allowance by 33 per cent and raised the monthly allowance for senior citizens by Rs 1,000 to Rs 4,000.

Also, the salary of all civil servants has been hiked by Rs 2,000. In a bid to encourage the use of electric vehicles, the government has decided to waive the renewal fee and road tax on EVs for the next five years, while also setting the target to replace light vehicles running on fossil fuel by EVs by 2032. In this regard, a taskforce of experts will be formed, the minister said.

**Rs 6.95 billion for upgradation**

of Tribhuvan International Airport • Rs 8.50 billion for completion of Pokhara International Airport • Commercial mining for Dhauwadi Iron Industry to start from next fiscal • Petroleum exploration to be completed in next two years in Dailekh district •

#### **GDP Around 4 Percent**

The government has estimated the annual growth rate to stand at around four percent in the next fiscal year. Due to dissolution of the House of Representatives, Finance Minister Poudel presented the budget through the ordinances. Presenting the budget, he has projected the economic growth rate for the economy hit hard by COVID-19 pandemic.

The per capita disposable income is expected to reach US \$ 1,486 by next fiscal year, according to the government's estimate. It was then sent to the Office of the President to be certified by President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Finance Minister Paudel, in his budget speech, stated that an annual growth rate of around four per cent has been estimated for the next fiscal year while the projected per capita disposable income in the same period is USD 1,486.

The FM revealed that the government will waive taxes on hospital equipment required for installing oxygen plants. Likewise, Paudel shared that a 50 percent subsidy would be provided to all hospitals for installing oxygen plants. The government has also decided not to impose taxes on the purchase of medicines, and no VAT or customs duty on import of Covid-19 related supplies.

A 300-bed hospital in Kathmandu would be built keeping in mind treatment of communicable, highly contagious and other illnesses, he added. The Finance Minister is presenting the annual budget from Singhadurbar.

The Finance Minister further said that the government tabled the budget in order to fulfill its responsibility towards the people and to implement the Constitution.

He argued that the government has been struggling with the current situation created by COVID-19.

Minister Poudel clarified that the government has made arrangement of necessary health budget as it is responsible towards the people's health.

FM Poudel suggested private sector to involve in economic activities, adding the next government has to implement the budget brought by the incumbent government.

Saying the election was not the



government's choice, he shared it was the compulsion of the situation but the election would not hamper the implementation of the budget.

President of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Shekhar Golchha, said that the government has addressed 60 per cent demands of FNC-CI, adding that the budget is overall good.

President of Confederation of Nepalese Industries, Satish Kumar More, opined that though it was challenging in budget implementation and to fulfill the goal set by the budget, the budget is positive.

#### **NC Criticized the Budget**

Nepali Congress leader and former Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has criticized the new budget for its bigger size and the one being brought at a time when many ongoing development projects have not been implemented.

He accused the incumbent government that has recently announced new election dates without discussions of bringing full budget for the fiscal year 2021/22 through an ordinance.

The NC leader was speaking at a budget review here on Sunday by the School of Democracy. "The budget has been brought with an intention of influencing the elections. The caretaker government has only the responsibility of continuing ongoing programs. But it cannot bring supplementary budget," he said.

Former Governor of Nepal Rastriya Bank Dr Chiranjibi Nepal charged the government with bringing the budget without discussions.

Similarly, former vice-chairperson of National Planning Commission Dr Jagadish Chandra Pokharel attacked the budget as being election-focused while another NPC former vice chair Dr Govinda Pokharel has stated challenges in budget implementation.

Compared to previous finance ministers, finance minister Poudel has many limitations this year. As a finance minister of election government and the country has been passing through a very critical period due to surge of COVID-19, Poudel too has presented the budget taking the consideration politics and economy.



# Left, Left, And Left

*With the weakening of centrist ideology of Nepali Congress, Nepalese communists have monopolized political spaces*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Whether there will be the restoration of the House of Representatives or the fresh elections in November as proposed by the present communist government led by CPN-UML leader Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, nothing will be change in the political landscape so far as leading the government in terms of ideology.

With the dissolution of the House of Representatives under the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, Nepalese politics is divided into two fronts. Although it is yet to split legally, ruling CPN-UML is present in both the sides of political spectrum.

Signing the petitions filed in the Supreme Court seeking the revival of the House of Representatives, 27 members led by CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal sided with Nepali Congress, Maoist Center, NCP-Masal and Sanghiya Samajbadi Janta Party led by Upendra Yadav.

Le by Nepali Congress, a centrist liberal democratic party, this front has communist domination as well in terms of strength. Out of five members, three are communist. Given the nature of the present confrontations, the outcome will be to establish a communist government replacing other.

Since the restoration of democracy in 1990, communists have made a net gain in Nepalese political space. From merely a student-led organization, communists have emerged as a strong force in the country. In the early 1990s, communists took the space of former Panchas and now they are displacing Nepali Congress.

With its frequent change alliance with the communists, Nepali Congress has lost its own identity and political stand. Tilted so much in left, Nepali Congress is now ideologically nowhere.

This is not with the commu-



nists. Although they are divided in several factions, Nepalese communist has a strong ideological base. They keep the communist flag with hammer and sickle and worshipped the communist ideologues Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao as their guru.

Based on the ideological foundation of a communist ideologue, the party structures and party literature of Nepalese communists preached the establishment of a socialistic and communist state.

With ideological commonness, unity among communists is natural but splits are unnatural which is based on individual ego. During the last elections, two major communist parties CPN-UML and Maoist-Center contested elections in jointly against Nepali Congress and later they merged as Nepal Communist Party.

The party recently split due to individual differences between Prachanda and Oli and later Madhav Nepal and PM Oli. As communists have been contesting all the professional level elections of including Bar, Medical Associa-

tion, Engineering Association and University Professor Association, unity can be easily made once the leaders give up individual ego.

Given such a history of unity and split of communist leaders, one cannot rule out the possibility of unity between Nepal and PM Oli. With final round of negotiations, Nepal and PM Oli can patch of differences.

CPN-UML was split in 1998 with Bam Dev Gautam-led ML and Nepal UML on the issue of ratification of the Mahakali Treaty. Two years after both the party reunited without any difficulty. Gautam and Nepal are same group now.

## Political Scenario

With the signature of 145 members of House of Representatives, four parties front of Nepali Congress, Maoist Center, Madhav Nepal Faction of UML and faction of Sanghiya Samajbadi Janta Party led by Upendra Yadav and Nepal Communist Party Masal filed a petition in Supreme Court demanding to restore the house dissolve by PM Oli.



## POLITICS

nists forces have uprooted rightists and displaced the liberal democratic Nepali Congress.

As communists have been exploiting all opportunistic to exploits political possibility, Nepali Congress and other political parties are net losers in the political game.

### Oli, Deuba, Nepal and Prachanda

With his own cunningness and strength, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is the common enemy of communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal and Pushpakamal Dahal duo. With their own communist background, they cannot defeat Oli alone. By offering the post of prime minister in the new government, Nepal and Prachanda lure Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba in their front to fight the common enemy.

Faced humiliated defeat in the last general election in 2018 with unified communists, the size of Nepali Congress has reduced to a marginal party. In this context, the split in the ruling communist party is politically beneficial to Nepali Congress and Deuba in long term.

However, NC and NC leader Deuba, for unknown reasons, choose to side with a faction of communists instead to contest the elections to defeat them and get their own space. In the name of saving a constitution, Deuba is siding with other communist factions.

Although Deuba, Nepal and Prachanda have nothing common in ideology, they agree to form the front against PM Oli in the name of safeguarding the constitution.

Given this scenario with a centrist party is partnering with an extreme ideology of communists and rightists are nowhere, Nepal has to go a long way to see the liberal democratic system with rule of law, individual freedom and periodical elections. For only left, left and left.



As The Mahanta Thakur- Rajendra Mahato faction of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal backing PM Oli and Upendra Yadav-Baburam Bhattarai faction is with other group, communists will have to gain more incoming political scenario at the cost of weakening other parties.

At a time when the centrist Nepali Congress Party is in minority in the faction, the coming political course will be decided by communists whether the court restore the house or accept the dissolution.

### Ideological Front

Born as a centrist party following the path of NC leader BP Koirala, Nepali Congress stands as a liberal democratic party with respect to rule of law, freedom of the individual and pluralism.

Under the leadership GP Koirala, Nepali Congress gave up everything for the sake of power. Following late Koirala's footstep, Sher Bahadur Deuba has further made the party just as a bunch of opportunists'.

To maintain its democratic identity and centrist stand, BP Koirala-led Nepali Congress had never sided with rightists Panchas and communists. Following his death, NC had changed its stand and joins a front with communists to overthrow Panchayat in 1990.

After death of BP, NC continues to drift its stand backing communists one after. B.P's own brother GP Koirala even signed an agreement with Maoists' rebellion to overthrow the monarchy accepting more radical orientation in 2006.

Expressing opposition NC leader and ideologue late Krishna Prasad

Bhattarai quit Nepali Congress in 2007 following its decision to back republican and federal agenda of Maoist Party.

As the rightist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) is far away from competitive politics and Nepali Congress, a centrist liberal democratic force, is siding with different communist factions as a partner, communists have been dominating the political spectrum of Nepal.

The recent split in Sanghiya Samajbadi-Janta, a regional-based party, will also ultimately strengthen the communist force in Nepal. Like Nepali Congress, the two factions of the regional party are supporting two communists in ruling and opposition.

Although the communist ideology is fading globally including Nepal's southern neighboring country India, communists are thriving and establishing their roots in a backward and traditional Nepalese society.

Having widely harped anti-Indian plank to woo the nationalist sentiment of the common people and portray as a defender of liberal democratic force siding with Nepali Congress, Commu-



# The West: A Sore Loser In Vaccine Diplomacy



BY: ABIJIT SHARMA

On May 12, the New York times published an article entitled ‘World’s Most Vaccinated Nation Is Spooked by Covid Spike’. The article talked about how Seychelles, an island country in the Indian Ocean, despite having a highly vaccinated population is now experiencing a huge surge in Covid cases. The country had relied heavily on Sinopharm vaccine provided by China to inoculate its population. A look at the headline and the first few paragraphs does seem to indicate that the Chinese vaccine did little to control the Covid surge in the country. But somewhere in the middle, the article goes on to reveal that ‘among the vaccinated population that had two doses, 57 percent was given Sinopharm, while 43 percent was given AstraZeneca’. It then quotes the Health Ministry saying that they did not exactly know how many newly infected had taken the Sinopharm shot.

In other words – there was no certainty that the Chinese vaccine had ‘not worked’.

