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VIEWPOINT
Dr. Tilak Rawal



ENVIRONMENT
Batu Uprety



ARTICLE
Ashika Sharma

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FORTNIGHTLY

COVID-19 VACCINATION

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JAPAN VACCINE DONATIONS
Huge Generosity



SHER BAHADUR DEUBA
Fifth Inning As PM



DEVELOPMENT
Promoting Climate Change Friendly Bricks

भाइरसले भेदभाव गर्दैन, हामीले पनि नगर्ौं

जुनसुकै जात, धर्म, लिङ्ग, क्षेत्र, उमेर वा वर्णका मानिसहरूलाई
कोभिड-१९ संक्रमण हुनसक्छ

कोभिड-१९ संक्रमितलाई अपहेलना र भेदभाव नगर्ौं

कोभिड-१९ संक्रमण भएर आइसोलेसनमा बसिरहनुभएका हाम्रा
आफन्त र छिमेकीहरूको नजिक जान नमिले पनि टाढैबाट

माया र हौसला बाडौं



कोरोना संक्रमणबाट बच्नका लागि जनस्वास्थ्यका सबै मापदण्डको पालना गर्ौं



मास्क लगाऔं



भौतिक दूरी कायम गर्ौं



बेलाबेलामा साबुनपानीले हात धोऔं



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Notes From The Editor



Following the order of the Supreme Court to reinstate the House of Representatives while directing President Bidya Devi Bhandari to appoint Sher Bahadur Deuba as the prime minister, Nepal's politics has entered into a new course. Taking oath, Deuba has started his fifth prime ministerial inning. This is the second time the court issued a verdict against Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's decision to dissolve the HoR. Issuing a constitutional order in a political issue, the court is likely to face a political backlash, particularly on the issue of the mandamus ordering appointment of Deuba as the prime minister within two days. With over 100 members behind him, PM Oli is still a major political player. Despite calls from his die-hard cadres to oppose the verdict, Oli has avoided direct confrontations. Even after the formation of the new government, political uncertainty will still be looming large. Given that scenario, we have decided to focus our edition instead on the vaccination campaign as our cover story. After arrival of over 1.5 million J&J single dose vaccines from the U.S. under Covax facility, Nepal is now in a better position to contain the Coronavirus. Thanks to the generosity of U.S. Government and people, Nepal government is able to provide vaccines to over 1.5 million people. As Nepal is also receiving four million vaccines purchased from China, Nepal will now have enough vaccines to cover people over 50. However, Nepal is yet to administer the second doses of vaccines to 1.4 million elderly citizens who have been waiting for long. Since India's coronavirus cases have started to decline, Nepal is expected to receive 1 million Covishield vaccines from India by September. We also cover other contemporary issues including the current political stalemate in this edition.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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Huge Generosity

With the decision to donate about 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine for Nepali friends, Japan has shown its generosity towards the elderly population

By KESHAB POUDEL

For people such as the former water resources secretary and seasoned bureaucrat, Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel, who has been showing his anger and frustration in social media for not receiving the second dose of vaccine, the announcement of Japan government to donate 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made AstraZeneca must have been a real sigh of relief.

"It is a matter of relief for all of Nepali. Actually, I was almost losing hope. This announcement gives me a huge relief," said Dr. Dhungel. "I would like to thank the Government of Japan and Japanese people for this support. Nepal Government needs to ensure now that all elderly people who have been waiting for the second dose get the vaccine."

Frustrated by Nepal Government's apathy towards providing the second dose of vaccine, former water resources secretary Dwarika Nath Dhungel tweeted, "Was wondering, if there is any government in Nepal to take care of its citizens? Yes I found one for paying the medical bill of a political leader. What a government we have, when we all Nepalese are looking towards the International airport sky for COVID vaccine?"

Dhungel is not the only one to feel relief from this news. Over 1.4 million elderly people above 65 must be expressing the happiness. "Japan has come to rescue us. Thank you Government of Japan and people of Japan for this great support. This came at a time when majority of people of my age were losing hope," said eighty years old former secretary Shyam Prasad Adhikari.

This announcement has also shown the concern of Japanese government and people of Japan.

The Government of Japan donated the 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine for Nepal as a grant through COVAX facility, which was officially announced by MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of

Japan. The exact shipping schedule will be confirmed once the procurement arrangements will be finalized by the international organization which is in charge of the matter.

KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan, stated this is a reflection of the long time friendship of Nepal towards Japan. He welcomed the decision by Tokyo as the vaccine is urgently needed to save lives of many Nepali people. The Ambassador hoped this vaccine will ease down various difficulties caused by the COVID-19 situation. Regarding these Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccines, the Embassy would like to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal for the necessary arrangements of receiving and using them for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign of Nepal. Those Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccine will effectively assist the second injection of elderly people who already had the first vaccination of Covishield, the AstraZeneca-type vaccine produced by Serum Institute of India.

According to a press release issued by Embassy of Japan, furthermore, they would be also useful to precede the vaccination campaign for the young generations who are not yet vaccinated. The Embassy of Japan has been working with the Government of Nepal to tackle COVID-19 together by assisting Nepali hospitals with medical equipment in multiple ways.

The Government of Japan stands with Nepal to overcome this pandemic and has been providing medical equipment un-

der the Japanese Grant Aid. It has confirmed to donate almost 300 oxygen generators, in addition to 25 blood gas analyzers and 25 portable ultrasound image diagnostic systems for the necessary medical care. Now 6 Made-in-Japan Ambulances are expected to be here by October to save more lives in the COVID-19 situation. The Embassy of Japan hopes that this vaccination assistance will save lives of more Nepali people from COVID-19, and it strongly supports the vaccination campaign which is necessary for the progress of post-COVID Nepali society and its economy.

The Government of Nepal welcomes the decision of the Government of Japan to provide Nepal with about 1.6 million doses of Japan-made AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines through COVAX facility. An arrangement will be made to transport the vaccines to Nepal at the earli-



est opportunity with the completion of due procedures.

The Government of Nepal has sincerely appreciated and thanked the Government of Japan for providing the life-saving vaccines at this trying time.

NEWSNOTES

Foreign Secretary Paudyal Exchanges Views With Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov



exchanges.

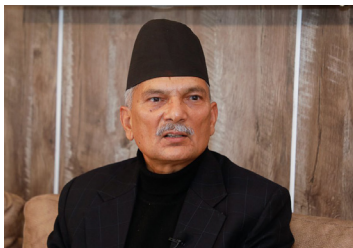
Secretary Paudyal had a courtesy call on the sideline of the International Conference on Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities.

Expressing appreciation for hosting the conference, Foreign Secretary Paudyal stated that the conference provides useful opportunity for discussing connectivity and promoting economic relations between the two regions.

Joint Secretary Harishchandra Ghimire, Head of Central Asia, West Asia and Africa Division at the Ministry, was also present during the meeting.

The Foreign Secretary arrived in Tashkent this morning leading the Nepali delegation to the conference. He was received by senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Republic of Uzbekistan at Tashkent International Airport.

CPC And World Political Parties Summit Was A Great Event: Dr. Bhattarai



Dr. Babura Bhattarai, Former Prime Minister and Chairman, Federal Council, Janata Samajwadi Party, said that CPC and World Political Parties Summit was a great event. In his tweet, former prime minister Dr. Bhattarai, who also attend the summit, has made this remarks.

“CPC and World Political Parties Summit” was a great event. This type of interaction among political parties at a time of global COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, environmental catastrophes & simmering new cold war should contribute towards creating a new peaceful world order.” Dr. Bhattarai tweeted.

On July 6, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and President Xi Jinping attended the CPC and World Political Parties Summit, and delivered a keynote speech “Strengthening Cooperation Among Political Parties to Jointly Pursue the People’s Wellbeing” via video link in Beijing.

Japan Extends Support JDS Scholarships For Young Nepali Government Officials

The Government of Japan has extended grant assistance of up to three hundred and fifty-six million Japanese Yen (¥356,000,000), to the Government of Nepal for implementing the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS: originally called as Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship).

KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal and Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance signed notes to this effect today.

Another set of grant agreements for implementing the program was signed by ASAKUMA Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, and Dhani Ram Sharma, Joint Secretary, the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance.



This JDS grant offers scholarships for up to 22 young Nepali government officials to study in Japanese universities for the future policy planning and governance of Nepal.

The studies are for two-year Master Degree courses and three-year Doctoral level research courses. After completion of their studies, the JDS Fellows are expected to contribute towards policy-making of Nepali socio-economic development. Since 2016, 102 Nepali JDS Fellows have studied under this scheme.

Last year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 22 selected officials had to commence their respective courses online. Twenty of them later decided to travel to Japan to complete their studies and two officials decided to continue their studies online from Nepal. Ambassador KIKUTA has expressed his hope that the JDS fellows will put forward the social and economic development of Nepal for future generations, using the knowledge and experiences they gain in Japan efficiently for the advancement of society. He is looking forward to learning about the contributions made by the JDS fellows for the Nepal Government’s various policies and projects, leading to the increased prosperity of Nepal.

The Ambassador points out that the progress of the post-COVID society will be hands of young Nepali government officials, particularly those who study in Japan. The Embassy of Japan would like to work with them for further strengthening the great relationship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal.

According to a press release of JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will provide scholarship for young prospective governmental officials through “The Project for Human Resource Development Strategy

(JDS)”.Paani Project To Protect Local Fish In Bajhang

Chinese ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi has said that China would supply more COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal as needed.

She said so while addressing a press meet held virtually this morning.

She said that China has supplied vaccines to over a hundred countries including Nepal and as China’s vaccine production capacity has also increased, it would supply more vaccines to Nepal as needed.

Responding to a query about the non-disclosure purchase process between Nepal and China’s company, the Chinese ambassador said the process that was adopted was as per international practice.

Talking about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), ambassador Hou viewed that Nepal is an important partner in the BRI and expressed her expectation that many more projects would be implemented in the future under the BRI.

She also mentioned the completion of the reconstruction of Durbar High School in Kathmandu, near completion of the Pokhara regional airport and Gautam Buddha Airport, among others, as examples of BRI projects in Nepal.

AIN Appeals International Community To Provide Jab To Elderly People Of Nepal

Association of International NGOs (AIN) in Nepal has appealed for an urgent support from the international community to address the health crisis in Nepal pointing that the elderly and most vulnerable people have not received the second dose of AstraZeneca vaccines.

“This may probably have reduced effects on those vaccinated and consequences could be far

reaching. This could also have an impact on COVID-19 prevention measures and the efforts of the Government of Nepal to immunise the population,” it said in a statement on Sunday.

“This is our humble appeal to all G7 and other developed countries and the European Union to donate AstraZeneca vaccines from their stockpile to Nepal to mitigate the humanitarian crisis,” said the press release issued by AIN.

It maintained that the principle of equity must be duly followed while distributing COVID-19 vaccines so that no one is excluded from getting the life-saving jabs.

“This is only possible through the COVAX facility along with support from vaccine-producing countries. The only way to equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines is through effective diplomacy and transparent procurement and distribution processes,” said AIN.

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When asked about the difficulties in the export of Nepali products to China through Kerung and Tatopai border points, the Chinese ambassador attributed the problem to the restrictions enforced to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and hoped that the concerned authorities in the borders will take necessary measures to ease the export and import of goods.

Himalaya Airlines Tickets Available Online

Himalaya Airlines, a Nepal-China joint venture airline, has recently launched its online ticket booking engine, which allows customers to make booking on its website <https://him-air.com>. This platform available on the desktop and mobile is all about connecting people to destinations.

Remarking upon the new website launch, President - Zhou Enyong expressed, “Our customers are at the center of everything that we do, and we relentlessly challenge ourselves to deliver more value to them..”

Similarly, Vice President – Administration, Mr. Vijay Shrestha, said, “This is a significant achievement for the company in our continuous effort towards building closer connectivity with our customers..”