Malicious stories about China have become a common place in Western media these days. Ever since the start of the pandemic, the West has left no stones unturned in tarnishing China’s image. At the beginning, there were stories – mostly conspiracy theories - about the origins of the virus. Some claimed that China had planned to use the virus as a bio-weapon, others claimed that the virus originated months earlier than reported. In the later stages, the criticism has shifted to Chinese made vaccines. But many of these stories – sometimes carried by giants such as New York Times and Washington Post – contain only one side of the story. While covering the story about Seychelles for instance, where even it is to be believed that the infection was higher amongst those who taken the Sinopharm shots, there is no mention of Chile where the Chinese jabs have been a huge success. A study in Chile, covering 10.5 million of its people, has found that the Chinese-developed CoronaVachas 67% efficacy against symptoms and 80% against death from Covid-19. Recently, a research in Indonesia covering health workers found that in real world scenario, Chinese vaccine protected 98% of the health workers from death and 96% from hospitalization as soon as seven days after the second dose. Such news however is met with either subdued response or skepticism.

It is clear that China’s advanced vaccine diplomacy stands in contrast to the ‘me first policy’ of the United States

and the European Union. While the EU and the US are focused on inoculating their people at home, China has already managed to ship 265 million doses of the vaccine in about 80 countries across the globe. All this while managing to vaccinate more than 200 million of its population. Beijing is thus a clear leader in terms of vaccine diplomacy. On the other hand, at the time of this writing, Washington was yet to start sending out the 80 million doses of vaccines promised by Joe Biden due to logistical and regulatory hurdles. Another manufacturer, Astra Zeneca has been struggling to meet the production targets due to increased Covid infection in some of its recipient countries. This has irked the West which is now resorting to its maligning tactics to downplay China.

There is no denying the fact that Beijing’s move is part of its larger political ambition. It is a maneuver used for image-building; a step taken to portray itself as a messiah for the Global South. But this does not give the West any right to tarnish China’s efforts. If nothing else, the West have equal opportunity to step up its game. Resorting to cheap shots just proves that the West is a sore loser. But Washington, it appears, is yet to realize that. At the time of this writing, Western media is now rallying behind another ludicrous conspiracy theory saying that the Covid-19 virus stemmed from a lab experiment. The suspicion started doing the rounds after a classified



US intelligence report - saying three researchers at the Wuhan laboratory were treated in hospital in November 2019, just before the virus began infecting humans in the city - began circulating in US media. Big media houses then started floating the news with the Washington Post even providing a detailed timeline on its edition in May 25 showing how the lab leak theory has ‘credible evidences’. Anthony Fauci, President Biden’s chief medical adviser even quoted to have said that ‘that possibility definitely existed’. All of this based simply on one intelligence report which is

far from conclusive!

The West needs to get rid of this excessive obsession with China. Treating every development from Beijing with skepticism will not put a brake on its efforts. It will continue to move forward aggressively capitalizing on every opportunity it sees. Whining about it will simply make the West lag behind. If Washington and its allies actually plan to counter Beijing, it will have to get its hand dirty - get down on the ground and pursue aggressive diplomacy.



MCC-B NEPAL

# EIA Clearance

*Government Approves EIA Report Of Electricity Transmission Project Of MCA-Nepal*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**lthough the agreement on MCC is yet to approve by the House of Representatives, the approval of EIA by the Ministry of Forest and Environment is very significant for the implementations of the project.

The Ministry of Forest and Environment has approved the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the Electricity Transmission Project to be implemented by Millennium Challenge Account Nepal Development Board (MCA-Nepal) with the grant funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), USA, and co-funding from the Government of Nepal.

According to a press release issued by Millennium Challenge Account Nepal Development Board (MCA-Nepal), the EIA report, approved on 29 April 2021 by the government with a ministerial level decision, is a major part of the project preparatory works now underway for the construction of transmission lines and substations under the ETP project.

“The achievement is an important milestone to help meet one condition related to site access before the MCC Compact can enter into force,” said Mr. Khadga Bahadur Bisht, Executive Director of MCA-Nepal, “The other important milestone will be ratification of the Compact.”

Bisht added, “The report has established the existing status of the physical, biological, socio-economic and cultural environment within the project’s footprint, and has suggested measures to mitigate the potential impacts.”

ures to mitigate the potential impacts.”

The detailed EIA report, prepared according to existing laws in Nepal, is in compliance with Nepal’s Environment Protection Act (EPA), 2019 and Environment Protection Rules (EPR), 2020.

The EIA used a robust methodology for data collection and analysis, and included a number of consultations and public hearings in all 30 municipalities/rural municipalities of 10 districts in the project’s footprint.

It has proposed measures to

actions to ensure fulfillment of the commitments in the EIA report. Following the approval of the report, MCA-Nepal will now initiate a process to receive the approval for the use of national forest area and removal of trees and plants.

The Government of Nepal and the US Government’s MCC signed a Compact in September 2017 for undertaking two projects that the Government had identified to address major constraints to Nepal’s development.

One of the two projects, the



avoid, minimize or mitigate/manage adverse impacts and to optimize project benefits as per Nepali environmental laws and regulations, and international best practices.

As a requirement of the EPA (2019), the EIA includes a detail Environmental, Social, Health, and Safety Management Plan (ESHSMP) to ensure safety of workers and communities affected by the project during implementation. It also includes an Environmental Monitoring Plan, and specifies an environmental audit process to identify any non-compliance including corrective

Electricity Transmission Project, also a National Pride Project, will build around 314 km of 400 kV transmission lines and three 400 kV sub-stations. The transmission lines will pass through 30 municipalities/rural municipalities in 10 districts. The Project will also ensure affected local stakeholders benefit through partnership program and strengthen the power sector in Nepal.

The other – Road Maintenance Project – will support maintenance of Nepal’s roads while also introducing a new road maintenance technology in the country.

# Supporting SMEs

## *IFC Invests \$10 Million In Dolma Impact Fund II To Help Small Businesses And Support Economic Recovery In Nepal*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when the lockdown imposed by the government to contain the coronavirus has badly affected the small and medium enterprises, IFC's new package will give life to them.

Private equity funds like Dolma can be an important source of capital and expertise for Nepali firms that have potential to grow, including those struggling to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to IFC Resident Representative in Nepal, Babacar S. Faye.

His comments follow IFC's decision to invest \$10 million in Dolma Impact Fund II (DIF II) to help provide financing to small and medium sized enterprises, (SMEs) in health-care, renewable energy, technology, and other critical sectors, vital to the recovery of the pandemic-battered economy. DIF II is managed by Dolma Fund Management.

SMEs are a key engine of growth in Nepal, contributing 20 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and creating over 60 percent of jobs in the country. Even before the pandemic hit, SMEs were already struggling with limited access to finance. At present only 39 percent of Nepal's SMEs have access to finance. Availability of additional financing for SMEs will be key to any sustainable and inclusive economic recovery in Nepal.

"Dolma Fund Management is one of the first private equity fund managers focused on Nepal. It com-

pleted the initial \$40 million close of Dolma Impact Fund II in May 2021, to invest in companies with strong growth potential, especially small and medium businesses," said Tim Gocher, CEO of the Dolma Fund Management. "This will help scale up their capacity, increase skills and competitiveness, and create sustainable employment in Nepal. The target fund size is \$75 million. We are confident that IFC's participation will further catalyze fund raising and help us reach our target size."



IFC's equity investment includes \$5 million from the International Development Association's Private Sector Window, created to catalyze private sector investment in low-income countries. The overall investment is part of IFC's SME Ventures program, which provides risk capital to entrepreneurs and fund managers in low-income countries where such funding is scarce or unavailable.

"With the rise in COVID-19 cases, Nepal is in a difficult spot, but

we believe in the country's potential," said IFC Resident Representative in Nepal, Babacar S. Faye. "By providing capital in emerging markets like Nepal, where it is scarce, private equity funds can help local businesses expand their operations, create more jobs, and provide critical goods and services. We also hope that this will send a strong signal to the market that we are confident in the resilience of Nepal's entrepreneurs."

With a combined capital of less than \$100 million, private equity funds operating in Nepal are smaller than those in other emerging economies and there is significant potential for growth. IFC's latest investment in DIF II marks its second in private equity in Nepal.

In 2015 IFC invested \$7 million in Business Oxygen (BO2), Nepal's first domestic private equity firm, which was subsequently increased by another \$7.3 million in 2017.

The additional investment was made through two funds managed by IFC, financed by the Climate Investment Fund's Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) and United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO). BO2, has invested in about 10 high-growth SMEs, helping them achieve their potential and create hundreds of jobs.

IFC's current combined committed portfolio in Nepal stands at \$550 million.



# Climate Change

## Implementing The Commitments



BY: BATU UPRETY

Climate change is imposing existential threat to human beings, other life-forms and ecosystems. Several Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement (PA) have submitted their updated or second nationally determined contribution (NDC) in December 2020. NDCs of developing countries, including Least Developed Country (LDC) Parties include 'conditional' targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. It means, they will implement their major contributions or commitments, subject to the availability of funding and technologies

Nepal's NDC submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat on 08 December 2020 mentions USD 25 billion and USD 3.4 billion to achieve 'conditional' and 'unconditional' targets respectively. NDC also aims to achieve net-zero GHGs emission or be carbon-neutral country by 2050. Unconditional targets are related to generation of 5,000 MW by 2030, sales of e-vehicles, development of 200km electric rail network, and promotion of improved cooking stoves and biogas. Cooking stoves, micro-hydro, and biogas were developed in the last decade as clean development mechanism (CDM) projects after Nepal's 'realistic' negotiation with Kyoto Protocol (KP) Parties on methodological issues in 2007. This contributed a lot to develop CDM projects in Nepal as per Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol, and reduce GHGs emissions, though negligible.

Rejoining the Paris Agreement, US President Joe Biden convened a virtual Leaders Summit on Climate on 22-23 April 2021. World's leaders announced new climate targets to reduce GHGs emissions so as to achieving the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Leaders committed to undertake innovative pathways to a net-zero economy. Many statements focussed on promoting clean energy tech-

nologies. Bangladesh (chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum), Bhutan (chair of the LDC Group to UNFCCC) and India attended the Leaders Summit from South Asia.

US commitment to achieve 50-52 percent reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide GHGs emissions by 2030 is a strong signal of the new government to the global community to implement the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, US plan to double by 2024 their annual public climate finance to developing countries may be rewarding for many developing countries and LDCs to achieve their commitments. Political desire of Head of the State or Government would greatly influence the decisions of the CoP26 of the UNFCCC to be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom in November 2021. Leaders may express their desire on climate ambition in G7 and G20 meetings as well.

US President has linked climate actions with creating new jobs and improving economy. This might greatly contribute to build capacity, develop appropriate technologies, generate clean energy, reduce GHG emissions, improve economy, and channel additional funding for actions in climate vulnerable countries.

Political commitments on climate ambition and finance have been made during the CoVID-19 pandemic. Lack of or inadequate investment in innovative solutions may promote even environmentally sensitive 'fossil-fuel-based' economic growth. If so, funding and technology problem will continue to be a major challenge to comply with the global responsibility for avoiding or reducing GHGs emission. This may create a 'tragedy of the common resource - the climate'. This may also affect the commitment of the developed country Parties to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement to provide additional funding and technology to climate vulnerable countries - the LDCs.

## ENVIRONMENT

If so, climate change will further adversely affect the economic sectors such as agriculture, water resources, tourism etc. The Prime Minister of Nepal hoped, 'UK, as the host of Cop26, to push hard for an ambitious climate deal – a deal that should contain financial support and capacity-building for climate-vulnerable countries' (<https://www.theguardian.com/comment-isfree/2021/may/10/nepal-covid-uk-g7>).

In May-June 2021, virtual meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) to the UNFCCC, KP and PA will discuss on several agenda items for the effective implementation of these legally binding instruments. This

meeting is expected 'not to make any decisions or conclusions on agenda items', including National Adaptation Plan, and extension of the mandate of the LDC Expert Group. Nepal's participation may be crucial in SBs' meetings in view of her 'conditional ambitious targets' in NDC2; 'non-continuation' in negotiations of important agenda items for Nepal, and 'non-responsive commitments' including in regional meetings. SBs sessions may refresh understanding and sharing our challenges, concerns and needs to cope with climate change impacts at this pandemic situation. As SBs will start on 31 May 2021, it is high time to think of Nepal's preparations for this Bonn session.

The Government has issued a National Environment Policy (2019) with the aim of ensuring 'right' to survive in a clean and healthy environment by controlling pollution, managing wastes and promoting greenery. A number of policies has been grouped under: (i) pollution prevention, control and reduction; (ii) environmental mainstreaming; (iii) environmental justice; (iv) participation; (v) sustainable development; and (vi) governance, research and capacity building. It commits to review this 2019 policy every five years. A research paper on environment policy is accepted in April 2021 for publication.

Authors (few working in policy formulating government Ministry) analysed Nepal's environmental policy from perspectives of policy actors and institutions and drew inferences on increasing involvement of non-governmental (and donor) actors in setting the context and framing of environmental

policies, and domination of government officials, experts and international organisations in selecting tools of action. Authors recommended to adopting transdisciplinary policy-making approach (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1462901121001052>).

This reflects 'ownership' over the policy, and helps to guess reasons for 'non-implementation' of poli-

cies that requires skills, commitment, funding and technologies. Possibility of translating policies into action exists in the new techno-administrative leadership in the policy formulating institution.

Realisation on the existential threats of climate change has moved from scientific community to political level. Politicians representing highlands (mountains), drylands, lowlands or islands are continuously raising impacts of climate change and have made commitments in reducing GHGs emissions, even if their GHGs contribution is negligible. Importantly, high GHGs emitting countries have also committed to adopt innovative clean energy development pathway to substantially reduce their GHGs emissions. Developing countries, including LDCs and Island States have urged developed countries to provide additional funding and technologies to adapt and build resilience to climate change. In order to translate 'leaders' commitment' and 'conditional targets' in NDCs into action, time has come to make climate change 'people's agenda'.

*Author is an former Joint-Secretary (Tech.) and Chief of Climate Change Management Division, then Ministry of Environment; E-mail: upretybk@gmail.com*



# CLIMATE CHANGE



# COVID-19 CRISIS

# Helping Hands

*At a time when the global community is gradually recovering and some countries are still facing the upsurge of coronavirus, the second wave of COVID-19 has created havoc in Nepal. With the increasing positive cases, hospitals, which have faced overwhelming cases, are unable to provide minimum facilities like oxygen. Thanks to the emergency health support from international communities and two neighbors, Nepal is able to sail through the most difficult phase. Although the infections rates are gradually declining, given the lack of preventive method like vaccination, one cannot rule out the another devastating wave*

BY KESHAB POUDEL

With the full fledged supplies of oxygen from India, despite its own needs and scarcity, the arrival of emergency medical equipment oxygen cylinders, ventilators, emergency medical equipment through land and sea from China and large bulks of medical supply from friendly countries like the United States, Japan, Australia, France, Britain, Finland, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, European Union.

Thailand and Singapore, Nepal have somehow managed to turn the tide down flattening the row of the second wave.

Following the decline of positive cases, Nepal had eased all the health restrictions, opening schools, parlor, theaters and people have started their daily chorus as in the normal situation. Wedding, parties, political rallies and other gatherings started to take place.

Newar community of Bhaktapur, Thimi and Kathmandu celebrated chariot festivals gatherings of thousands of people. The start of the marriage session on the 21st of April, it opens flood gates for parties and receptions of people giving much-needed space to the coronavirus to penetrate deep inside the community.

From merely a couple of death and less than 100 daily infections and dozens of hospitalization

## COVERSTORY

till April 15, everything has started to grow like a rocket. With the entry of a new deadly and contiguous variant, Nepal's health system started to crumbling from April 21. The daily positive cases went up to 10,000, hospitalization over 1000 and death over 200, there was complete chaos and panic.

With the increase of cases nearby neighbor India, which has itself suffered from a worse scenario with over 400,000 daily infections, was unable to helpfully. However, it did its best supplying the oxygen to Nepal to save the life.

Sending oxygen cylinders and other necessary medicines Nepal's next neighbor China jumped to rescue Nepalese people from COVID-19. Following the emergency call from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United States of America came with huge consignments of emergency supply including the oxygen cylinder, ventilators and other medicines.

Similarly, the United Kingdom, Nepal's oldest friend, has also sent a big consignment of medical supply. European Union announces Rs. 282 Million to Nepal Tackle COVID-19 Surge.

Within a month of called by Nepal for support, the international community has shown solidarity offering the much-needed humanitarian support to cope with the new surge.

### EU Member States Channel Critical Support To Nepal To Combat Coronavirus Surge

An aircraft from Spain carrying urgently needed oxygen cylinders and concentrators, ventilators and rapid antigen tests arrived in Nepal, following the country's request for support for EU assistance to help contain its rapid surge in COVID-19 infections.

The shipment, the first of several to follow from the EU Member States in the coming days, is facilitated through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The offers of support from the EU Member States currently include Finland: 2.2 million surgical face masks, 350,000 FFP2 masks, 52,500 pairs of vinyl gloves, 30,000 isolation gowns.

France: 14 ventilators, spare parts for oxygen plants, 20,000 antigen tests, 500,000 KN95 masks. Germany: 62 ventilators, 27,500 FFP2 masks, 30,000 surgical masks, 200 body bags, 5 isolation centre tents, 400 gumboots

Spain: 50 oxygen cylinders, 10 oxygen concentrators, 15 ventilators, 124,800 rapid antigen tests, 144,000 FFP2 masks. Belgium: 1 million surgical masks, 2,000 nasal oxygen cannulas.

Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management said: "The COVID-19 surge in Nepal is claiming more lives every minute as it spreads across the country. We stand in full solidarity with Nepal in its fight against the pandemic. I am very thankful to Finland, Spain, France, Germany

and Belgium for their quick and generous offers of assistance via our Civil Protection Mechanism, showing that the EU is a trusted partner and friend in times of need. We are also quickly mobilizing emergency support with an initial €2 million. We stand ready to provide further assistance."

The initial €2 million will support the monitoring of all home isolated cases through telehealth/telemedicine services and rapid referral to hospitals, as well as national emergency medical teams' deployment and the mobilization of international emergency medical teams. The funding will also procure key COVID-19 equipment and supplies in Nepal, including oxygen equipment (including oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators), personal protection equipment, home care kits and diagnostics equipment.

Team Europe is also working to ensure global, equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and supporting the rollout of vaccination campaigns while exploring possibilities for boosting local manufacturing capacity. The EU played a leading role in setting up the COVAX Facility, the global initiative that allows for high-income countries to fund vaccines for low and middle-income countries and where Team Europe is one of its leading donors, with over €2.47 billion. To date, over €40.5 million doses of vaccine have been delivered to more than 100 countries worldwide.

The EU has been providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict and major natural hazards in Nepal since 2001, including the devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake in 2015. Over 50 disaster preparedness projects have reached more than a million people across the country.

### EU Provides Rs. 282 Million to Nepal Tackle COVID-19 Surge

EU stands in full solidarity with Nepal in its fight against the pandemic, mobilizes EURO 2 million (NPR 282 million) to tackle infection surge







Nepal has requested EU assistance to help contain the explosion in COVID-19 cases. In response, the EU has mobilized an initial EURO 2 million (NPR 282 million) in humanitarian funding, which will support monitoring of all home isolated cases through telehealth/telemedicine services and rapid referral to hospitals; national emergency medical teams deployment and international emergency medical teams mobilization facilitation; procure COVID-19 equipment and supplies in Nepal.

Key equipment and supplies will include oxygen equipment including oxygen gas cylinders, oxygen concentrators, home care kits, diagnostics including antigen test kits; personal protection equipment. Nepal has also activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Finland is the first Member State to offer more than 2 million surgical facemasks, 350,000 FFP2 masks, 52,500 pairs of vinyl gloves and 30,000 isolation gowns.

Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, said: “The COVID-19 surge in Nepal is claiming more lives every minute as it spreads across the country. We stand in full solidarity with Nepal in its fight against the pandemic. We are quickly mobilizing emergency support with initial €2 million funding. I am very thankful to Finland for their quick offers of assistance via our Civil Protection Mechanism. We stand ready to provide further assistance.”

The European Union’s 24/7

Emergency Response Coordination Centre is in regular contact with the Nepalese authorities to closely monitor the situation and channel the EU assistance.

### **French Government Handed Over Medical Supply To Nepal**

In solidarity with Nepal in its



fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the French Government has extended support of medical equipment and supplies to the Government of Nepal.

Francois-Xavier Leger, Ambassador of France to Nepal, handed over to Hridayesh Tripathi, Minister for Health and Population, the shipment containing 504,000 FFP2 masks; 20,225 antigenic test kits; 12,000 protection glasses; and 14 respirators including consumables at a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport this morning.

Minister for Health and Population Tripathy thanked the Govern-

## **COVERSTORY**

ment and the people of France for their generous support of life-saving materials, which would be helpful in containing the surge of COVID-19 cases and treatment of the affected people. He stated that the timely support from France is reflective of the longstanding Nepal-France friendship.

“The medical support received is in response to the request of the Government of Nepal to the French Government, communicated at the bilateral level as well as through the European Union’s Civil Protection Mechanism, for supporting Nepal with vaccines, medicines, equipment and supplies in the face of the deadlier second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said a press release issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **France’s Support To Nepal In Its Fight Against COVID-19**

In order to combat the Covid-19 crisis in Nepal, the French Gov-

ernment French Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Crisis and Support Centre sent a 7-ton humanitarian cargo earlier .

This is in response to the Government of Nepal’s call for support.

The materials were handed over to Minister for Health and Population, Honourable Hridayesh Tripathi, by the French Ambassador, François-Xavier LEGER. Ambassadors of the Delegation of the European Union, Germany and Finland were also present at the occasion.