With this new service introduced, Himalaya is geared up to ensure seamless ticket booking experience for its valued customers.



BUSINESS BRIEF

School, Health Sectors To Get \$100M In WB Additional Financing

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved two separate additional financing of \$50 million each to support the implementation of the government's flagship School Sector Development Program, and improve efficiency in the public resource management systems of Nepal's health sector.

"Strengthening Nepal's school sector and building resilient health systems are critical for human capital development, particularly for poor and vulnerable populations," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "Through this support to the Government of Nepal, we aim to mitigate learning losses and ensure that children return to schools, and improve efficiency of spending and fiscal space for delivering quality and accountable healthcare services."

The Additional Financing to the School Sector Development Program will help reduce dropouts and mitigate learning losses by supporting pro-poor targeted scholarships, pro-science scholarships, and catch-up programs. It will lay the foundation for the next school sector successor program in two areas – assessment and data systems, and help create the fiscal space to fill the gap in financing the government's flagship program. It will also support the implementation of federalism in Nepal by aligning the program with the federal

structure to improve efficiency and achievement of results.

"Learning losses and drop-outs are higher among children coming from poorer socio-economic backgrounds," stated Karthika Radhakrishnan, World Bank's Program Task Team Leader. "The additional financing will support catch-up programs to mitigate learning losses, and support children

from poorer socio-economic backgrounds through pro-poor targeted scholarships."

The Additional Financing for Nepal Health Sector Management Reform Program for Results will support the implementation of Nepal's Health Sector Strategy in the one-year extension phase and sustain the gains accrued thus far in public resource management reforms of the health sector. It will also provide critical financing in a resource-constrained COVID-19 environment to build resilient health systems, and prepare Nepal to implement its next health sector strategy.

"The additional financing will continue to provide incentives for addressing the bottlenecks to improving public resource management in the health sector, and promote transparency and accountability in the system by linking payments to results," stated Sangeeta Carol Pinto, World Bank's Program Task Team Leader.

The World Bank, one of the largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries, is taking broad, fast action to help developing countries respond to the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19. This includes \$12 billion to help low- and middle-income countries purchase and distribute COVID-19 vaccines, tests, and treatments, and strengthen vaccination systems. The financing builds on the broader World Bank Group COVID-19 response, which is helping more than 100 countries strengthen health systems, support the poorest households, and create supportive conditions to maintain livelihoods and jobs for those hit hardest.

ADB Appoints New Country Director for Nepal

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has appointed Arnaud Cauchois as its new Country Director for Nepal.

As country director, Cauchois will lead ADB operations in the country and policy dialogue with the government of Nepal and other development partners. He will oversee the implementation of ADB's country partnership strategy for Nepal that focuses on the country's long-term development needs through improved infrastructure for private sector-led growth, improved access to devolved services, and environmental sustainability and resilience.

"ADB has been a long-term development partner of Nepal. I look forward to building on the strong partnership and working closely with the government, development partners, and other stakeholders in supporting Nepal's development agenda and poverty reduction efforts," said Cauchois. "My immediate priority will be to support the Government of Nepal as it addresses both the immediate and longer-term health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis."

In the medium term, Cauchois indicated the need to support the government with the development of integrated solutions by combining expertise across sectors and mixing public and private sector financing. Expansion of private sector operations, as well as green resilient and inclusive projects, will be pursued in close collaboration with the government and development partners.

Cauchois has almost three decades of professional experience, including over 15 years with ADB. Cauchois, a French national, joined ADB in 2005 as a Rural Development Specialist and has since held numerous leading positions. Prior to this appointment, he served as Principal Water Resources Specialist for India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and was out posted in ADB's India Resident Mission. He was also assigned in ADB's Nepal Resident Mission for 6 years and led the improvement of the water management systems in Nepal.

He has extensive experience of leading policy dialogue with governments on various aspects of development and has served the European Commission in Afghanistan as Rural Development Advisor prior to joining ADB.

He holds a master of science degree in water resource management from the Superior School of Tropical Agronomy in Montpellier, France.

Since its establishment in 1966, ADB has provided over \$7 billion in financial and technical assistance to Nepal. The assistance was provided in energy, transport, water supply and urban infrastructure services, agriculture and irrigation, and education.

Indian State Owned SJVNL To develop 679 MW Lower Arun Hydropower Project

The Investment Board Nepal (IBN) and India's state-owned SJVN Ltd signed an agreement to develop the 679-megawatt Lower Arun Hydroelectric Project in the country. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by IBN Chief Executive Officer Sushil Bhatta and SJVNL Managing Director Nand Lal Sharma on behalf of their respective organisations.

Bhatta said signing of the MoU for Lower Arun HEP marked a new milestone in the bilateral ties between Nepal and India





and expressed belief that green projects could aid in significantly reducing the carbon emissions that have been making the headlines for causing climate change.

Sharma said SJVN had bagged the 679-MW Lower Arun HEP through international competitive bidding, which in-

involved big players. The Lower Arun HEP is located in Sankhuwasabha and Bhojpur districts.

The peaking run-of-the-river project will be implemented as per build, own, operate, transfer model. The company will conduct a detailed project study and submit the detailed project report to the IBN within two years of the MoU signing date.

The entire cost of the study will be borne by the company, which will also have to submit monthly progress report to the IBN. Estimated to cost \$1,300 million (as per the exchange rate of 2017), the project that is scheduled to be completed in four years after commencement of construction activities and is expected to generate 2,625 gigawatt hours of electricity annually.

The pact was signed today in the presence of Nepal Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel and Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra. SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company (SAPDC) CEO Arun Dhiman and SAPDC Chief Financial Officer Jitendra Yadav were also present along with other senior officials from Nepal government and SJVN.

SJVN started its journey in Nepal in 2008 by signing of the pact for implementation of 900MW Arun-III Project. The project construction activities commenced with laying of the foundation stone jointly by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart PM Narendra Modi in 2018. It has been reported that Arun III Hydroelectric Project has achieved significant progress in the past three years despite the COVID-19 pandemic, as construction activities of the project are going on in full swing.

Golchha Group Donates 30 Samsung Microwave Ovens To Teaching Hospital

Golchha Group has contributed 30 Samsung Microwave Ovens to the COVID heroic personnel at Teaching Hospital. Director of Golchha Group, Seema Golchha handed over the ovens to Prof. Dr. Dibya Singh Shah, the Dean, Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, at a ceremony.



The program was organized by Nepal Health Worker's Association, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital Organization.

Speaking on the occasion, Director of Golchha Group Seema Golchha said, "We are happy to support Nepal Health Worker's Association, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital. We feel that our modest contribution will help in providing

some relief to the Covid frontline workers during their difficult and long hours at work. We are grateful to have this opportunity to express gratitude to these selfless and dedicated health workers."

Devyani Rana Joins Coca-Cola India As Vice President

BUSINESS BRIEF

Coca-Cola India has appointed Devyani Rajya Laxmi Rana as vice president of its public affairs, communications and sustainability for India and Southwest Asia. She moves from Caterpillar India, where she was director of Public Affairs for India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Rana's appointment marks the company's continued effort towards a purpose-driven approach for the region. Sanket Ray, president, India and Southwest Asia, said, "I am delighted to welcome Devyani on this exciting charter to deepen Coca-Cola's engagement in the region as she joins the leadership team to spearhead the practice in the region."

Devyani brings a wealth of experience in advocating for policies, legislation, trade agreements and regulations. Her contributions will augment our belief in our purpose even stronger and serve as an acceleration of the work that was already underway."

Over a span of 25 years, Rana has also worked with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations (UN) in India, as well as The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Geneva and the Switzerland World Economic Forum (WEF).

Samundratar-Trishuli 3 'B' Centre Transmission Line In Operation

As the government has prioritized the development of energy sector, the construction of Samundratar-Trishuli 3 'B' Centre 132 KV Transmission Line has been completed.

Completion of this project is regarded as a great achievement at a time lack of transmission lines in the country was creating huge challenges in power supply in spite of the development of hydropower projects.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had inaugurated the project. The 26-kilometer transmission line from Trishuli 3 'B' construction site at Kispang rural municipality could transmit electricity up to 270 megawatts. The line starts from Samundratar of Dupcheshwor Rural Municipality in Nuwakot district.

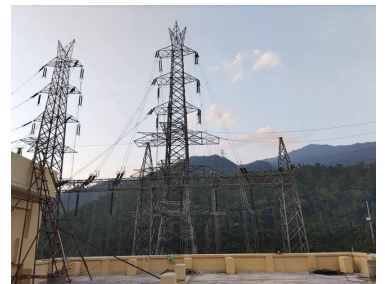
A total of 60-megawatt power produced from 10 hydropower projects of the private sector from Tadi Khola and its tributaries could be connected to this transmission line. Out of 26 kilometers transmission line, three kilometers is multi-circuited. Two transformers of 30-MVA capacity towards 132/33 KV have been connected at Samundratar sub-station.

Similarly, two transformers of eight-MVA capacity towards 33/11 KV have also been connected at the Samundratar sub-station.

Executive Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Hitenra Dev Shakya, said the problem of a power outage at the eastern part of the Nuwakot district would be resolved as power would be supplied there from the sub-station.

The project was constructed with investment of the government of Nepal and a concessional loan of Asian Development Bank and European Investment Bank. The total investment on the transmission line and sub-station was Rs 155 billion.

Inaugurating the project, Prime Minister Oli said the government was moving ahead in order to develop a situation to meet the country's power demands from its own production.



Eventful Nepal



BY: DR. TILAK RAWAL

Despite issuance of prohibitory orders to confront the second phase of pandemic, which is said to be more injurious than the first phase, Nepal has not remained as quiet as earlier and last couple of months have been interestingly eventful, fluidity on the political front being the major contributing factor. It would be interesting to delve a bit into the past before discussing the current

scenario. After the resurrection of the House by the Supreme Court (SC), Prime Minister Oli failed the floor test on May 10 as 28 members belonging to Nepal Khana faction of his party (UML) and 12 members of Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) led by Upendra Yadav abstained. As jointly demanded by Nepali Congress (NC) president Deuba, Maoist Centre (MC) chair Prachanda and JSP co-chair Yadav, urging the president to initiate the process of forming a coalition government, President Bhandari gave political parties until 9 pm (May 13, 2021) to lay their claim for forming a new coalition government under Article 76(2) of the constitution. Notwithstanding the solid decision of NC to back Deuba to lead the next coalition government, support extended by Prachanda and expected support from Nepal Khana-led faction of UML and JSP faction led by Yadav, the parties could not stake claim to form a government in the given time, clearing way for the President to appoint Oli, leader of the largest party, as the prime minister under Article 76(3) of the constitution. President also asked parties represented in the House to stake claim to form the new government under Article 76(5) of the constitution by 5 pm on May 21, on the recommendation of the caretaker government led by Oli who was not prepared to seek another

trust vote as the situation was not different from that existed on May 10. Although political parties and legal experts had serious reservations about the very short time given and legality of the move to ask parties to form a government under Article 76(5) at a time when Oli had not resigned or lost the trust vote a second time, Deuba approached office of the President on time with signatures of 149 parliamentarians in his pocket. On arrival, they were informed that Oli had also submitted his claim little earlier, showing support of two parties (UML and JSP) consisting of 153 lawmakers. The two letters sent to the President's office by Oli and Mahantha Thakur urging the office not to give validity to the signatures of the lawmakers of their two parties, 26 and 12 respectively of UML and JSP who had supported Deuba, provided a pretext for President Bhandari to disapprove both claims. Indeed, May 21 was an eventful day which saw numerous inter and intra-party meetings held both formally and

informally, telephonic conversations between top leaders belonging to different parties, conspiratorial small group meetings and the surprising move of Oli to stake a claim, contrary to his announcement made at 12 noon that day. This eventful day was followed by a night of high drama, which saw the President keeping her office open well beyond mid-night to approve the mid-night

decision of the Cabinet to dissolve the House (one more time in less than 6 months) and have mid-term polls. Expectedly, this dramatic move created lots of hue and cry but Prime Minister Oli proceeded ahead, turning a deaf ear to challenges coming from different corners. He expanded his Cabinet twice and continued to make appointments to several constitutional bodies

and missions abroad, often resorting to different ordinances that got almost automatic approval of the President. In addition to problems related to running of the government, Oli had problems keeping his own party intact since long and lately the rival faction in the party had insisted on a written agreement to revive the party committees and structures that existed prior to UML's merger with MC. They also remained adamant about not withdrawing support given to Deuba in the case against House dissolution. In the midst of divergent views and many leaders still finding Oli conspiratorial, a 10-member task-force formed to reconcile differences was revived and after several rounds of initial inconclusive

meetings, it succeeded in clinching a unity deal, which included amongst others, revival of all party committees and structures that existed before UML's merger with MC and that all party activities and decisions taken after March 7, the day House was reinstated, will be nullified if they were against party unity. This is definitely a positive development implementation of which could be difficult. Indeed, politics in Nepal is very much instable and in addition to UML, other political parties are also facing destabilizing problems. NC seemed solidly unified in proposing Deuba to lead the next government but there is every possibility that differences related to the Fourteenth General Convention could take alarming proportion to convulse the party anytime soon. Further, with co-chairpersons of the JSP (Thakur and Yadav) expelling each other from the party and Thakur faction having supported Oli and Yadav faction backing Deuba, things look unmanageable in this party. It is undeniable that other political