Highlighting the importance France puts on its relationship with

## COVERSTORY

Nepal, Ambassador LEGER said, “France stands side by side with Nepal in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. A global solution and cooperation are required to combat the current crisis and France, along with other EU member states, is committed to helping Nepal and the Nepali population to fight the crisis”.

The materials were delivered by an Airbus A350 which was put in place by the Airbus Foundation as a courtesy.

### **Nepal Has Received COVID-19 Vaccines From China**



As conveyed by Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, during the telephone conversation with President Bidya Devi Bhandari on May 26, 2021, a consignment of 800,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Kathmandu.

The vaccine and a similar number of syringes were airlifted from Beijing to Kathmandu by a chartered flight of Nepal Airlines Corporation this afternoon. The vaccines have been duly received by the officials of the Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal.

The remaining two hundred thousand doses of the vaccine are being provided to Nepal by the Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

Accordingly, 50,400 doses

of the vaccine and syringes have been handed over to the officials of the Ministry of Health and Population this morning, and another batch of 50,400 vaccines and syringes is scheduled to arrive in Kathmandu this evening. The consignment of the remaining 99,200 vaccines and syringes will arrive in Kathmandu tomorrow.

The Government of Nepal sincerely appreciates and thanks to the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China for providing life-saving vaccines at this trying time.

Nepal received 850,400 COVID-19 vaccines along with syringes provided by China under grant assistance. The consignments were handed over to the officials of #mohpnep at TIA. We thank the Government of China for the support.

China Handled Over Various Medical Equipment Including 40 Portable Ventilators

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi tweeted the news of handing over of various medical equipment to Nepal by

China at Tatopani yesterday.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China is contributing to Nepal’s fight against the pandemic! 40 portable ventilators, 20 automated analyzers, 10 DR machines, 20 portable ultrasound and 30 anesthesia machines were handed over at Tatopani yesterday,” tweets Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi.

### **First Batch Of Chinese Vaccine Arrives From Tibet Autonomous Region**

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi tweeted the news of the arrival of the vaccines. “The first batch of vaccines donated by Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region has arrived in Kathmandu!”

The first batch of anti-Covid-19 vaccines donated by Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region to Nepal has

arrived at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), .

On May 26, President Bidya Devi Bhandari, during a telephone conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping relayed that Nepal is looking forward to purchasing China-manufactured vaccines for its people.

During the conversation, Chinese President Xi Jinping had committed to providing 1 million doses of Vero Cell vaccines to Nepal under grant assistance.

Nepal Received 800 Cylinders With Oxygen, 200 ICU Beds And 45 Ventilators From China

Nepal received 800 cylinders with oxygen, 200 ICU beds, 45 ventilators, 10 concentrators, 15000 antigen kits, 20 automated analyzers, 10 DR machines, 20 ultrasound and 30 anesthesia machines from China at Tatopani .

“We thank the Gov and people of China for the generous support,” tweets the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

China’s Central And Provincial Governments Provide Various Life-Saving Medical Equipment And Supply To Nepal

The Government of the People’s Republic of China, the Provincial Governments as well as other organizations in China have provided various life-saving medical equipment and sup-





plies to help Nepal fight against Coronavirus.

As a part of grant assistance, China provided 3500 oxygen cylinders and 10 ventilators, out of which 2000 oxygen cylinders and 10 ventilators have already been airlifted and the rest of the oxygen cylinders are being delivered at Rasuwagadhi border port shortly.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, another consignment of 40 portable ventilators, 20 automated analyzers, 10 DR machines, 20 portable ultrasound, and 30 anesthesia machines worth 5 million RMB is being handed over to the Nepali side at Tatopani border port by next week.

According to the Ministry, the Government of the People's Republic of China has announced additional grant assistance of 5 million RMB under which items such as 650 oxygen concentrators, 20000 oxygen nasal cannulas and 20000 oxygen face masks will be provided to Nepal by next month.

The Government of Sichuan Province of China delivered by a chartered aircraft on May 19, 2021, medical supplies that include 300,000 disposable surgical masks, 162,880 N95 masks, 10,000 medical protective clothing, 500 ear thermometers, 50 non-contact infrared thermometers equivalent to 3.06 million RMB.

Besides, the Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China has handed over the first batch of

150 liquid oxygen cylinders to the Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa. The donated Liquid Oxygen is equivalent to 30 thousand liters of liquid oxygen.

The liquid oxygen cylinders are expected to arrive in Tatopani border port on 22 May 2021. Meanwhile, the TAR Government of China has announced to provide additional medical equipment and materials that include 200 ICU beds, 5 ventilators, 10 oxygen concentrators, 800 oxygen gas cylinders with oxygen and 15000 antigen kits.

The Red Cross Society of China is providing Nepal Red Cross Society with 90 oxygen concentrators, 2000 coverall and 700000 surgical masks, which are being handed over tomorrow. Several private organizations in China have also provided medical equipment such as oxygen concentrators, oxygen regulators and valves, oxygen cylinders to Nepal.

The Government of Nepal appreciates and thanks to the Government of the People's Republic of China and its provincial Governments for the generous support at this difficult time. The medical equipment and materials are managed by the Ministry of Health and Population.

#### **Chinese Medical Supply Arrived In Kathmandu**

A large quantity of Chinese medical support arrived in Nepal.

Brought by a charter flight of Sichuan Airlines, the emergency health support includes medicines and equipment.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi tweets, "Medical supplies donated to Ne-

pals by Sichuan Provincial People's Government, the P.R.C have arrived in Kathmandu!!"

Earlier, Nepal Airlines plane has already brought a large number of oxygen cylinders and other equipment from China to fight against COVID-19.

#### **Thailand Handed Over Forty-six Oxygen Concentrators To Nepal**



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Bhikkhus and Verapuchong Foundation, Thailand have provided forty-six oxygen concentrators to Nepal.

Ambassador of Thailand Vongsasit Vongsasit handed over those oxygen concentrators to a senior official of the Ministry of Health and Population amidst a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

A representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs too was present on the occasion. Those oxygen concentrators were brought by a Shree Airlines flight,

The Government of Nepal appreciates and thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Bhikkhus and Verapuchong Foundation, Thailand for their support.



## COVERSTORY

A special aircraft, carrying various equipment and medical items contributed by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn PhraVajiraklaochaoyuhua and members of the Thai Royal Family in order to support the Government of Nepal in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, is also arriving early next week.

### Nepal Received 150 Ventilators From The UAE

A special flight, carrying health equipment and supplies provided by the Government of the United Arab Emirates to support the Government of Nepal in its fight against Covid-19 pandemic, arrived Kathmandu this morning.

Nepal received 150 ventilators, 150 trolleys, 318600 masks, 9000 coverall, 15000 gown and 20000 goggles from UAE. We appreciate and thank the Government and people of the UAE for this generous support.



The shipment consisting ventilators, trolleys, masks, coverall, gown and goggles was handed over to the representative of the Ministry of Health and Population by the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Kathmandu. The support received is in response to the request of the Government of Nepal.

The Government of Nepal expresses its gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for the generous support that complements our efforts for treatment, prevention and control of the pandemic.

### Thailand Provides Medical Supply To Nepal



A special aircraft from Thailand, carrying emergency medical supplies, arrived in Kathmandu.

The shipment consisting of surgical masks, PPE set, face shield, rapid antigen test, and fingertip pulse oximeter among others, was handed over to the Minister for Health and Population Hridayesh Tripathi by the Ambassador of Thailand to Nepal Vosita-Vorasaph, amidst a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and Minister for Education, Science and Technology Krishna Gopal Shrestha were also present on the occasion.

The equipment was provided by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn PhraVajiraklaochaoyuhua, Her Majesty Queen SuthidaBajrasudhabimalalakshana and Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendiradevyavati of Thailand to support the Government of Nepal in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, arrived in Kathmandu this morning.

The Government of Nepal is grateful to Their Majesties the King and Queen and Her Royal Highness the Princess as well as to the people of

Thailand for their support which is a testimony to the long-standing friendship between Nepal and Thailand.

### Finland Channels Critical Support To Nepal To Combat Coronavirus Surge



Pertti Anttinen, Ambassador of Finland to Nepal, has handed over various critical health materials to Minister of Health and Population Hridayesh Tripathy amid a function at Tribhuvan International Airport,

A shipment from Finland carrying urgently needed protective supplies arrived in Nepal, following the



country's request to the EU for assistance to contain its rapid surge in COVID-19 infections.

The shipment comprises 2,498,540 surgical masks, 164,500 vinyl gloves, 26,000 gowns, 349,920 KN95 masks and 288,000 face shields. The Finnish assistance package contains 3,326,960 items (around 30t) in total.

Pertti Anttinen, Ambassador of Finland to Nepal said: "The COVID-19 surge is claiming lives every day in Nepal and has rapidly overwhelmed hospitals and depleted medical supplies all over the country. Finland and the European Union are ready to help in this serious situation and stand in full solidarity with Nepal to protect all Nepalese right to health and life."

According to a press release issued by Kati Bhoose, Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, the shipment, the second of several to follow from the EU Member States in the coming days, is facilitated through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Nepal is one of Finland's long-term partner countries in development cooperation. The Country Programme focuses on water, sanitation and hygiene, education and gender equality.

During the ceremony ambassador of the European Union to Nepal Nona Deprez and ambassador of Germany to Nepal Roland Schäfer were also present.

Finland's material assistance to Nepal to fight #COVID19 pandemic was received in Kathmandu. Aid was delivered through the #EUCivilProtectionMechanism as part of the EU's joint assistance mission.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign, the timely support received from the Government of Finland reflects the long-standing development partnership and friendship among the people of both countries. The Government of Nepal deeply appreciates Finland's solidarity to Nepal at this hour of difficulty.

"The support received is in response to Nepal's request to Finland, communicated bilaterally as well

as through the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism, for supporting Nepal with COVID-19 related vaccines, medicines, equipment and supplies," said the Ministry.

Pertti Anttinen, Ambassador of Finland to Nepal, handed over the materials to Hridayesh Tripathi, Minister for Health and Population, at a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport this morning. The Hon. Minister for Health and Population thanked the Finnish Government for its generous support, which would help contain the surge of COVID-19 cases.

In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Finland has extended support of medical equipment and supplies to the Government of Nepal. The shipment arrived in a chartered flight dispatched by the Finnish Government includes 350,000 FFP2 masks; 100,000 KN95 masks; 232,500 gloves; 30,000 gowns; 2,498,000 facemasks; and 350,000 face shields

#### **The United Kingdom Provides 260 Units Of Ventilators (130 CPaP and 130 BiPaP Machines To Nepal**



Nicola Pollitt, the Ambassador of the UK to Nepal, handed over the materials to Hridayesh Tripathi, the Minister for Health and Population, at a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Tripathy expressed gratitude to the British Government for extending helping hands when Nepal is facing a huge challenge in saving people's lives from the resurgent second wave of the pandemic. This assistance from the UK is in keeping with the long history of the close and friendly relationship between Nepal and the UK including at the people's level, he stated. Ambassador Pollitt assured the Hon. Minister of continued British cooperation to Nepal.

The medical items generously provided by the UK include 260 units of ventilators (130 CPaP and 130 BiPaP machines), assorted consumables to last around four weeks, and 19,200 eye protectors. The same charter flight also carried oxygen concentrators donated by NepalMedUK, a charity organization based in the UK.

"In order to support Nepal in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of the United Kingdom has provided medical equipment and supplies to Nepal. A charter flight carrying the medical consignment arrived in Kathmandu this morning," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### **The United States Announces \$2.75 Million Funding Support To Nepal**

The United States continues to provide ongoing support to meet the immediate needs of Nepali people.

, U.S. announced another \$2.75M in funding that is earmarked for crucial oxygen generating plants, liquid oxygen storage tanks, & oxygen transportation cylinders.

## COVERSTORY

### USAID Announces Emergency Assistance To Help Nepal



The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced emergency assistance to help Nepal battle its deadly COVID-19 surge. The first of three flights departed for Kathmandu carrying surgical masks, face shields, and gloves to protect thousands of health care workers in Nepal. This is the first of a series of flights to Nepal and other countries in South Asia as the region experiences this latest surge.

's announcement builds on USAID's efforts to help Nepal battle rising COVID-19 cases and contain transmission. In the past three weeks, USAID has provided more than \$15 million to help the Government of Nepal scale up COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, treatment, and infection prevention.

USAID is also helping procure oxygen related supplies and repair oxygen-generating systems throughout the country. This recent assistance, in addition to support over the past 15 months, brings USAID's total assistance to Nepal for COVID-19 to more than \$50 million. USAID's historical investment, over the last 20 years, totals \$600 million to improve the quality of health services in Nepal.

Since the pandemic began, USAID support to fight COVID-19 has benefitted more than 60 percent of Nepal's population. USAID has helped expand Nepal's COVID-19 testing lab

network from a single lab to 87 labs to ensure nationwide coverage.

Over the past six months alone, USAID has provided Nepal with COVID-19 testing equipment, oxygen cylinders, pulse oximeters, PPE for health care workers, disinfection supplies, thermometers, arterial blood gas machines, and other life-saving medical equipment. In November 2020, USAID donated 100 ventilators to 51 hospitals throughout Nepal and the National Ambulance Service to aid critically-ill COVID-19 patients.

### USAID Handed Over Medical Supplies To Nepal

From the American People: The first of several flights w/emergency aid from USAID.

protect health care workers and battle the recent surge in COVID19 cases in the country.

In response to the request of the Government of Nepal in the context of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases, the Government of the United States of America has sent a cargo aircraft containing important medical supplies.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the support materials--first of the three chartered aircraft arriving within the next two days--were received by Spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population Dr. Jageshwar Gautam from the officials of the Embassy of the United States of America and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Kathmandu this afternoon.

The materials handed over include surgical masks, face shields, and gloves. This is in addition to the earlier support received from USAID including 100 units of ventilators, Covid-19 testing facilities and equipment, oxygen-related materials, personal protection equipment (PPEs) and other life-saving medical supplies.



agency aid from USAID. According to USAID, they have started arriving in Nepal. These health supplies will help

USAID is scheduled to hand over 1,000 oxygen cylinders to the Ministry of Health and Population to-



tomorrow. The much-needed medical support has been instrumental in saving lives and complementing the national initiatives for treatment, prevention and control of Covid-19.

The Government of Nepal expresses deep gratitude to the Government and friendly people of the United States of America for the solidarity extended to the people of Nepal, reflecting the longstanding bilateral relations marked by friendship and cooperation. The effort made by the United States Embassy and USAID in Kathmandu for the timely delivery of the support materials has been acknowledged with appreciation.

“From the American People: The first of several flights of emergency aid from USAID. According to USAID, they have started arriving in Nepal. These health supplies will help protect health care workers and battle the recent surge in COVID19 cases in the country,” tweets USAID.

### **Switzerland Provides 1.1 Million Rapid Antigen Test Kits And Other Medical Support To Nepal**

The Government of Switzerland

abeth von Capeller, Ambassador of Switzerland to Nepal.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Health and Population expressed gratitude to the Swiss Government and the friendly people of Switzerland for the generous support, which would be instrumental in saving lives and complementing the Government's efforts for prevention and control of infections. He thanked the Swiss Embassy in Kathmandu for making efforts in the timely delivery of the support materials.

The support received is in response to the request of the Government of Nepal to the Swiss Government for supporting Nepal with vaccines, medicines, equipment and supplies related to COVID-19.

The items that arrived in a chartered flight arranged by the Swiss Gov-

the occasion.

Germany, France, Finland And Belgium To Provide Ventilators And Other Medical Support To Nepal  
**Japan Provides Medical Equipment To Nepal To Fight Against COVID-19**



As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread in Nepal at an unprecedented pace, the Government of Japan is providing 25 Portable Ultrasound Image Diagnostic Systems to 25 hospitals in Nepal, 23 of which were already handed over on 16th May. The remaining two will be installed and tomorrow respectively.

Upon handing over the medical equipment to the hospitals, Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, stated that “The Ultrasound Image Diagnostic Systems Japan provides this time are easy to use because they are portable, and will significantly contribute to the diagnosis of COVID-19 patients. While Japan herself keeps fighting the pandemic domestically, Japan always stands behind Nepal. We will tackle the COVID-19 pandemic together at this critical time. I sincerely hope that the medical equipment from the Government of Japan will help Nepali people in this difficult situation.”

The Government of Japan supports Nepal to tackle the COVID-19



land has provided support of various medical equipment and supplies to the Government of Nepal. At a brief ceremony held at the Tribhuvan International Airport this morning, the support materials were handed over to. Hridayesh Tripathi, Minister for Health and Population by Ms. Elis-

ernment include 40 oxygen ventilators, 1,100,000 rapid antigen test kits, 10 oxygen concentrators, 1,000 nasal canulas, respiratory masks, examination gloves and protective suits. Senior officials of the Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also present on



## COVERSTORY

pandemic by providing medical equipment under the Japanese Grant Aid. Twenty-five (25) Blood Gas Analyzers have already been provided on 27th January to 25 hospitals in the country. Japan will soon provide 160 Oxygen Concentrators and 6 Ambulances.

These Oxygen Concentrators will arrive in Nepal next month and they are significantly useful especially for the urgent treatment of COVID-19 patients since this high-tech equipment can “generate” highly concentrated oxygen without the need for oxygen cylinders. They will be distributed to 58 hospitals across the nation. The Embassy of Japan hopes that this assistance will save the lives of as many Nepalese people as possible. The Embassy also hopes this will contribute towards further strengthening the relationship, friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Japan and Nepal. Embassy of Japan in Nepal

### UN And Partners In Nepal Launches Emergency Covid-19 Plan



As Nepal faces a breaking point amidst its worst COVID-19 outbreak, the United Nations and partners are launching the Nepal Covid-19 Response Plan calling for US\$ 83.7 mil-

lion to mobilize an emergency response over the next three months to assist 750,000 of the most vulnerable people affected by the pandemic. The plan was endorsed by the Nepal Humanitarian Country Team and the Government of Nepal's COVID-19 Crisis Management Centre and lays out critical areas of support required to complement the Government of Nepal's response efforts.

UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti said: “The current outbreak is having a devastating impact not just on health but across all sectors, hitting the poorest and most marginalized people in Nepali society the hardest. The COVID-19 Response Plan that we are launching calls for swift action and international solidarity that is desperately needed to save lives and prevent unnecessary suffering, tomorrow, and in the difficult weeks to come. We have no time to lose.”

After several months of relatively low daily cases in Nepal, cases began to increase rapidly in mid-April, rising from 150 cases per day in early April to over 8,000 cases per day since 5 May. Over 44% of COVID-19 tests nationally are coming back positive, suggesting that case numbers are much higher than reported. Despite the surge beginning almost three weeks after India's, Nepal is experiencing roughly the same number of daily cases per capita as India, but with a health system whose capacity is much more limited.

Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, WHO Representative to Nepal, said: “The recent surge in cases has resulted in an unprecedented need for medical supplies including oxygen, medicines, ventilators, diagnostic kits and vaccines. While WHO and partners are supporting the Nepal Government's endeavors in mounting a robust response, fighting the pandemic necessitates international solidarity. I appeal to friends of Nepal from around the world to come forward and help with fulfilling the needs of the hour.”

Millions of people in Nepal are struggling not just

with the direct health impact of COVID-19, but also with hunger, malnutrition, devastating economic losses, and other health needs that are being overlooked. The Nepal COVID-19 Response Plan brings together the priority response activities as set out by the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) to address both the health and humanitarian consequences of COVID-19. The Government of Nepal is leading the response, but capacities are stretched to breaking point and international solidarity is urgently needed to assist the most vulnerable people with life-saving response activities in health, food security, education, nutrition, shelter, protection and water, and sanitation.

Ms. Elke Wisch, UNICEF Representative for Nepal, said: “Nepal is experiencing an alarming new COVID-19 surge, with a steep rise in cases that have overwhelmed Nepal's fragile health system. As we respond to the immediate health crisis to help save lives, we cannot forget the devastating broader impact the current COVID-19 surge has on children and young people in Nepal. They are being cut off from vital support networks, losing parents and caregivers, and witnessing scenes no child should ever see. We must come together, nationally and internationally, if we are to prevent interrupted childhoods in Nepal from being lost for good.”

### Airlift Lands in Kathmandu With Emergency Medical Support

Over the past seven days, Di-



rect Relief has delivered 330 shipments of requested medical aid to 47 U.S. states and territories and 16 countries worldwide.

A 25-ton shipment of medical aid for Nepal landed in Kathmandu with 860 Direct Relief-purchased oxygen concentrators to help the country as it faces a surge in Covid-19 cases.

The charter to Nepal followed two airlifts to India this month, which contained more than 2 million masks, several thousand oxygen concentrators.

Direct Relief is also working to prepare hurricane-prone regions for the 2021 hurricane season, which officially starts June 1.

Ambassador Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada thanks and lauds Direct Relief and Community Partnership International of the US for sending essential medical supplies to Nepal to fight the recent COVID-19 surge: A humanitarian medical relief flight from Direct Relief landed in Kathmandu on May 28, 2021.

### Singapore Based Foundation Provides Medical Support To Nepal

Temasek Foundation Inter-

carrying those items reached at the Tribhuvan International Airport this evening. Senior officials of the Ministry of Health and Population received those medical items. Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also present on the occasion.

The Government of Nepal appreciates and thanks to the Temasek Foundation International as well as its various collaborators for this generous support.