With declining direct foreign investment, unsatisfactory level of capital expenditure (about 60 percent this year) and the budget failing to address the problems of medium and small enterprises through specific stimulus packages, the wished growth of 6.5 percent is very unlikely to be achieved. Further, the devastating Covid-19 and our highly instable politics are certain to continue inflicting serious injury on our economy next year as well. We wish experienced Deuba luck in achieving political stability and paying some attention to the economy to arrest its deterioration.

parties have also contributed to the existing fluid political situation but people cannot just help pointing a finger of accusation towards the ruling party and its leadership for failing to manage the country and the party even when the government continued to enjoy near two-thirds majority in the House for about 3 years. It is disheartening that numerous writ petitions were filed in the SC, challenging Oli's controversial style of managing state affairs.

A total of 146 members of the dissolved House filed a petition at the SC, challenging the dissolution and urging the apex court to appoint Deuba as prime minister. President Bhandari, a titular head without any discretionary power, is vehemently attacked by the press. People argue that Bhandari and Oli worked hand-in-glove to breach the constitution. It is also said that Oli's style of functioning has soured a bit the pleasant relationship that existed between two state organs. Indeed, the apex court has already stayed the implementation of the Citizenship Act Amendment Ordinance, issued a day after dissolving the House basically to placate Thakur/Mahato faction of JSP. Another political blow suffered by Oli was on June 22 when the SC, in response to a writ petition, stayed the induction into government of 20 ministers, leaving him with only four ministers. It may be interesting to note that Oli had reshuffled his Cabinet retaining only 4 ministers and inducting 8 ministers and 2 state ministers from JSP on June 10, just two days after the SC issued a show cause notice on the expansion of June 4 by the caretaker Prime Minister. Another crippling blow delivered by the judiciary pertains to an SC verdict that nullified decision of the hugely expanded Central Committee of the UML party, renamed as the Tenth General Convention Organizing Committee, to sack 4 rebellious members in Karnali provincial assembly, stating that the body created had no legal standing. This verdict rejuvenated a bit the struggling rival faction led by Nepal/Khanal and many observers feel that parallels could be drawn between this decision, which has politically weakened Oli, and the early March verdict of SC that nullified unification of the two parties (UML and MC), very uncomfortably placing Prachanda and Nepal, more specifically Nepal who found the verdict a bolt from the blue and had to struggle hard to put himself back on track to proceed with the continued battle against his formidable rival. Looking at these verdicts of the SC made over the last couple of months and the associated rise or fall in political influence alternately of the rival groups of UML, one is tempted to imagine the two factions sitting on each end of a see-saw, going up and down as desired by the court. The ultimate blow that Oli received was on 12 July when the apex court not only reinstated the House, twice in about 4 months, but ordered the President's office to appoint Deuba prime minister by the evening of 13 July and fixed 18 July deadline for convening the House session. Resurrection of the House was very much expected but directing the concerned to appoint Deuba, specifying the time, was a pleasant surprise even to NC/Deuba supporters. Deuba took the oath two hours later than the stipulated time because of the controversy over the contents of the appointment letter.

The SC probably may not be happy to be loaded with many political cases because these bring along lots of hassles such as the ones seen in the recent formation of the constitutional bench, which looked a bit complicated in the beginning, with divergent opinions coming not only from the lawyers involved but also from Justices who appeared publicly divided and went on record to express their disgruntlement on the issue. It was good that the issue subsided with the inclusion of senior most justices in it. Understandably, PM Oli also began to come down heavily on the SC in recent days and his supporters have taken to the street against its latest verdict, probably forgetting that SC, with some problems of its own making and accusations by see-sawing politicians, may not succeed in giving solutions to political problems. The ailing economy has also to be saved from sustaining irreparable damage.

It is undeniable that other political parties have also contributed to the existing fluid political situation but people cannot just help pointing a finger of accusation towards the ruling party and its leadership for failing to manage the country and the party even when the government continued to enjoy near two-thirds majority in the House for about 3 years. It is disheartening that numerous writ petitions were filed in the SC, challenging Oli's controversial style of managing state affairs.

In the midst of controversy about the size and timing of the budget, budget for the new fiscal year 2021/22 (2077/78) was unveiled by the government through an ordinance, meeting the constitutional deadline. Contrary to the urging of many to bring a modest budget, the caretaker government made public a huge annual plan with an outlay of Rs. 1647.57 billion, which is 11.73 percent larger than the on-going budget (Rs. 1474.64 billion) and is higher by 22.52 percent if the reviewed figure of Rs

1344.68 is taken into account. With priority accorded to battling the pandemic, revenue collection target (Rs. 1024 billion) is just enough to meet the recurrent expenditure of Rs. 1004 billion - Rs. 678.61 billion kept as recurrent expenditure, Rs. 386.71 billion and Rs. 325.74 billion as equalization grant and Rs. 60.97 billion as conditional grant to lower level governments. Funds under social security head have gone up by 33 percent, which undoubtedly is not a bad thing to do, provided the government has the capacity to do so. The government also intends to borrow around Rs. 559 billion (Rs. 250 billion from internal source) and expects to collect Rs. 63.37 billion as grant. Talking of foreign assistance, it is a well-known fact that the portion of grant has continuously decreased in the last couple of years, compared to the loan portion, which is a direct result of our very low grant utilization capacity, about 39 percent in the last couple of years. With declining direct foreign investment, unsatisfactory level of capital expenditure (about 60 percent this year) and the budget failing to address the problems of medium and small enterprises through specific stimulus packages, the wished growth of 6.5 percent is very unlikely to be achieved. Further, the devastating Covid-19 and our highly instable politics are certain to continue inflicting serious injury on our economy next year as well. We wish experienced Deuba luck in achieving political stability and paying some attention to the economy to arrest its deterioration.

Dr. Rawal is a former governor of NRB.

POLITICS

SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

Fifth Inning As PM

With the verdict of the apex court, Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba has started his fifth inning as the prime minister. However, the question now is: will Deuba secure a majority in the House within 30 days? If Deuba fails to secure the required majority, elections will have to be held within six months

By A CORRESPONDNET

After taking oath from President Bidhya Devi Bhandari on 13 July, NC leader Deuba has started his fifth innings as the prime minister of Nepal.

Following the verdict of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, Deuba has marched towards Singdurbar replacing three and half years old K.P. Sharma Oli-led CPN-UML government.

This is the second time in his life time Deuba became the prime minister of a reinstated house. In his first innings, in 1996, the reinstated House of Representatives elected Deuba as the prime minister.

After the restoration of House in 1996, Nepal had seen five years of horse trading in politics that led four governments to fall within a short period of time.

On July 12, the Supreme Court, in its verdict issued in favor of reinstatement of House of Representatives, had also passed an order to appoint Deuba as the prime minister by 5 pm the following day. This was not the case in the 1996 verdict.

As Deuba has been sworn in as the prime minister, he has to prove his majority within 30 days. In case he fails to secure the majority, the house will be dissolved and there will be a call for fresh elections within six months.

The writ filed by 146-lawmaker strong opposition alliance was among the writ petitions that had moved the apex court demanding the reinstatement of the lower house along with the appointment of Nepali Congress President Deuba as the Prime Minister for staking a claim to the post according to Article 76 (5) of the Constitution.

A five-member constitution-



al bench led by Chief Justice Chandra Shumsher Rana issued the ruling on July 12 stating that President Bidya Devi Bhandari's decision to dissolve the House upon the recommendation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was an unconstitutional act.

Reinstating the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court has also issued a writ of mandamus to appoint Nepali Congress (NC) President Deuba as the Prime Minister within two days. The apex Court has also ordered to call the HoR meeting on July 18.

Along with PM Deuba, Maoist Centre leaders have also joined the government. However, Samajbadi Janta Party has said it will join the government only after its party meeting.

Court's Verdict

As it was expected by many leaders of opposition, the Supreme Court issued an order to reinstate the House

termining its dissolution unconstitutional.

However, political pundits did not expect mandamus to appoint Deuba as the Prime Minister in two days. They describe the decision as being of a political nature.

Whatever one thinks about it, the Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court formed to hear writs against the dissolution of House of Representatives has legitimized the opposition claim for Deuba to lead the government.

Although it is a bitter decision of the court with political implications, PM Oli has accepted the verdict with reservations on it.

Although the apex court has been censuring several of Prime Minister Oli's decisions, few expected that the court could accept all the pleas of Deuba.

By nullifying Citizenship Amendment Ordinance, terming the

expansion of cabinet unconstitutional and banning the export of bolts and concretes to India, the Supreme Court had given ample suggestions to show where it was heading.

Quietly accepting the court verdict, PM K.P. Sharma Oli has tried to avoid controversy now. However, this decision is likely to push PM Oli to extreme front in the coming days. This will also force politicians to appoint more henchmen in the court for politicization of judiciary.

Following the verdict, Sher Bahadur Tamang, secretary of CPN-UML party office, informed that his party has reservation over the verdict although it had accepted it.

Similarly, leader Subash Chandra Nembang said that they will respect the verdict of the court. "Although the SC's verdict was unexpected, the party would respect the judiciary and welcome the verdict," said leader Sher Bahadur Tamang.

Cadre In the Street

However, Prime Minister Oli's cadres have expressed that their party will take a certain legal and political

removed unceremoniously by a letter of secretary of Judicial Council. Similarly, acting chief justice Dipak Raj Joshi was removed following a hearing committee vote against him. Joshi even denied the bench to take part as a senior judge.

If the fresh reaction of cadres of the National Youth Force who gathered in Maitighar Mandala, chanting slogans against the recently passed verdict that goes against Oli's continuity in power, is an indication, the Supreme Court and judges will have to face a new political ire.

"We will not accept all the orders passed by the Supreme Court, beware!" the demonstrators chanted. Oli's confidant and the youth wing leader Mahesh Basnet was present at the protests, too.

Basnet claimed that the court's decision was unfair as it is not the judiciary but the president's prerogative to appoint the Prime Minister, and as such the order is unacceptable. The Supreme Court's decision has received mixed reviews from all sections of the society.

This is the second time that the Apex Court has decided in favor of

judiciary. We, the opposition alliance, are holding a meeting later and will issue an extended statement then," said Sher Bahadur Deuba, President, Nepali Congress.