### World Vision Handed over 1400 Oxygen Cylinders And Medical Equipment Nepal

As Nepal records catastrophic surge in COVID-19 cases, child-focused organization World Vision supported 1,400 oxygen cylinders, 20 Oxygen concentrators, 1,225 PPE sets, 1012 Infrared (IR) thermometers, 1012 pulse oximeters and 25 beds

to the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) on Friday.

Handed over in the presence of Hridayash Tripathi (Minister for Health and Population), Julie Kumari Mahato (Minister for Women, Children

and Senior Citizens) and Pushkar Khatri (Member Secretary of the Social Welfare Council), Vice Chair Dr. Padam Khatiwada, the much-needed medical supplies will strengthen government medical services and protect health workers as they respond to the major health crisis. The distribution that took place at the premises of the MoHP in Kathmandu was a part of World Vision's 90-day response plan

against the second wave of COVID-19 in the country.

Minister of Health & Population Hridayash Tripathi stated that, "Development organisation including World Vision's support is highly appreciable at this time of need. Government would like to commit to make the most of out of the support. Unlike other times when the support was given only to the accessible places, through the one door system we are committed to provide support throughout the country."



Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizen Julie Kumari Mahato thanked World Vision for the supporting the government upon the appeal from Social Welfare Council and Ministry.

Acting National Director of World Vision International (WVI) Nepal Anubhaw Adhikari highlighted, "As an active partner, we are humbled to contribute to the government's efforts to contain COVID-19 in the country. Government health systems are overwhelmed due to rapid increase in patients infected with the coronavirus. These medical equipment will definitely help to meet the urgent needs at government health facilities and protect frontline workers as situation continues to change. Unlike the first wave, the sec-



national, a Singapore based foundation, in collaboration with MiRXES Pvt Ltd and Lotus Life Foundation, has provided urgent medical items to Nepal to support its fight against the Coronavirus pandemic. The medical items include PCR kits, pulse oximeters, RNA extraction machines and kits as well as 30 units of tele-ventilators and 6 units of ventilators.

A Nepal Airlines cargo flight



## COVERSTORY

second wave is of even higher concern as it is affecting people of all ages severely, with a higher rate of infection among children. We have launched a multi-sectorial integrated response in 16 districts keeping children at the core.”

### KOICA Supports Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital



KOICA through its KOV program supports Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital worth USD 5,000 in COVID Response Program

KOICA Global Doctor Byungcheol Kim working as a volunteer in Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital supported medical equipment as well as safety items worth USD 5,000 to Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital for COVID Response program. The handover program was completed on May 30, 2021 in the presence of Mr. Madan Sundar Shrestha, Mayor and other related officials of Municipality and the hospital.

The main objective of this program is to support in COVID response program via supporting medical equipment and safety items to increase the health services/facility of the hospital. Dr. Kim believes that the support will contribute in strengthening the capacity of the hospital to deal with the second wave of COVID-19. In addition to this, KOICA support is expected to

upgrade the hospital performance and improve the service delivery to the patients. The supported items are Oxygen concentrator-1, PPE 230 sets, Head Cover (disposable) 10,000 units, examination gloves 84 boxes, disposable mask 5000 units.

KOICA through its KOV program, he has been partnering with the Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital since 2017 A.D. Since then he has been actively working in this hospital. He has already supported some projects to this hospital. Madhyapur Thimi Municipality as well as Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital appreciated the work done by Dr. Kim.

KOV program is one of KOICA most important development cooperation program which has been implemented since 1991, with this program KOICA aims to contribute in the socio-economic development of the partner countries at the grass root level. KOICA dispatches Korean national volunteers to government organizations as per the need and request. KOV serves in Nepal for 1 to 2 years in various fields such as education, health, agriculture, ICT, tourism etc.

### Japan Assists COVID-19: Japan Provides 160 Oxygen Generators For Hospitals In Nepal

The Government of Japan

provided 160 oxygen generators to the Government of Nepal in order to tackle COVID-19. This essential medical equipment will be delivered to 58 hospitals around the country. His Excellency, Mr. KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, upon handing over the oxygen generators to the Government of Nepal, stated “Dear Nepali friends, long-awaited oxygen generators have finally arrived.

This high-tech equipment can “generate” concentrated oxygen without oxygen cylinders, so hospitals can supply oxygen to patients immediately. Although they are not ventilators in ICUs, according to medical experts, they are quite useful for a certain level of COVID-19 patients. We shall tackle the COVID-19 pandemic together, and overcome the difficult situation for all.” The Government of Japan supports Nepal to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic by providing medical equipment under the Japanese Grant Aid. So far, 25 blood gas analyzers and 25 portable ultrasound image diagnostic systems have been installed and used at many hospitals across the country. What is more, Japan will provide 6 Made-in-Japan Ambulances in October to mitigate the shortage of ambulances in this pandemic. These equipped ambulances will serve as mobile hospitals to manage emergency care.

The Embassy of Japan hopes that this assistance for hospitals will save the lives of many Nepali people who are suffering from COVID-19, we hope it will also ease the difficulties

of medical professionals who work for them around a clock. The Embassy also hopes this will contribute towards further strengthening the relationship, friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Japan and Nepal.





# The Government Of Japan Supports Nepal To Tackle The COVID-19 Pandemic



BY: KIKUTA YUTAKA

*These equipped ambulances will serve as mobile hospitals to manage emergency care. Of course, Japan is working hard for the provision of vaccines as well.*

Long-awaited oxygen generators have finally arrived. I am pleased to hand over 160 Oxygen Generators from the People of Japan to 58 hospitals in Nepal. These high-tech equipments can “generate” concentrated oxygen without oxygen cylinders, so hospitals can supply oxygen to patients immediately. Although they are not ventilators in ICUs, according to medical experts, they are quite useful for the certain level COVID-19 patients.

The Government of Japan supports Nepal to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic by providing medical equipment under the Japanese Grant Aid. So far, 25 blood gas analyzers and 25 portable ultrasound image diagnostic systems have been installed and used at many hospitals across the country. What is more, Japan will provide 6 Made-in-Japan Ambulances in October to mitigate the shortage of ambulances in this pandemic.

These equipped ambulances will serve as mobile hospitals to manage an emergency care. Of course, Japan is working hard for the provision of vaccine as well. Just yesterday June 2, 2021, Japan co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit with Gavi to secure the necessary COVID-19 vaccinations for all, including Nepali friends.

Prime Minister Suga and Foreign Minister Motegi attended the summit and pledged 800 million USD for further assistance, which would be 1,000 mil-

lion USD in total, together with the previous pledged 200 million USD and it is presumably the second biggest commitment to COVAX facility as a single country only after the USA. I hope that Japan’s endeavors will help to save lives of many Nepali people who are suffering from COVID-19, as well as help to ease the difficulties of medical professionals who work around-a-clock under difficult condition.

*KIKUTA Yutaka is the ambassador of Japan to Nepal. Excerpt of his statement issued upon the handing over medical equipments to Nepal hospitals.*



# A Tribute To Ujjwal Thapa, The Youth Leader



BY: YOGENDRA SAKYA

On Friday, 26th Feb 2010, during the launching of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, twenty two major political party leaders read out the promise signed by their party presidents. They vowed that for the prosperity of the country, they will come “Together for Tourism” and not call any more “Nepal Bandhs and strikes”!!

Fifty thousand Nepalese, waving ten thousand “Chandra-Surya” Nepali flags at Sainik Munch, Tundikhel, Kathmandu and millions watching on TV were a witness to their pledge. The NTY 2011 main committee, where I was serving as the national coordinator, all patted ourselves for the grand event, little realising that the signatories had no shame in breaking any verbal or even written commitments !! They continued calling their sadistic strikes and bandhs paralysing the freedom of movements which is the base of tourism.

In the midst of my frustration, I met this young, unassuming, soft and short speech Ujjwal Thapa. He was totally flushed like me, “You see Dai, these b.... don’t mean what they say and have absolutely no credibility!! Let us defy their bandh calls. You bring tourism people and I will bring the youths.” No matter which party called the bandh (after 26 Feb 2010), we gathered at Keshar Mahal with our cars and motorbikes and drove round the Kathmandu streets to demonstrate “my movement, my right”.

I thought he was just another emotion-

al, short term campaigner like me and most of us, and took him quite lightly.

When I opened my Face Book , I am amazed to see how he had touched so many hearts within these 10 years! A salute and a tribute to you, Ujjwal, for daring to come out of your comfort zone and actually embracing politics to fight “bad politics”. You may be gone, but you have lit the flame!!!



# Insight Into The Political Economy Of Nepal's Development



BY: PROF. BIPIN ADHIKARI

*Nepal's Economy in Disarray: The Policies and Politics of Development (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2019), co-authored by Pushkar Bajracharya, Mohan Das Manandhar and Rojan Bajracharya, provides a timely and accurate context of Nepal's economic challenges.*

Nepal promulgated a new Constitution in September 2015 following a long period of conflict, instability and lack of direction. The Constitution is a progressive document that declares the State's commitment to ending all forms of discrimination and oppression created by the feudalistic, autocratic, centralized, unitary system of governance that Nepal characterized in the past.

In its progressive vein, the Constitution also aims at achieving sustainable economic development, stimulated by rapid economic growth, by way of the maximum mobilization of the available means and resources in the country. This is to be done through the participation and development of the public and private sectors and cooperatives and by developing a socialism-oriented, independent and prosperous economy. Such an economy is perceived as a necessity in order to build a society free of exploitation and one in which economic inequality is abolished through an equitable distribution of gains. This economic objective of the State is accompanied by a remarkable commitment towards social transformation and change. This objective challenges the governments under the new Constitution to reorient the national economy and, in place of a stalled and tattered economy, build one that will help achieve the State's progressive commitments.

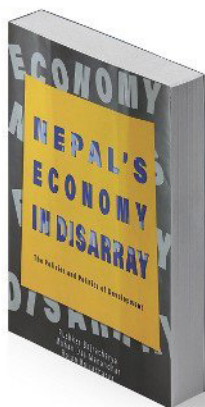
*Nepal's Economy in Disarray: The Policies and Politics of Development (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2019), co-authored by Pushkar Bajracharya, Mohan Das Manandhar and Rojan Bajracharya, provides a timely and accurate context of Nepal's economic challenges. The objective of the book*

is to pursue a comprehensive, in-depth and evidence-based enquiry into Nepal's economy and development initiatives. The reason is very clear. In the words of the authors, "Nepal's efforts to democracy, citizens' sovereignty and inclusiveness leading to federal republican nation within a short period of democracy have been topsy-turvy [a state of utter confusion] with varied effects on development. Even Nepalis populace

seem to be confused about how really to attain development and what is development from our/their own perspective. Have the political leaders/parties in governance and otherwise, exhibited propervision and adopted appropriate strategies or not? And, have we really failed as a nation state as is being argued in some quarters?" Obviously, these are critical questions for any student of political economy of Nepal.

The book is divided into nine chapters: Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. Chapters II and III provide the background to the pre-1990 and post-1990 scenario, when the system of parliamentary democracy was restored in Nepal. The country's major economic

sectors, i.e. agriculture, industry and market and services, have been separately analyzed in Chapters IV, V and VI. The authors have characterized the education and human resource development as the foundation and have discussed this sector in Chapter VII. Then comes the review of Nepal's infrastructure sector as another foundation of its economy. The book clearly shows that the development Nepal has accomplished in all sectors over the decades is vast, varied and certainly incremental. Despite the progress noted, the book argues, Nepal's economic development has been slow and unsteady. Corrup-





## REVIEW

tion and rent-seeking attitudes are deeply rooted in politics and bureaucracy, jeopardizing the development process. The authors claim: “So, even if the words are harsh, it may be deduced that we have not simply initiated development, whatever, little is done due to vested interests or because of unintended outcomes generally bogged down by perspective of retaining to power and signaling the Nepali populace with claims of ‘bigger development’ not supported by investment, activities and initiatives. Finally, the country’s recent political transformation to a federal republic has yet to be properly institutionalized. Further, political instability is a possibility, especially given the increasing inequality in wealth and income.”

The authors have given extensive focus on the agriculture sector’s role in national economic development on the basis of a data-packed analysis. In fact, this is the sector that can still bring multifarious changes in Nepal, including regarding sustainable development and mass empowerment. Poverty eradication is virtually impossible without developing agriculture sector and accommodating rural people in their own habitats and lifestyles. With an abundance of water, forests and sustainable lifestyle, Nepal could have taken significant strides in the agriculture sector. Tourism can always be innovatively integrated into the agriculture sector. In Nepal’s case, they enforce each other. All additional efforts, including on good governance, development of human resources, a private sector-led economy, infrastructure development and regional economic integration, could have focused the most on agriculture sector during the last seven decades.

The main constraints to accelerating growth, investments and exports are a lack of economic infrastructure, a lim-

chains, post-harvesting processes and agribusiness to increase market outlets are also as necessary. Adding value to agricultural produce and generating employment in rural areas are essential components of long-term development. Of course, improving the nutritional status of poor rural people and vulnerable groups should always be a matter of concern.

The link between the development of the agriculture sector and economic growth has also been studied widely. Johnston and Mellor’s heavily-cited paper, “The Role of Agriculture in Economic Development” (1961), highlights the important role that agriculture development plays in overall economic growth through five propositions: Agriculture development meets the increased demand for agricultural products as an economy grows, it leads to an expansion of the export of agricultural products, leading to increased income and foreign exchange earnings, and it provides the labor force necessary for manufacturing and other expanding sectors. It also has the potential to contribute to the necessary capital for overhead investment and expansion of other sectors. Finally, agriculture sector can also lead to increase cash income for the farming population, which may also be an important stimulant of industrial expansion.

Evidence of this link between the development of the agriculture sector and economic growth can be found in various countries leading in the agriculture sector. For example, although the agriculture sector’s share in India’s GDP has decreased to around 15 percent in the last decade, it employs around half of India’s population and accounts for much of the volatility in the India GDP. Moreover, some argue that agriculture in India plays a vital role in contributing to higher GDP growth and other economic indicators, including employment, poverty reduction, and an equal distribution of income.

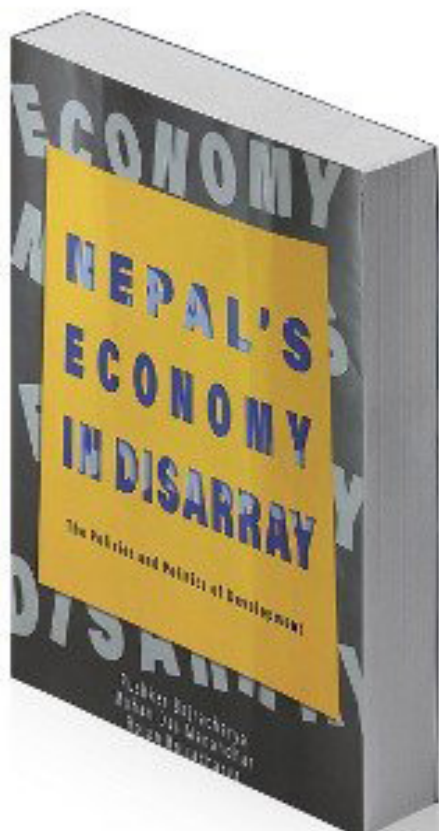
India’s agricultural sector has a long and rich history. A 2012 study found that agriculture had a significant positive impact on economic development (defined as a measure of standards of living and quality of life) from the time period between 1950-51 to 2009-10. During this period, in the 1970s, India also launched the Green Revolution under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which focused on introducing high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat for the purpose of increasing food production in various provinces of India, and especially, Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, and lead-

ing India to become self-sufficient. This strategy was accompanied by subsidies for fertilizers, pesticides, as well as electricity in order to pump groundwater for irrigation.

The Green Revolution led to yields improving by more than 30 percent in the state of Punjab, while the capital acquired large quantities of grains at minimum support prices in order to distribute them to the poor at subsidized rates.



ited skills base, increasing vulnerability to climate risks and a low emphasis on establishing a sound investment climate and foreign direct investment in the agriculture sector. The focus needs to be on sustainably increasing agricultural productivity through the management of natural resources and investment in physical and social capital, including scaled-up agricultural intensification. Developing climate-resilient export value



It also had negative effects, however, including a decline in the production of indigenous grains, wide regional and interstate disparities in development as well as a developing water crisis. However, even worldwide, research has shown that the adoption of Green Revolution tactics, like modern varieties of seeds, is associated with productivity growth as well as increased food production, decreased food prices globally, increased average caloric intake, and, correspondingly, improvements in health and life expectancy.

Moreover, since economic reforms were introduced in the 1990s, India has been a net exporter of agri-products, reaching INR. 2.52 lakh crores in agri-exports in the 2019-20 fiscal year. Key agri products exported include marine products, basmati rice, buffalo meat, spices, non-basmati rice, cotton raw, oil meals, and sugar, among others. The major destinations for export were USA, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Nepal and Bangladesh. Even in the 2020 year, while the export of merchandise took a hit by falling by 15.5 percent year-on-year, farm exports reported a 9.8 percent growth, given the lack of impact on the agricultural sector during the coronavirus lockdowns. India's experiences with agriculture demonstrates the key role it has played in changing the face of the national development and improving the economic conditions of the people.

Another country where agriculture has played a major role in economic development is China, where between 7 to 9.3 percent of the GDP is accounted for by agriculture in the past decade. Farming, forestry, animal husbandry, and fisheries contribute to a significant portion of China's GDP, making it the world's largest agricultural economy. This is substantially greater than in affluent countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, where agriculture accounts for

roughly 1 percent of GDP.

Agriculture in China has evolved dramatically since the 1978 economic reforms. Four out of every five Chinese people worked in agriculture prior to the reforms. However, when property rights in the countryside became more established, this altered, resulting in the emergence of small non-agricultural companies in rural areas. Rice, cotton, pig, fish, wheat, tea, potatoes, corn, peanuts, millet, barley, apples, cotton, oilseed, pork, fish, and more are all produced in China. Government backing and low labor costs help the country's agricultural exports remain profitable, albeit a disjointed transportation network and a lack of cold-storage infrastructure are a hindrance.

As mentioned earlier, the 1978 reforms were vital in stimulating economic growth in the agriculture sector of China. China's agricultural sector's output increased by over 61 percent between 1978 and 1984 and followed after the country adopted a system that stressed individual responsibility in place of communal decision-making and rewards. More specifically, this new system, the Household Responsibility System, allowed households to retain the remaining output after satisfying contractual obligations, which then stimulated the farmers' incentive to produce and led to an increase in agricultural production. A research study found that over 75 percent of the productivity increase may be accounted for by the payment system changes, while the remainder can be attributed to price increases.

When comparing the pre- and post-1979 periods, it becomes clear the vital role that agriculture development played in kickstarting China's economic growth. Prior to these reforms, China had focused on growing industry by taxing the agriculture sector and without investing anything back. After the introduction of the Household Responsibility System and in combination with market-oriented reforms, China rose to become one of the fastest-growing economies of the world, and its growth was driven by market and export orientation as well as increased levels of foreign direct investment. This evidence shows that agriculture growth can substantially contribute to the growth and transformation of the economy, even if it does not act as the primary engine of this growth. This goes back to support the thesis that the agriculture sector, whose importance is engrained in Nepalese society as well as economy, cannot be disregarded and, rather, should be approached as a vital tool for transforming Nepal's economic development.

Conclusively, the book *Nepal's Economy in Disarray: The Policies and Politics of Development* presents Nepal's economic history and the nature of its development challenges very well. It is one of the prescribed books for the postgraduate students of public policy in Kathmandu University as well. It does not, however, explore the future of Nepalese economy with clear guidelines.

The authors have noted their determination to "explore policy prescriptions and reform measures to transform the nation regaining paradise and steer it on a clearer course of sustained growth with equity with proper distribution to ensure a sound quality of life to all Nepali populace." Accomplishing this objective will certainly add further meaning to the book that is already making a headway in the local market.



# Hari Sharan Nepali ‘Kaji’

One beautiful evening, I was invited to a birth day reception in Hotel in Thamel. It was a dusk time, slightly before it got dark. The host was yet to show up. I immediately joined two gentlemen in deep conversation across a table after they confirmed that they were part of the same programme. We introduced ourselves. The elderly gentleman was very humble and said his name was Hari Sharan Nepali ‘Kaji’. In course of conversation, he said he normally would love to have people gather at his house in Kshetrapati, but the earthquake of 2015 had left it badly damaged. ‘It is under repair now.’ To me it was like a flash back. I spent my early childhood in Thamel, not very far from his House. There was huge gap—in fact many decades—between two of us. But when you go back to childhood, you are nothing more or nothing less than a child. You are just a child: curious yet innocent.

There were mostly indigenous people occupying the area, mostly doing farming and owning small business. But generations that followed switched to other business, and migrated and settled along with their old parents abroad.

Kaji was a prodigal son, deeply rooted in the soil, with its fragrance and charms binding him there. The idea of deserting the place never came across. We suddenly switched to the topic that was so favourite to him. It mesmerized me all through. I told him how as a child, I could see the mountain range—snow clad—beneath the serene sky, from my terrace in Thamel. The House that we lived

in was surrounded with trees, that were home for many species of birds, making every morning pleasant with their chirps. As a toddler, I used to hold my grandfather’s hand and feed pigeons and other birds every morning. I shared with him my vague memories about the features of the birds around. We suddenly switched to the topic that was so favourite to him. It mesmerized me all through. I told him how as a child, I could see the mountain range—snow clad—beneath the serene sky, from my terrace in Thamel. The House that we used to live in was surrounded with trees, that were home for many species of birds, making every morning pleasant with their chirps. As a toddler, I used to hold my grandfather’s hand and feed pigeons and other birds every morning. Kaji began collecting a large number of bird skins,



BY: ABHILASHA SHARMA

along with feathers, and many of them adorn the Kathmandu Natural History Museum now.