"The Supreme Court's decision is an important historical event in itself. This is a victory not only of the opposition alliance, but of the country and the people. Supreme Court, by means of this verdict, has taken the nation and constitution's prestige to a new high," said Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Chair, CPN (Maoist Centre).

"This verdict has fulfilled four important tasks- it has clarified several confusing elements of the Constitution; it has limited possible authoritarian intentions of Prime Minister(s) and said that all state bodies should remain within their limits; revived Constitution and parliament; and, has safeguarded the Constitution and Parliament, yet again, which has enhanced the roles and prestige of the Court," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, Senior Leader, CPN-UML.

Rebel MPs Yogesh Bhattarai and Ram Kumari Jhankri also toed with Nepal. "I respect and welcome the Constitutional Bench's order to reinstate the House of Representatives. I further urge all leaders and cadres of the UML to maintain peace and have patience in a bid to save the party's unity," said Bhattarai.

"The judiciary has added stars to its prestige with the decision. I thank the judiciary, members of the constitutional bench, advocates, political leadership, media and civil society that raised their voice against the unconstitutional step," said Jhankri.

However, Oli supporters interpreted the verdict differently. "The Supreme Court's decision has raised a huge question in terms of justice imparted, on a global scale. Despite that, we will accept the court's verdict," said Subas Nembang, former chair of Constituent Assembly, CPN-UML.

"People should understand that today's decision has ignited another episode of political instability in the country. Those that are party to this action will have to stand in court of histo-



course. In the revived house, Oli's supporters can take any decision to criticize the justice.

Although the leaders have not spoken anything about it, the cadres are demanding registering an impeachment motion against selected judges. If this idea is moved forward, it will likely invite major constitutional upheavals.

Since 2006, Nepal's court has seen several upheavals. Three years ago, chief justice Gopal Prasad Parajuli was

reinstatement of House during PM Oli's tenure.

Mixed Reactions

As the Supreme Court passed a verdict, overturning the decisions, there is a mixed reaction. Petitioners hailed the verdict as historic. However, defenders termed the decision as a blunder.

"With its verdict, the Supreme Court has single-handedly saved constitution and revived rule of law. It has reinstated people's faith in independent

Divided We Stand

They held several meetings and inked a deal. However, UML has still a long way to go before forging unity

By A CORRESPONDNET

Four parties Nepali Congress, Maoist Center, Samajbadi Janta Party and Janmorcha are debating over power sharing as CPN-UML is heading towards unifying its divided house.

Although outgoing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, who holds the key in the rank and file of the party, has not opened his card yet about the likely scenario, rebel leader Madhav Kumar Nepal has already announced that he will be no longer with the new ruling alliance, expressing his reconciliatory tones.

At the all-party meeting, UML leader Madhav Nepal shared that as the basic aims concerning reinstatement of House and clarification on various confusing articles of the constitution have been achieved, he would step back from the alliance and work towards UML reconciliation.

Nepal was later quoted as saying that as the primary issue has been resolved and as democracy has prevailed, he would now like to focus his energies entirely on reuniting the party.

CPN-UML leader Nepal's statement has indicated that he will now return to his own party as his group achieved the aim of pulling down the Oli-led government.

He expressed hope that his partners would understand his predicament and also advised Deuba to be as inclusive as he can be while forming the government, and to include UML in the discussions, too.

A Ten-point Agreement

Meeting several rounds with Oli and forging an agreement, Nepal-led faction has shown that they are willing to reconcile in the party.

Following the fall of government and formation of new government, unity matters of CPN-UML will be likely to intensify.

They have to decide what to



do on the vote of confidence motion in the HoR. Oli's preference is election and he wants to foil this motion and hold the elections within six months. However, Madhav Nepal-led faction has a different approach. They want to vote for the government and the parliament to complete the tenure.

Disputes had surfaced in the CPN-UML as Oli dissolved the House of Representatives on May 23 despite the formation of a 10-member taskforce on May 16 on the basis of consensus of CPN-UML Chairman Oli and senior leader Nepal.

After days of reunion-centered dialogues, the two rival factions of the ruling CPN-UML have finally reached a consensus on 'agreeing to agree'.

The taskforce formed to resolve existing issues between the two sides has struck a 10-point deal. The two sides have decided to resolve all existing differences and deal with issues internally for now.

A 14-hour long meeting of leaders representing the dissident sides facilitated the possible coming together of party chair Oli and senior UML figure Nepal, who have been at loggerheads with each other for months.

Leaders Subash Nembang, Bishnu Paudel, Pradeep Gyawali, Shankar Pokhrel and Bishnu Rimal have been initiating talks on Oli's behalf with Nepal-Khanal faction leaders including Bhim Rawal, Ghanashyam Bhusal, Surendra Pandey, Gokarna Bista and Raghujii Panta.

However, the two sides have

agreed to put differences aside, on paper, and move towards reconciliation for now, in what can be termed a breakthrough deal.

"The taskforce agreed to resurrect the party as it was on May 16, 2018, as per the court decision, deciding the number of party Central Committee members and on the management of the former Maoist leaders, who have joined the UML and on the court issue," Bista said.

Senior leaders Subash Nembang and Bhim Rawal led the taskforce teams, which comprises Bishnu Paudel, Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Shankar Pokharel and Bishnu Rimal from party chairman Oli's side and Ganshyam Bhusal, Gokarna Bista, Surendra Pandey and Raghujii Panta from the side of senior leader Nepal.

"The meeting held between party Chairman KP Sharma Oli and senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal has increased hopes that the intra-party rift would finally come to an end," said leader Pandey.

The taskforce members agreed that all party committees and structures that existed before the CPN-UML's merger with the CPN-MC in 2018 would be revived.

Despite the ten point agreement, the factional feud evolved in the UML after Oli dissolved House of Representatives is yet to die. Although both the factions are moving very carefully, their real test will depend on how they agree on voting on the confidence motion over Deuba government.

Greater Access To Services

Nepal and India sign an LoE on Nepal-India Rail Service Agreement

By A CORRESPONDNET

With a single agreement in using the Indian railway to ferry goods between Nepal and India, and for Nepal, with other countries, some hassles used to be there. To make things easier, India has agreed to provide more options to Nepal.

In this context, Nepal and India have signed a Letter of Exchange (LoE) on the India-Nepal Rail Services Agreement (RSA) 2004. A virtual ceremony was held on 9 July 2021 to exchange Notes Verbales and signed copies of the LoE, between the two governments.

This agreement will help Nepal's exporters and importers to ferry goods in much cheaper transport costs. This means Nepalese consumers will get the goods for a cheaper price.

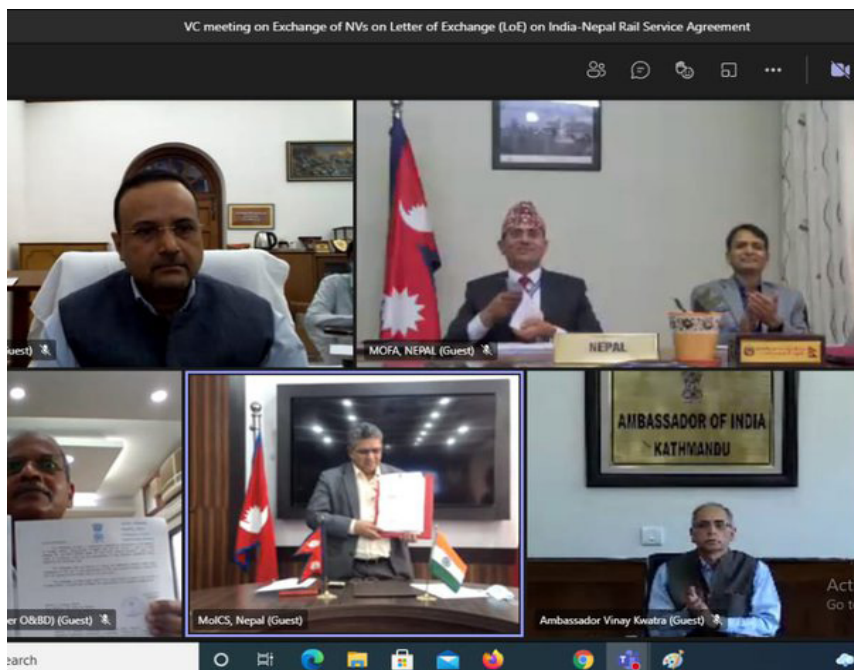
From the Indian side, the ceremony was led by Sanjay Kumar Mohanty, Member of Operations and Business Development, Ministry of Railways. From the Nepalese side, it was led by Dinesh Bhattarai, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Supplies.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy of India in Kathmandu, the ceremony was conducted in presence of Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Ambassador of Nepal to India Nilamber Acharya, Joint Secretary (North), Ministry of External Affairs of India, Anurag Srivastava and Joint Secretary (South Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Tirtha Raj Wagle. Also present were representatives from the two Embassies and concerned Ministries of both the Governments.

With the entering into force of the LoE, all authorized cargo train

operators which includes public and

The liberalization will par-



private container trains operators, automobile freight train operators, special freight train operators or any other operator authorized by Indian Railways will be able to utilize the Indian railway network to carry Nepal's container and other freight – both bilateral between India and Nepal or third country from Indian ports to Nepal.

This liberalization will allow market forces to come up in the rail freight segment in Nepal, and is likely to increase efficiency and cost-competitiveness, eventually benefiting Nepalese traders, transporters and the consumer.

Further, after this LoE, all kinds of cargoes in all categories of wagons that can carry freight on Indian Railways network within India can also carry freight to and from Nepal.

ticularly reduce transportation costs for automobiles and certain other products whose carriage takes place in special wagons. Wagons owned by Nepal Railway Company will also be authorized to carry Nepal-bound freight (inbound and outbound on Kolkata/Haldia to Biratnagar/Birgunj routes) over the Indian Railways network as per IR standards and procedures.

The LoE also updates several other portions of the India-Nepal RSA and brings those in line with latest operational and infrastructure status of Indian and Nepalese Railways. It therefore marks another milestone in India's efforts to enhance regional connectivity under the "Neighborhood First" policy.

Mobilizing Resources For The University Of Nepal



BY: DR BIPIN ADHIKARI

The Government of Nepal has finally constituted a Board to take responsibility for the development of infrastructure of the proposed University of Nepal (UoN), as per the *University of Nepal Infrastructure Development Preparation Board Constitution Order*, issued by the Council of Ministers on April 2, 2021. The 15-member Board constitutes of academics and professionals, including four ex-officio members from different levels of government, who were active in pursuing such a public university with their initiation and support.

With the constitution of the Board, on 14th June, the Government has approved the opportunity to the academics and professionals who had been calling for the establishment of a university at Gaundakot, Nawalparasi for the last four years with their own initiative. Despite the existence of many universities in the country, these academics and professionals aimed to create a high-quality, autonomous liberal arts university—something that many people believe has become absolutely necessary to rectify existing gaps and shortcomings in the higher education of Nepal.

As a liberal arts university, the proposed University of Nepal's the education and academic efforts will be geared towards exploring the truth, in-depth study of the interdependent relationship between the individual, society and nature, creation of new knowledge and practice of multidisciplinary genres to meet the present and future challenges of the country and the world and seizing opportunities in this regard. This liberal arts education will help creating a group of citizens and leaders who are able to compete globally, lead efficiently in the positive transformation of our society and nation, carry social responsibility and be prudent, efficient, loyal, creative, innovative, enterprising and critically-minded.

This education will provide an international standard of higher education in humanities, arts, social science, science, technology, management, and other departmental fields for the purpose of achieving all-round development and prosperity for Nepal. These qualities are absolute necessity in Nepal, which is yet to employ liberal arts in the nation-building process. Moreover, the University looks to collaborate with leaders who possess integrity, excellence, and passion to establish its foundations in various different fields. Politics and political affiliation will not sway the University's mission, and a capable and passionate individual will find a place at the University should they wish to help establish its components.

The University's Board Constitution Order enables the Board to work and create infrastructure in five major areas for the next two years. Firstly, the Board will have to prepare a master plan of the university complex and its structure at Gaundakot, build offices required for running a university, laboratories, study rooms, dormitories, teachers and staff residence, libraries, information technology or research center buildings, guest houses, workshops,

open areas, playgrounds and garbage dump sites. Secondly, the Board will have to finalize academic programmes and possible schools or departments that will be launched in the initial years of the university, priority research areas, student admission policy and necessary human resources.

Thirdly, and as a major intervention, the Board will have to finalize cooperation with international academic institutions and faculties to ensure quality education in Nepal. This will require collaborations with international academic institutions, including through student and teacher exchange programs, short- or long-term visitations of foreign teachers and collaborations between research institutions. Fourthly, while the land to be given by the government for the use of the university has already been identified, the Board will have to work with the government to fix its boundaries and establish the details of users' rights of the university over the land as quickly as possible. Finally, the Board must assist the government to pass a University of Nepal Act through the Parliament by June 2023 to transform the present Board into a statutory university with all paraphernalia of a modern academic institution.

As such, in addition to the specific tasks, duties and powers mentioned elsewhere in the Constitution Order, Section 6 states the general tasks of the Board as follows:

- a) to buy or coordinate with the Government of Nepal to acquire land for the purpose of building physical infrastructures necessary to run a university such as administrative offices, class rooms, laboratories, student hostels or dormitories, residential facilities for the faculty and the staffs, library, guest house, open spaces, play grounds, waste/sewerage management system;
- b) to develop a detailed project plan report for the purpose of physical and academic infrastructure required for the University;
- c) to build the physical and institutional infrastructure of the University;
- d) to complete the environmental impact assessment as per the existing law while building the infrastructure as mentioned in (c);
- e) to prepare the list of the departments, faculty or schools that are considered necessary for running the courses or conducting research in the University;
- f) to enlist the required equipment and prepare the academic curricular framework that will eventually have to be approved by the concerned body of the University;
- g) to formulate the policy for the recruitment of students and faculty;
- h) to prepare and submit to the Government of Nepal a draft bill required for the establishment of the (proposed) university and provide needed input and advices to the Government in this matter;
- i) to prepare and approve the annual plan, program and budget of the Board;

- j) to consult and take suggestions and help from Provincial Government, local municipality, elected political representatives, local civil society/community and other stakeholders in the matters related to the development of the University;
- k) to conduct seminars, workshops and talk programs in the area of establishment and running of the university (including the academic programs) as well as academic development and innovation; and
- l) to undertake and/or perform any other relevant activities that are necessary for the establishment of the University.

These general tasks demonstrate that the Board will have a very challenging two-year term. Creating an institution from ground up and standardizing it within two years is certainly a challenging work for the Board and its members. Behind the Board, there is a pool of more than one hundred national and international experts who have teamed up as promoters of the liberal arts university and are enthusiastic to contribute. However, the challenge does not become minimized because of this. While the proposed UoN is a public university and budgetary support is expected from the Governments at all levels, including the Gaundakot Municipality, the level of their support is yet to be seen. When Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel presented the annual budget on 29th May, he indicated very clearly that the Government of Nepal is going to support the UoN initiative as a policy and programme of the Government. The Government of Gandaki Province, where the University is to be established, has also assured that it will support the initiative of the academics and professionals.

Although the Gaundakot Municipality, which has been supporting the initiative from the very beginning, is not a revenue-rich municipality, it has assured the promoters of its yearly budgetary contribution. There is enough indication that the Gaundakot Municipality, with its commitment to develop as a knowledge city, will continue to support the University with everything that local resources will permit. The presence of four ex-officio members in this Board representing the Federal Government (Ministries of Finance and Education), the Provincial Government (Gandaki) and the Local Government (Gaundakot Municipality) will certainly add value to this approach. They can be the bridge for the Board to reach the respective governments for their support and assistance. Even with this combined strength, the ambition that the Board has set for itself requires an enormous investment, including raising funds from all potential non-governmental sources.

Aside from the funding allocated to the establishment of the University through the local, provincial and federal governments, the Board is further expected to seek opportunities for alternative sources of funding for its massive commitment. The foremost issue to confront when it comes to finances is ensuring the autonomy of this institution. Various universities of Nepal have come under fire due to the sway of internal politics and influence as well as the will of powerful political actors. These factors have worked to erode the public's trust as well as the academic integ-

rity of higher education in Nepal. At the University of Nepal, the Board is expected to be committed to upholding the autonomy of the institution, regardless of who the donors, whether governmental or otherwise, are. The Board is expected to do so by ensuring (1) transparency and accountability of all financial and other workings of the University throughout the fundraising process and (2) participation of relevant and affected stakeholders in the decision-making process. These principles will definitely guide the Board in retaining public trust in both the leaders as well as the academic integrity of the institution.

The need to develop alternative strategies for fund-raising in education has become an issue that is now receiving widespread attention throughout the world of education. The Chairperson of the Board and its members are working pro bono for the public cause and will not claim any compensation for their work. The Constitution Order is very clear about it. Rather, many of the promoters, including Board members, are interested as first-row individuals in donating whatever is possible in their capacity to the new initiative. A University cannot expect third parties to invest until those who are closest to it lead by example. This act will showcase the character of the new university and give it a distinct standing in the community of Nepal's universities and institutions of higher learning.

A university development plan in the form of a strategic planning is one of the quickest tasks the Board will have to complete. This development plan will specify the amount of funding required for the next few years to achieve the intended development in academics and physical infrastructural developments. An exact scenario will enable the Board to appeal to Nepalese and international communities for crowdfunding. It may come as a surprise to many Nepalese that private generosity is being called on even to establish a university. Such a tradition existed in Nepal until a few decades before but has fizzled out once the government began stepping forward with public fund committal.

The need to reach out to the members of the Nepalese business sector, professionals, academicians and others for the public good and the betterment of university education is going to be an almost uniquely distinctive trait of the University of Nepal. International donors will also be mobilized for this purpose. Donors provide support to meet their objectives, not simply to give money away. This requires an adequate level of understanding between the donors and the institution, and their involvement sought in the planning and policy exercises as observers or development partners. However, as mentioned previously, the University of Nepal will not compromise its objectives and mission in service of a donor's agenda, and will work to collaborate with partners with whom the University aligns in terms of values.

In all these instances, the higher the organizational integrity of the Board and the university it will be transformed into, the more likely it is that the fund-raising outcomes will be successful. There is no option for the failure in this move.



ISRAEL SUPPORT

From A Friend Indeed

Providing 58 ventilators, Israel has shown how it has accorded high priority to Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

As it is said a friend in need is a friend indeed. Since the establishment of bilateral relations, the State of Israel has been showing its support and backing to Nepal at times of crisis.

From economic to humanitarian fronts, Israel's support to Nepal has been immense. Under learn and earn program, Israel has been supporting 500 Nepali students, inviting them to learn about hi-tech agriculture and earn money. Selected through Sanakisan Bittiya Sanstha Limited, over 4000 Nepalese young students have already benefited from this 10-month long program.

Similarly, Israel has also been providing humanitarian support whenever Nepal is in desperate needs. Just after a major earthquake which rocked Nepal in 2015, Israel had sent a special aircraft with a makeshift hospital to treat the victims of the earthquake.

Largest Number of Ventilators

Israel has become the first country to donate the largest number of ventilators to Nepal this year. Israel handed over 58 ventilators to Nepal on amid a recent function.

After experiencing a shortage of ventilators, the government had requested various donor agencies to provide ventilators when the daily infection rate of COVID-19 was at a peak during the second wave.

"The Government of Nepal expresses its gratitude to the Government and friendly people of the State of Israel as well as the Nepali community in Israel for their generous support of essential medical items to Nepal at this time of need," said a statement issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A special flight of Nepal Airlines brought from Israel a consignment of medical support consisting of medical equipment and supplies including ventilators, oxygen concentrators, masks, PPEs and overall, provided by the Government and people of the State of Israel as well as the Nepali community living in Israel to support the ongoing fight against COVID-19 in Nepal.

The consignment was received by the representative of the Ministry of Health and Population at the airport. Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, and Harishchandra Ghimire, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were also present on the occasion.

Ventilator Support

According to the MoHP, 200 ventilators were donated to the nation by various agencies during the pandemic. Of them, 46 were donated by Germany, 40 by the Embassy of Switzerland, 20 by T-Pride PTE Limited, 15 by the Spanish government, 14 by France, five by Tibet of China, and one set each by Standard Chartered Bank and One Heart World-Wide.

"Apart from 180 ventilators to be procured this year, currently there are 1,233 ventilator sets in Nepal including those received as donations," the MoHP informed.

"The ministry is working round

respective hospitals to ensure operation of those ventilators," said Dr. Poudel.

Following the increase in COVID-19 cases after the relaxation of prohibitory order in various districts across the nation, the government is working in full swing to ensure availability of ventilators.

Dr. Poudel, spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), said, "As the demand for ventilators has increased from the past few days, the ministry has managed area-based supply of ventilators and increased human resources to facilitate easy operation of the ventilators."

"Prior to this, even though ventilators were available in a few hospitals, they could not come into operation due to the lack of human resources," he added.

According to Dr. Poudel, currently there are 1,233 ventilators nationwide. The government had added 600 ventilators last year itself.

"Considering that the number of ventilators they might not be enough for the treatment of COVID-19 patients if the cases spike again, the MoHP is underway to procure 180 more ventilators," informed Dr. Poudel.

He added that the ministry was working by its entire means to provide quality treatment to the virus-infected patients in time.

"Currently, we are collecting data from hospitals across the nation to distribute the ventilators accordingly," he added.

According to the MoHP, Gandaki Province has 542 sets of ventilators, which is the highest of all provinces. There are a total of 201 ventilators in government, community, private hospitals, and medical colleges.

Ventilators in Kathmandu Valley

As informed by the Health Ministry, there are 31 ventilators in TU Teaching Hospital, 20 in Nepal Police Hospital, 25 in Kathmandu Medical College, 22 in Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital; nine in Armed Police Force (APF) Hospital, eight in Birendra Sainik Hospital, 10 in Bir Hospital, 12 in Manmohan Hospital and eight are in Dhulikhel Hospital.



the clock to control the spread of the virus and overcome unavailability of hospital beds, ICUs and ventilators for the treatment of infected patients," said Dr. Krishna Prasad Poudel, spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP).

"Thus, preparations are being made to frame a directive to strengthen managerial and supply side of ventilators and human resources."

According to Dr. Poudel, the ventilators available at district hospitals were not used due to the absence of competent technicians. "Thus, we are making efforts to frame plans to employ health professionals in the

EU Delegation Refutes News

By A CORRESPONDENT

As a leading development partner of Nepal, the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal has been supporting Nepal's social and development sector to improve the livelihood of the people living in different parts of the country.

EU's support to education, health and environment has brought about visible changes. Its social inclusion programs have helped uplift tens of thousands of poor and marginalized communities.

At a time when Nepal faced huge shortages of medical equipment, EU came out with the largest package of support, mobilising its member states. Nepal has received all the necessary emergency medical equipment as part of the support.

Even in that context, according to a press release of EU, the attention of the Delegation has been drawn to a factually incorrect news item that can misinform the people and tarnish its image.

"EU engagement in Nepal is openly guided by national priorities, its fundamental values, adherence to the universal principles of human rights, transparency and accountability," the press release said.

"The attention of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal has been drawn towards a factually incorrect news item headlined 'EU gives NPR 15 million to Rupa Sunar to Incite Ethnic Tensions in Nepal.'"

The EU Delegation to Nepal stands ready to provide further information on EU's activities and its partnership with Nepal, the statement read.