I visited his home few times after that meeting that really me to watch birds around my home, and the river near by. Couple of months later, Hari Sharan Nepali Kaji’ presented to me with his autograph and best wishes a book—

Nepal ka Charaharu—in which he introduced himself as the Founder President, Bird Conservation Nepal 1982. The book is full of various species of the birds with their full pictures in color, and description as well as tips on how to watch and understand the avian world. My interest grew, and I began surfing web sites and relevant sites. I instantly ‘liked’ and followed the page of birds’ conservation Nepal. Once, I got a chance to participate in the bird watching event at Godawari Lalitpur. I joined other participants in the morning, laced with a back-pack and binocular that was an essentially prescribed.

The participants were mostly Nepalese bird watchers from various professions, and students from the college of Forestry. We all got together at the designated place, and then followed the Guide deep into the forest.

First forty five minutes were disappointing as no birds came to our vicinity. As we moved forward silently, we could hear the sounds of birds distinctly. Then, we focused into tracing the direction and exact location of those birds.

Finally, they were within my vision range. I could notice tiny birds first. Chara Kaji had given me three common tips to recognize birds: Eyes, Tail and Beak. They indicated how different one bird was from another. The tip unmistakably worked. I could see new birds which were different from the ones I had previously seen. Joy of seeing new birds was something enchanted me. I felt being at the top of the world. Bird watching, of course needs interest and passion. One has to keep ones ears open to listen to their small movement. It requires calmness, patience and concentration. The joy it gives lasts much much beyond the time one spends in the bird watching event. I felt much relaxed and accomplished for days after the event. I could sense how President Carter chose to visit Nepali forests and birds, and chose ‘Chara Kaji’ as his guide and companion. Birds and their sanctuaries take us close to the nature that is undoubtedly the source of nature in its pristine form. Any age of the people leading otherwise hectic life would feel the change instantly once they get to such sanctuaries. Nepalis people are blessed to have empowering Nature and our own Ornithologist Hari sharan Nepali ‘(chara kaji) telling us about its Netizens. Kaji, his gentleness, and slow narratives of his work coming from his mouth, will always remain firmly in my memories.



# Stupidimundos Homosapius



BY: DEEPAK RAJ JOSHI

Charles Bukowski once said, "The problem with the world is that smart people are full of doubts, while stupid people are full of certainties." Research indicates that each generation has a lower IQ level than the previous one. The reasons are many and varied. Our society is getting dumber by leaps and bounds. Everyone has a degree but intelligence is declining. However, we live in the age of intelligence, where stupidity is the worst taboo.

Common sense is not so common anymore. The so-called 'Smart' people trust themselves too much and they think that they are always right. In order to prove they are right, they put too much pressure on people, and the most serious problem is, that they lack emotional intelligence. Everyone believes society can be good without morals in terms of economic benefits. Politics, economics, and public administration are not more important to them than moral education. Everyone talks about compassion, values, good conduct, morals, and ethics but no own practice. The height of stupidity, applauded by the same masses, who today cry for the victims of political ignorance.

Governments get rich at the expense of the ignorance of the people. Moreover, politicians have abandoned rational discourse and analytical thinking and have decided to address voters with elementary messages. Furthermore, we are living in a time where anything that does not appear on TV and social media does not exist. Media is controlling how we think and perceive things. In addition, technology doesn't make us dumber, it just helps us show it off. Leaders are fighting like a gangster on national television while discussing the national issue. The blame game has become the new norm, and leaders seem to be reward-

ed based on hate speech. We live in a social media bubble where it is difficult to find out whether we are protesting or just posturing for social media. Media makes a mockery of democracy and our leaders but they enjoy it as if they are a

celebrity what social media is doing to make stupid people famous!

It is so sad that the sun sets in Nepal during the day. Most people are afflicted by ambition, and it is hard to find people afflicted by loyalty. We are all bound by the limitation of society. Wherever I look, I can't see anything but corpses. The corpse of life, values, and relationships. We are a society full of dumb people with smart phones and degree holders without direction.

What kind of democracy are we relying on? The elected person whom we have sent for 5 years to raise the very problem we are facing is not allowed to speak for more than 3 minutes. Sad enough, most of those elected members do not have a clue what to say in that 3 minutes time. There is no better business than politics. We are in a system where people with mental and physical imbalance become health ministers. A criminal becomes the Home Minister, and a person with fake certificates becomes the Minister of Education.

We have teachers who can't teach, students who don't study, advisors who don't advise, actors without acting skills, producers who don't produce anything good, singers who don't know a thing about melody, a doctor without direction, bureaucracy without borders, a policy without politics, and politics without true politicians. In the crowd of grimy faces, power is still cheap and clean for the few so-called elites.

Truth and Dharma are being destroyed in our society. Evil grows stronger day by day. The government is drunk with arrogance and ready to crush the social order. Our political and constitutional mayhem is not stopping any time soon. One can say, this country is run by absurd



people with insane reason and scientists came up with the word. It is called Stupidimundos Homosapius. If you think you are surrounded by Stupidimundos Homosapius, don't worry, they think the same for you.



# Bhagwan Bharosa II



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

Yes, the world as we know it has changed tremendously since the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2019 when a drastic misfortune fell on all of us on earth. It was reminiscent of what had occurred a hundred years ago – the Spanish Flu of 1918 which had then killed off many individuals in different lands – irrespective of their status. This now is a similar episode in our lives – a minor occurrence in the history of our planet!

Many religious minded may at one time have thought that this was the end of Kaliyug and that Kalki would emerge riding on a white horse to see the impending event all the way through to its end. This is not likely to occur soon, both in India and Nepal. The first wave of the pandemic in 2020 did not seem to cause great damage and we all patted ourselves in the back talking of our inherent immunity etc. Yes, lockdown was partially done and seemed to be successful though the organisation and reality of our isolation centres for Nepalis fleeing home from India is another matter.

Looking at the present situation India and Nepal, it is to say the least grave because of the porous border that exists between us at this time. The new Covid-19 variants: B.1.617.2 & B.1. 617.1 are the ones expected to cause havoc in the days to come. Thinking over our past months it seems that our actions in Nepal have been lacka-dai-si-cal. True the social distancing, the use of masks and use of sanitizers, though broadcast over the radio, TV, the land-line phone and even the pocket mobiles seem to have gone unheeded by many of us Nepalis. Even at this grave juncture rules are not followed. We had to celebrate our New Years, the various other festivals, the birthdays and marriage parties in full tempo, irrespective of what the government had advised. Had the government done its duty towards the people of the land? What about the various political or protest rallies held from time to time during the last six months? Well it looks like the fat is in the fire. We Nepalis are in a bad situation and face hard times ahead.

India had initially gifted not only us but other surrounding countries in the region a substantial amount of the Covishield / Covaxin vaccine. These were rightly first given to health workers. The sad part in training institutions was that the medical and nursing students who also help tremendously in patient care were not given these shots. Not giving them the vaccine but expecting them to work day in and day out is not right after having excluded them from protection. Then there was another oversight. Those over 65 years were given the vaccine at first. Subsequent arrangements were for those between 18 to 59 years. Are there no Nepalis between 60-64 years of age? It seems that the initial gifted vaccine stocks have now been used up though there are individu-

als who have had the first dose but the second one that is due seems nowhere. It is likely that some people here, as in some places around the world may have to have two different vaccines. Such is life. Though the Russian Sputnik V and the Chinese Sinopharm / Sinovac seem to be available one does not know the exact situation. Yes, a

certain number of doses have been given free but there seems to be some hanky-panky as far as vaccine procurement is concerned. The procurement of PCR tests have been shrouded in a mystery that has still to be cleared up. Following that of course is the procurement of the vaccine from India. Because of the commission issue when the government had ordered it, it does not look that the vaccine from India is coming anytime soon. If this is so, then the persons responsible for this fiasco need to be ferreted out and action taken. These individuals should then be labelled as persona non grata in Nepal. Because of this Late Latif behaviour on our part the concern producer of the vaccine in India has announced that in view of their own needs, the earliest that they can supply the vaccine to Nepal is at the end of 2021. Aba ke game?

Then in this hour of dire need came the shortage of not only oxygen but the cylinders to contain it. Thankfully it has been partially solved. The sun's rays on the horizon is that at this time of dire needs, some prominent business men have come forward to set up oxygen producing plants at government hospitals. Our thanks to individ-

uals who have come forward to set up these plants as these will make us self sufficient in essential oxygen for the treatment of patients. On the flipside however, ones hopes that the government will also make provision for the maintenance of these oxygen plants to ensure that they are run properly and do not become the property of kabbadiwalas after the epidemic is over!

One thought is also for all those deceased as a result of the Corona epidemic. The two units of the crematorium in the Pashupati area worked full time. Plans are said to increase this set up by two other units. In view of the fact that the supply of electricity will be far better in the future years, it makes sense to set up crematoriums in many of the larger towns of Nepal. There will be a great saving of firewood and many trees will not have to be cut down!

Looking at the management of the Corona crisis in Nepal, I had initially thought of titling this item 'Ke garchass Mangale afnaye dhangale'? Our Mangales at the top have let us all down. Therefore on second thoughts, remembering the item 'Bhagwan Bharosa' of one year ago I made it as above. After all we are still in a precarious situation.

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



# For News, Views, Comments & Perspectives

## LOG IN

# spotlightnepal.com

### Latest Magazine



VOL. 14, No. 17, May 09, 2021 (Baisakh 26, 2078) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 14 No. 16, April 16, 2021 (Baisakh 03, 2078) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 14 No. 15, April 02, 2021 (Chaitra 20, 2077) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 14 No. 14, March 12, 2021 (Falgun 28, 2077) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75

**NEW SPOTLIGHT**  
NEWS MAGAZINE

Kathmandu, Ph.: +97 1 4430250

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



## Why pay a fee? Get it done for FREE.

Introducing NIBL's Thaili, a zero transaction fee digital wallet.



Transfer money, pay bills and do much more  
at zero transaction fees.

For anything and everything

#थैली छ नी!



(available soon for iOS users)

DOWNLOAD the App now

Here you go Sisi Your  
BIRTHDAY SURPRISE!

Rs. 5000 transferred to sister's account.

Rs. 5000 deposited in account.

Oh Dai! You're the best.  
ABA TA PARTY!



Features and services  
updated regularly



Available for  
Android users



iOS users get started on:  
[www.nibl.com.np/thaili](http://www.nibl.com.np/thaili)



Download and experience  
features and special offers



GET 4% AND 2% DISCOUNT  
ON NTC AND NCELL TOPUP

Customer SUPPORT  
☎ 01-4545481  
☎ 01-4512044  
☎ 01-4514561  
email us at: [thaili@nibl.com.np](mailto:thaili@nibl.com.np)