"Our mandate in Nepal focuses on a development partnership aiming at having a common understanding on issues of mutual concern and thereby working together to help Nepal achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and graduate from LDC status by 2026," said EU Ambassador to Nepal, Nona Deprez.

The European Union (EU) has established a strong relationship with Nepal since 1975 as a trusted partner and reliable friend. This relationship is not limited to extending financial support but also aims to collaborate jointly in different international

forums on the issues of strategic significance and common interest, including global peace and order, stability, sustainable development, climate change, etc.

The EU strictly provides financial support to Nepal through the government



treasury, multilateral agencies and Civil Society Organisations operational in Nepal through a transparent and competitive process. All the programmes outlined for the EU-Nepal cooperation adhere to 'Leaving No One Behind', the overarching principle of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as realising the domestic policy provisions and the international commitments of Nepal.

The EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as peace and well-being of its peoples. These values are common to its Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. They are enshrined in the fundamental treaty of Lisbon.

Consequently, in its relations with the wider world, the Union upholds the principles which have guided its own creation, development and enlargement, and promotes its values, such as democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity. The EU also contributes to peace,

security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty, as well as the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the international law.

Adhering to the principles of multilateralism, the EU abides by its international commitments including the Paris and Accra declarations, Busan platform of action in terms of supporting all developing nations. The EU shares with Nepal their common adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, based on the principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights without any kind of distinction.

The European Union in Nepal supports combating against discrimination, promoting participation and inclusive development process and development benefits shared by all on equitable and sustainable manner. In doing so, the European Union has been consistently committed to going along with its Nepalese partners and friends in the implementation of the Constitution of Nepal, that expresses its determination to create a multi-caste, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society, by ending discriminations related to class, caste, region, language, religion and gender, including all forms of racial untouchability.

The EU has been working together with the National Human Rights Commission and around 300 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for the promotion of the rights and protection of women and child rights, rights of the elderly and the marginalized communities under a rights based approach.

In general, the EU has prioritized three key areas for cooperation—Green Growth and Green Recovery, Human Capital Development and Good Governance. Adherence and respect of human rights as a driver for peace, stability and development, is a cross cutting issue for all these interventions, as well their inclusiveness.

Impact Of Project Outcomes



BY: BATU UPRETY

The National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), approved by the Government in September 2010, opened avenues to implement climate change adaptation projects in Nepal to address most urgent and immediate needs of the climate vulnerable communities and natural resources. ‘Stand-alone’ approach of implementation, non-integration into planning process, and target monitoring indicate positive outcomes with little effectiveness and replication potentials beyond the project duration. Issues are frequently raised whether these projects are producing good results and have addressed the identified and most prioritised problems and challenges effectively.

Recalling the past, project development requires several brains to address identified, perceived and prioritised challenges and attain better results to respond the needs of needy, marginalised, economically poor and vulnerable communities. Project development undergoes several steps. A climate change adaptation and resilience project is considered and recalled here to better understand project development and outcomes of implementation.

Once problems and challenges are realised at different levels, the first step is to link with national and local needs, priorities, and commitments. This provides a basis to conceptualise problem-solving project or activity to respond to challenges and find appropriate resource or people-centric ways to address the problem. Conceptualisation leads to project formulation, preparation of a project document, and negotiation at different levels with planners, budget allocators and decision-makers within country or with development partner or funding agencies for financial support. Priorities of the sector agencies, planning, and decision-making bodies might differ and project developer faces difficulties to convince, primarily the financing institution, for funding at national, local or international levels.

National development proposals that seek funding from bilateral or multi-lateral sources are reviewed at

different levels - regional and international and sometimes person or institution conceptualising or developing project document may not know the state of proposal in countries like ours. Several institutions, if authorised from the national government, exist at the national, regional and international levels to prepare, submit, and negotiate the project, and channelize the financial resources. Concerns, perceptions, needs, and priorities might affect the original concept of the development proposal.

Nepal accessed over US\$ 80 million for Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR) from the World Bank operated Climate Investment Fund. A group of ‘Kathmandu-based elites’ made efforts to ‘blame PPCR as the loan project’ and sounded much saying ‘no loan to climate change’. In my recall, only one person, engaged in energy and climate change activities, urged to access this fund and best utilise to address climate change impacts. This ‘no loan to climate change’ issue was also raised in the then parliament, and the then Secretaries of the Ministries of Finance and Environment professionally briefed the project to the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment. The then Minister for Finance Bharat Mohan Adhikary was also briefed about the possible outcomes of this funding and the Minister approved to access this Fund. Many of the ‘2010 elites’ who opposed to access it contributed a lot in implementing climate change projects funded under this Fund. Funding for one of the components of the project was also used to construct the new building of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology.

The then Ministry of Environment implemented a component on *mainstreaming climate risk management in development* and funding was channelled through the Asian Development Bank. The original concept of developing human resources, generating knowledge, and integrating climate risks into sector-specific policies, programmes and facilitative instruments was approached. After the hu-

man resources and necessary country instruments (policies, standards/norms, guidelines and manuals etc) are in place, original idea was to develop multi-million dollars projects to address climate change impacts in key economic and social sectors climate-resilient was not materialised. This USD 7 million project developed 6 concepts for less than USD 3 million (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2016/12/16/c-l-i-m-a-t-e-c-h-a-n-g-e-o-p-e-r-a-t-i-o-n-a-l-i-z-i-n-g-c-o-n-c-e-p-t/>).

There might be several reasons for non-achievement of the project outcomes as conceptualised and planned. Few reasons might be: (i) those involved in developing a concept and project document were either transferred or sidelined or retired or were not in scene; (ii) those engaged in implementing the project did not understand the concept and spirit of the project document; (iii) implementing agency did not want or try to discuss for better understanding (concept and project outcomes); (iv) 'close-door' approach was followed during project implementation; and (v) technical matters were rather addressed non-technically and/or leading institutions or person overlooked important elements as well. This might be one of the reasons for not having project outcomes effective and replicable. Termination of the project leads to forget the outcomes. Similar activities are repeated in similar types of projects. This leads to again 'starting point'.

Similar situation exist in implementing approved project-level environmental assessment (EA - Initial Environmental Examination or Environmental Impact Assessment) reports. EA is, in many cases, carried out independently without functional coordination with the feasibility study and project design teams. Non-integration of the environment protection measures (benefit enhance-



ment and adverse impacts mitigation measures), environmental monitoring and auditing in the project cycle or the detail design of the project leaves the proponent multiple opportunities to benefit from this predictive tool. Some of the reasons might be: (i) environmental assessment is conducted as a 'stand-alone' study to get environmental clearance to implement the project; (ii) many proponents are unaware of the benefits of EA tool; (iii) some proponents might not know what is written in the approved EA report, what and how to implement; (iv) competent authorities do not allocate necessary funding for, or are unaware of the benefits of, environmental monitoring and auditing or consider their role to provide 'environmental clearance'; (v) competent authorities respond or take actions only in case of any complain registered; (vi) EA report preparers rather believe in 'influencing decision-making process' for approval than making realistic and implementable report; and (vii) competent authorities enjoy and express willingness for being 'development-friendly' by approving EA report of 'any quality' such as the EIA report of Nijgadh International Airport.

If situation continues, expected desired long-term outcomes as conceptualised or designed or negotiated or approved will not be achieved.

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COVID-19 VACCINATION Back On Track

With the arrival of a million dozens of Chinese vaccine and following the U.S decision to provide 1.5 million J&J single dose vaccine, Nepal's vaccination campaign seems to be returning to its track. Although Nepal's 1.4 million elderly people, who have received the first dose of Covishield, are waiting for the second dose, the new vaccines will help accelerate the pace of vaccination

By KESHAB POUDEL

With the announcement of the United States of America to send 1.5 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine to Nepal, the common people, who have been waiting for vaccination, have heaved a sigh of relief.

Unlike other vaccines, J & J vaccine is a single dose vaccine to cover one and half million population. The shipments are part of the Biden

administration's pledge to share an initial batch of 80 million US-made vaccines globally.

Since the last seven decades, the United States has been part of establishment and expansion of health system in Nepal. Beginning from Malaria eradication to expansion of community based health system, mobilizing Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV), the United States

has been providing technical and material support.

Besides, the United States has been providing emergency health and other support from time to time. The current announcement is also a part of continual support of the US government to Nepal.

"We're leading the world in a global vaccine strategy because it's the right thing to do," news agencies



quoted a White House official as saying, “It’s the right thing morally, the right thing from a global public health perspective and right for our collective security and well-being.” The official also said that scientific teams and legal and regulatory authorities would work together to ensure prompt delivery of safe and effective vaccines to Nepal.

With this announcement of the United States, Nepal’s government authorities have also heaved a sigh of relief. At a time when 4 million doses of Vero Cell vaccines purchased by Nepal from China have already started to arrive, the new vaccines will help Nepal to accelerate the drive.

U.S Handed Over 1.5m Doses Of Single-Shot J&J Vaccines To Nepal.

The United States of America has provided assistance of 1,534,850 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal through COVAX. This will complement Nepal’s vaccination drive amid the second wave of the COVID-19

pandemic.

Receiving the support at a brief ceremony held at the Prime Minister’s Official Residence, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli conveyed sincere gratitude of the Government and people of Nepal to the Government and People of the United States for providing the generous support of vaccines. The Prime Minister also acknowledged with thanks the cooperation received from COVAX and its partner institutions.

“The US handed over today more than 15,34,850 doses of J&J vaccines to help Nepal fight against #COVID19. I express sincere gratitude to @POTUS, the Gov and people of the US for this generous cooperation and solidarity,” tweets PM Oli

Speaking on the occasion, Randy Berry, the Ambassador of the United States to Nepal, said that the vaccine support was the gift from the American people to the friendly Nepalis, reflecting the longstanding friend-

ship between the two countries.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Bishnu Prasad Paudel, Minister for Health and Population Krishna Gopal Shrestha and senior officials of the Government and the UN agencies were present on the occasion.

The single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines were airlifted to Kathmandu by a chartered flight this morning. Minister Shrestha and Ambassador Berry were present at the Tribhuvan International Airport to receive the consignment.

It may be recalled that President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and President of the United States Joe Biden had earlier exchanged communications on Nepal-US cooperation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the vaccine support.

A flight ferrying the single-shot vaccine vials provided by United States government to Nepal landed in the Tribhuvan International

COVERSTORY

Airport Monday morning, as per the Ministry of Health and Population.

“Today we’re giving Nepal enough #JNJ COVID19 vaccines via #COVAX to fully vaccinate 1.5 million people. I’m proud that the U.S. is the largest single-country donor of #COVID19 assistance to Nepal. This gift, on behalf of the American people, has the singular goal of saving lives,” tweets U.S. Ambassador Randy Berry.

Authorities have moved the consignment to Teku based vaccine storage facility managed by the Department of Health Services.

“Our sincere gratitude for providing life saving vaccines with a high priority to Nepal,” tweets Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As per preliminary reports, individuals falling in the age group 50-55 will receive the jabs. However, the government is yet to make an official announcement regarding the same.

US government dispatched the said amount of jabs to Nepal un-

Uncertainty for Elderly

Despite the efforts made by Nepal through various channels, it is yet to be able to provide the second dose of vaccine to over 1.4 million people who had the first Covishield vaccines.

They had received the first dose of the Covishield vaccine almost 5 months ago. These 1.4 million people above 65 years are waiting for their second dose.

Frustrated by a long wait, the elderly people have started to express their anger through various means. However, the government looks helpless given the scarcity of vaccines.

“I was wondering, if there is any government in Nepal to take care of its citizens? Yes I found one for paying the medical bill of a political leader. What a government we have, when we all Nepalese are looking towards the International airport sky for COVID vaccine?,” Tweets Dr. Dwarikanath Dhungel, former secretary of Nepal.

Although Nepal started its vaccination drive, with generous support from Indian government, given the current global vaccine scarcity, it is uncertain whether they will get it or not. Under an interim order of the Supreme Court of India, the Indian government has completely banned the export of the Covishield vaccine. Nepal had started vaccination to elderly people in March hoping to receive the necessary doses.

However, the deadly upsurge of the second wave of coronavirus has changed everything. The Indian apex court had in its order asked the government to administer vaccines to its citizen before exporting them to other countries.

Despite close relations, across an open border, the court’s order stopped the export of the Indian vaccine to Nepal and all other countries of the world.

Vero Cell Second Dose

Ministry of Health and Pop-



der COVAX facility, and in line with US President Joe Biden’s pledge to donate a batch of 80 million US-made vaccines globally to counter vaccine disparity.

“As per today’s some newspaper, Denmark has supplied million doses of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines to Bhutan under the grant program. Why Nepal has been completely forgotten? What went wrong to our diplomacy?”

ulation (MoHP) has been providing a second dose of Vero Cell from July 6 and it is planning to start first dose to other age groups from 16 July. The country resumed its stalled COVID-19 vaccination campaign on June 8 with 1



“

In the coming days, the U.S. will donate at no cost to Nepal enough vaccines to fully vaccinate 1.5 million people. I could not be any prouder of our 73-year long partnership. America will always stand with Nepalis, and we will continue to work tirelessly to improve their lives.

”

- @USAmbNepal Randy Berry

million doses given by China after the government made international pleas for help with a shortage of shots.

Nepal has vaccinated about 14 percent of the population by July 10. Among them, 4 percent have received both doses and are fully vaccinated so far.

According to Dr. Jhalak Gautam, Chief of the National Immunization Program under the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), so far, 851,300 people have been vaccinated with their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine while 2.611 million have got their first dose in the country by July 9.

“An utmost effort from various mechanisms is underway to bring the vaccines,” said Dr. Gautam. “The government is committed to vaccinating all the eligible people free of cost and it has been exploring all possible ways to procure vaccines at the earliest.”

Among the people vaccinated with the first dose, around 1.4 million elderly citizens are eagerly waiting for the second dose of the vaccines. With the unavailability of vaccines, the government has not been able to inoculate

them, which is necessary as a booster for better efficacy.

“The government had frequently made appeals to India to at least send the remaining 1 million Covishield jabs Nepal had paid for, and to Britain to supply vaccines so that elderly citizens could get the booster doses who are now waiting for more than 15 weeks.”

Dr. Rabindra Pandey, a public health expert, said that as the second wave of COVID-19 was more fatal than the first wave, people who have taken double shots have not fallen ill seriously from the virus.

Deaths were not recorded among the people who received both doses of the vaccine, said Dr. Pandey and emphasized the need to ensure availability of vaccines at the earliest.

Nepal launched its vaccination campaign against COVID-19 on January 27 with the 1 million doses India had provided under its Vaccine Maitri program.

Second dose important, but no need to panic

As the country faces supply shortages of vaccines, those waiting

for the second dose may have to keep waiting, but health experts say there is no need to panic.

According to Dr. Shyam Raj Upreti, Coordinator of the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee, when people take the first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine, it activates an immune response, which works even if you delay your booster dose.

Dr. Upreti said that the main concern in delays of the second dose may weaken immune response and one must get the second dose as soon as the vaccine becomes available.

He said that as the new strain of the virus is emerging time and again getting both doses is more important and safer.

Only one vaccine may not work at the optimum level, that is why people need the second dose, according to doctors.

In the case of the Covishield vaccine, the minimum gap between two doses is mentioned as 12 weeks but a longer gap could increase the results. Therefore, everyone must get his or her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine even if it is delayed.

COVERSTORY

The unavailability of vaccines has sparked a wave of fear among the people, who got their first dose, but there is nothing to panic about, said Dr. Uprety and urged everyone to focus on getting their second dose as per the government schedule after availability of the vaccines.

Status of the vaccination campaign

Around 430,000 frontline workers – health workers, staff at health facilities, female community health volunteers, security personnel, sanitation workers – were listed as priority groups for the first round of the vaccination campaign.

After the first round's first phase was completed, the government announced vaccination for journalists and diplomatic staff. When the first phase was completed on March 5, as many as 438,000 people had received their first dose of COVID vaccines.

In February, the government decided to buy 2 million doses of vaccines from the Serum Institute of India, at \$4 per dose. The first consign-

ment was delivered immediately, as 1 million doses arrived on February 21 but the second consignment has not arrived yet.

Also, 348,000 doses of Covishield arrived in Nepal on February 21 under the World Health Organization (WHO)'s COVAX facility. With the arrival of vaccines continuously, there were high hopes and the public responded heartrendingly. Then the government inoculated 1.4 million senior citizens in the second phase of the vaccination campaign.

After Nepal granted emergency use approval to the Vero Cell vaccine of Sinopharm on February 15, the Chinese government then provided 800,000 doses of the vaccine under the grant assistance. The Vero Cell arrived in Kathmandu on March 29.

After the arrival of the Chinese vaccine, the government resumed the vaccination campaign from April 7.

Vero Cell was then administered to people working in postal and telephone services, public trans-

portation services, water supply and distribution, tourism sector—hotels and restaurants—production, sales and distribution of medicines, electricity supply, storage and transportation of consumer goods as well as health workers who had missed the first phase of the vaccination drive earlier from January 27. The government provided a second dose of Vero Cell from May 16 to May 25.

The country resumed its stalled COVID-19 vaccination campaign on June 8 with 1 million doses given by China after the government made international pleas for help with a shortage of shots.

Then the government decided to inoculate people aged 61-64. Having an insufficient amount of vaccines, some of the local levels provided jabs to people aged 62- 64 years of age.

Now, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) has announced to launch the fourth found of vaccine campaign providing first dose of Vero Cell from July 16.



As per COVAX commitment, 1.9 million doses were to arrive in Nepal by March. However, as per the latest update made by the COVAX, an additional 348,000 could come by July.

Nepal Has Brought First Batch of 4 Million Vero Cell Vaccine

Over 809 thousand doses of Vero Cell, COVID-19 vaccine developed and manufactured by Sinopharm, have been brought to Kathmandu.

A wide body airplane, A 330, of the Nepal Airlines Corporation brought in a total of 17600 boxes of vaccine, in which a box had 46 doses of vaccine.

The vaccine has been purchased on the government-to-government (GtoG) basis. Some four million doses of Vero Cell are to be procured on this basis, and brought in.

According to the schedule published earlier, remaining vaccine will be brought in on July 15, July 16 and July 22.

Earlier, China had donated 2 million doses of Vero Cell to Nepal. Nepal had also received 348 thousand doses of vaccine under COVAX while India had also provided 1.8 doses of Covishield

as assistance. 4.248 million Doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been brought in so far, according to the record of the Ministry of Health and Population.

With the arrival of vaccine



from China and the US, Nepal is in a relatively better position to cover large sections of people to avoid third wave. As cases in India are declining and the production of vaccine rounds up, Nepal will be likely to receive more vaccine from India as well.

If things go as usual, Nepal will be in a position to vaccinate over 50 percent of population by the end of

rum Institute of India and Vero Cell developed by Sinopharma and Beijing Institute of Biological Products.

J&J will be the third of the Covid-19 vaccine to be used in Nepal and the first of the single-shot kind.

The country that is hard-pressed to control the spread of the contagion under the second wave of coronavirus infection has the only op-



December.

Nepal so far has received and conducted the inoculation drive with COVISHIELD, developed by Oxford AstraZeneca and manufactured by Se-

tion of vaccinating as many as its citizens if it were to put up any kind of fight against a possible third wave of the pandemic.

Communist Party of China Centenary Celebrations

Reading Between The Lips

Marking the 100th year celebration of the formulation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), there were dazzling choreographed performances, fighter jets flying in the sky and a carefully vetted crowd-nationalist songs in Beijing's Tiananmen Square earlier this month. But more than anything else, it was President Xi Jinping who hogged the limelight. More specifically, it was his speech.

"Foreign powers will get their heads bashed if they attempt to bully or influence the country."

This warning brought rousing shouts and applause from the attending crowd of 70,000. It was a message directed directly towards the United States and its ally. Xi was clear in his message – China is not the same as it was a 100 years back when foreign powers bullied it, took away parts of its territory and waged war against it. When the CPC was formed in 1921, it was formed to fight the nationalist government with whom it engaged in a bloody civil war until the former's victory in 1949. At the time, China had recently seen the end of the Qing dynasty which had been attacked by numerous foreign powers including the British. It had to forfeit one of its areas (Hong Kong) and lost its glory of the 'Middle Kingdom' days. China still treats this phase of its history as humiliating.

Come 100 years later and China stands in a completely different position. It is an emerging superpower and has been overtaking the United States in almost every possible indicator – be it economic or others. So it was not unusual for Xi during his address to sing glory of the new China. His threat to the 'foreign powers' that they would have their 'heads bashed' came in context of the maneuvering the West has been doing in the past few years to discredit China by raising issues of human rights and implementing sanctions against it following the crackdown in Hong Kong. The Chinese leader's message hinted that they cared very little about what the West thought about China and if in any case it tried to cross the line, it would not be afraid to retaliate.

Apart from this, what was also interesting in Xi's speech was the subtle messages. Highlighting the role of the party in the development of China, Xi reiterated the role of the party in modern China, saying that it has been central to the country's growth and that attempts to separate it from the people would fail. To the old guards, some of whom see Xi as developing his own personality cult similar to that of Mao, the Chinese leader showed his commitment to the party's value by saying that 'only socialism could save China', and only



BY ABIJIT SHARMA

socialism with Chinese characteristics – the party's official ideology - could develop China. A point he reiterated was China's glorious 5,000 years of history which saw an end after West's intervention. Xi highlighted that he wanted to bring back the country's glory days.

The Chinese President's strong message came not just from his speech but also, quite notably from his choice of uniform. Usually clad in an elegant suit, he appeared in the famous 'Mao suit' – a dress which was previously known as Zhongshan suit in the country but came to be known as the Mao suit because of the Chinese leader's fondness for it. Xi appearing in the 'Mao suit' was a message that he adhered strongly to the party values, looked up to the country's cherished leader and at the same time also proved that he was walking on a path of similar legacy as the paramount leader. Carefully crafted message could be observed even in the crowd. None in the crowd of 70,000 had been wearing masks. Using the centenary celebrations, the party tried to drive home the message of its supremacy over Covid-19.

The centenary celebration event was thus more than just a celebration. It was an event to give out a strong message to the West and its allies. The West should take note. Instead of trying to 'corner' Beijing in the future, it would be in their interest to move forward by cooperating with it. If they do not do so, time will come when they will regret their decision.



Two Decades Of Service

Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd (Small Farmers Development Microfinance Financial Institution) celebrates its 20th anniversary, enhancing its capacity to serve the needy small farmers

By A CORRESPONDNET

Started 20 years ago with a net capital of 170 million rupees, Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd, a venture of Agriculture Development Bank, Small Farmers Cooperatives and other private banks, has proved to be a reliable and integral partner of small and marginal farmers. In the 17 years, the deposit has reached Rs. 17 billion with Rs.15 billion loan.

The bank has made a tremendous progress through its poor oriented programs. Supported by Government of Israel, a nine-month long 'learn and earn' program has also helped uplift the young sons and daughters of small and marginalized farmers.

Under this program, more than 3000 sons and daughters of small farmers have already visited Israel to learn modern agriculture and they have returned with certain earning and learning. Many of those who returned from Israel have already started commercial farming in bigger scales.

In a country with an overwhelming majority of farmers, the service demand of Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd continues to increase. Establishing its network in 69 districts through over 600 cooperative members, the bank is now serving over 7 million population of the country.

Whether it is in the distribution of loan to enhance productivity to the farmers or loan to reconstruction, Sana Kisan Bank has reached out to the needy people. As its system is transparent and people oriented, the recovery rate of the bank is very high.

As the Bank's overall lending and base of capital has changed and the demands of farmers are growing, the limitation set for the bank remains very small. To make the bank friendlier and friend of poor and small farmers, there is the need to change its initial status,

opening more room for investment.

However, the recent Bank and Financial Acts has put restrictions on it. Given the present act, there is the need to have a certain protection from the ministry of finance and Nepal Rastra Bank.

As Maha Prasad Adhikari, governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, is always supportive to the upliftment of small farmers, the bank has a good opportunity to move ahead through the extension and expansion of its jurisdiction.

Working for the poor without aiming at profit, Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd needs certain protection from the government and support to increase its capital.

Addressing as a Chief Guest of the program Governor Adhikary hailed the role played by Sana Kisan to uplift the life of poor and marginalized farmers from remote and rural parts of the country.

Addressing the 20th anniversary of the bank, Governor Adhikary said that poverty eradication is possible only through uplifting the life of poor people and Sana Kisan can play an important role in this direction.. "Given the important role played by Sana Kisan, the NRB is ready to provide all kinds of support to the bank"

As the bank celebrated its anniversary, it also recognized the per-



sons involved in the promotion of small farmers. Welcoming the guest, Dr. Shiva Ram Prasad Koirala, CEO of the bank, highlighted the progress of the bank in a virtual program attended by people from different walks of life.

Leading the bank for eight years, former CEO Jalan Kumar Sharma pushed it to take a new step, current CEO Dr. Koirala, who took charge three years ago, has already come out with a new vision and planning to transform the bank into another stage.

With hard working and dedicated chairman of SAFCL Khem Bahadur Pathak at the helm and new dynamic leadership under CEO Dr. Koirala, the bank is set to overcome all the challenges of the future.

From the chair chairperson Pathak, who inaugurated the function, stated how the Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd has been working to provide services to the people.

Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittyasanstha Ltd has been distributing loans to the 897000 small farmers and promoting 957 Small Farmer Agriculture Cooperatives and 1374 Cooperatives in 531 Palikas of 74 districts.



Promoting Climate Change Friendly Bricks

A startup, Compressed and Stabilized Earth Bricks (CSEB), has opened new livelihood prospects for the Dalit women of Mangalsen Municipality of Achham

By A CORRESPONDENT

A startup enterprise on Compressed and Stabilized Earth Bricks (CSEB) has excited the Dalit women's group of Mangalsen Municipality of Achham District about new livelihood prospects. From being mostly homemakers and busy in farming, they are looking forward to this opportunity, hoping it will help them with employment and livelihood support. The startup bets on developing an innovative green technology in the area for the first time.

The interlock brick factory, as it is called, is set to be operated under the ownership of Sahakarmi Mahila Udhyami. The working modality has already been prepared. The processes to register the industry at the local level and PAN registration have already begun. This was all possible because of the support by PARIWARTAN, which is the short form of Participation, Inclusion and Wider CSOs' Actions for Responsive, Transparent and Accountable Local governance in Nepal. PARIWARTAN is a project of DCA, which is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by local partner NGO, Malika Development Organization Nepal (MDO-Nepal).

"We have been working in collaboration and partnership with DCA's local partner MDO-Nepal. This is the reason the Municipality board

allocated Rs.150,000 too, but later, in consultation with the group and experts, we have allocated additional Rs. 350,000 to build a trust building, so that the women can produce more bricks and can store them as well.

brick produced by the women in Mangalsen will support Nepal's national commitment to the global climate change agenda as well. Thus, the new initiative taken at Mangalsen is highly significant in the national context, as



We are also implementing a climate adaptation and mitigation program at the local level and the project is on par with our program," said Mayor of Mangalsen Municipality Padma Bahadur Bohara.

As interlocking bricks drastically reduce carbon emission, the

it supports climate change and reaches the far western region of Nepal, parts of which are still inaccessible and away from latest technologies.

By supporting the initiative to establish the brick factory, PARIWARTAN has shown a way for forging partnership and collaboration

DEVELOPMENT

Partnership with Local Governments

As COVID-19, has forced many migrant workers to return home, the demand for local jobs is growing, and this could just be the right choice. Provincial Governments and Local Governments in two provinces have also backed the promotion of climate friendly brick technology.

To provide employment opportunities for returnee migrants, Belaury Municipality has decided to support people who are willing to establish CSEB. Sushila Lekhak, the spokesperson of the Belaury Municipality,

among local levels, the development partners, local NGO and community based organizations and supporting Nepal's effort to establish green industries with the participation of women.

Introduced in 2015 with the funding of Nordic Climate Facility (NCF), DCA, Practical Action and Build Up Nepal successfully popularized CSEB technology in Nepal through their joint project, New and Affordable Building Materials (NABIN).

With the funding from EU, DCA and Community Impact Nepal (CIN) are now supporting the establishment of CSEB as part of ongoing PARIWARTAN and Enhanced Action of Inclusive CSOs for Participation in Climate Resilient Economic Growth (UTHAN) projects in the Sudurpashchim and Karnali Provinces through districts with local partners – NNSWA, SOSEC, and MDO.

New Venture for locals

A returnee from South Korea, Ghanashyam Joshi, who is a resident of Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan, has been able to capture a good market share in Kailali within a short period, so much so that he even led the formation of the CSEB interlocking brick association in Province 7.

“Given the technical support from CIN and financial support from DCA and other support from local government, I am confident that we will replace the traditional bricks in a few years. Since CSEB is based on a simple technology, it can be easily produced. People are also very interested in this new technology,” said Joshi.

After facing the upsurge of COVID-19 pandemic in foreign coun-

tries, Pradip Kumar Tharu wanted to start a small business to support his family back home without needing to go abroad for job again. Supported by DCA and Community Impact Nepal (CIN), Tharu started his CSEB technology enterprise a year back. “As the demand for low-cost bricks is going up, my entire family is now running this enterprise, including my brothers. Instead of going abroad, I am here with my family and we are making enough profits to run our business and sustain our family needs. Things would have been difficult if I was away from family in such a pandemic situation other-



wise,” said Tharu.

Thanks to the European Union-supported UTHAN and PARIWARTAN, the livelihood prospects of people like Tharu and Joshi of Sudurpashchim and Karnali Provinces, have visibly transformed with CSEB-technology. The technology is eco-friendly and safe to build houses at low cost and at the same time able to generate employment for local community people.

pality, said that the Municipality board has been closely collaborating with local NGOs in this regard.

Similarly, Laljhadi Rural Municipality has also decided to promote the interlocking bricks in its area and announced necessary support for individuals wanting to produce them.

Madsen Badayak, Mayor of the Rural Municipality, shared, “We are collaborating with the local NGOs

DEVELOPMENT

to introduce an upgraded version of the technology to produce interlocking bricks, as we hope to achieve mitigation goals, address air pollution, and reduce local impacts while significantly contributing to reduce global warming.”

In this regard, the collaboration and partnership among DCA, CIN, provincial governments, local

With the successful learning experiences, DCA and CIN are now transferring this technology by scaling it up in Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces. The factory proposed to be established in Mangalsen, Dailekh, Doti, Achham, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Bardiya will be different from the earlier ones in terms of the use of materials and the size of bricks.

crease adaptation, improve quality and reduce CO2 emissions,” said Rigendra Khadka, Program Manager - Resilient Livelihood of DCA. “We are working to improve the quality of bricks through a new process of a soil test, a mobile app and a brick test in remote locations,” he informed. “We use the new technology – a mobile app with instruction videos so that masons and



governments and the local community in Sudurpaschim and Karnali Province to promote interlocking brick technology have already started.

“As the policy of the Province, we are promoting and encouraging CSEB technology in the region for green development and employment generation,” opined Bharat Prasad Shrestha, Spokesperson of Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment of Sudurpaschim Province. “We want to collaborate with development agencies, and business entrepreneurs to promote this technology.”

Scaling up and Innovations

According to DCA, it will introduce innovations and value-additions to promote the CSEB technology, making it further cost-effective, eco-friendly, and lowered adaptation barriers.

The new scale-up technology will become accessible to the population living in both lowlands and mid-hills in the provinces and contribute towards carbon reduction while increasing competitiveness with the existing climate-unfriendly products.

“Along with friendly local materials, our innovation projects will further improve technology to in-

brick makers can always go and check to remember what was taught in the training.”

DCA and CIN, through the innovation projects, are also working to reduce cement content by adding another stabilizer. Cement is the most expensive component in the brick-mix, especially in remote areas due to high transport costs. Cement also needs a sandy mix which can be a big problem in remote areas if sand is not available nearby.

DCA, CIN and their local partners are also preparing to launch a mobile app targeting the local entre-

preneurs. One of the features of the app also includes the cost calculation of houses made with CSEB and fired bricks. This helps them to see the differences in the cost and choose what suits their budget.

C S E B Support to Climate Change Policy

The promotion of CSEB technology also supports Nepal's climate change policy which focuses on the mitigation efforts targeting for the next decade to reduce emissions and support vulnerable communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) document submitted to the UN Framework on Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat in December 2020 clearly talks about this where Nepal has expressed its commitment to shifting from the traditional brick kiln manufacturing to an interlocking brick factory entirely in the next 20 years.

In line with it, the Ministry of Forest and Environment has adopted a policy to support the production of clean and sustainable bricks by optimizing learning and adopting cleaner technologies. The provincial and local level governments are also promoting sustainable and green bricks in the construction sector.

"NDC has categorically highlighted the importance of interlocking bricks saying that their use will contribute to the reduction of air pollution immediately and support climate change impact in the long term,"



explains Manjeet Dhakal, climate change expert, who has been working in this field for a long time providing advice to the government of Nepal. "The NDC has explicitly pointed out the importance of this technology to support climate change."

"Ministry of Forest and Environment has already issued circulars to the provincial and local levels regarding Nepal's current position and proposal of NDC. The Ministry believes that replacing the traditional brick kilns with interlocking bricks will help reduce air pollution contributing to climate change," affirmed Dr Budhi Sagar Poudel, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Forest and Environment.

CSEB Contribution to Reduce Carbon Emission

According to a study, compressed earth blocks require anywhere from 1/5 to 1/15 of the energy for production when compared to fired bricks and concrete masonry units. On average a small 3-5 room house built with CSEB saves 4, 58-ton CO2 emissions

compared to fired bricks. According to a recent study by the World Bank, fired brick is responsible for 37% of CO2 emissions in Nepal and also a major source of air pollution and black carbon. The world-renowned research institute on earthen structures – Auroville Earth Institute – has made research showing that walls built by earth bricks are emitting 4 times less CO2 compared with fired bricks. (56.79 Kg per m3 compared to 230.06 Kg per m3 for kiln fired brick)

According to a report of the World Bank published in 2014, the current CO2 footprint per capita in Nepal is only 0.3 tons.

DCA Target to Promote Green Growth

DCA, European Union and Community Impact Nepal have been promoting climate friendly bricks for green growth. By 2022, at least 30 such green enterprises will be established in Karnali and Sudurpashchim Provinces.

FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

Monsoon Havoc

Since the onset of monsoon, more than 70 people have already lost their lives while property and infrastructure worth millions of rupees have been washed away in floods and landslides

By A CORRESPONDENT

Dragged in the internal party politics, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli did not find any time to inspect the flood-affected people of Melamchi and Helambu areas until quite late. Only after two high level committees constituted by PM Oli and his rival Madhav Kumar Nepal came closer to an agreement, he took Nepal Army's helicopter to visit flood affected areas on Saturday, July 10.

As all his predecessors would do, PM Oli directed officials to provide immediate relief and expressed his commitment to help victims in the process of rehabilitation, providing them financial packages.

The Prime Minister reached Ganesh Bagar of Helambu Village Municipality-2 in a Nepal Army helicopter, inspected the flood-hit areas and met the flood victims there.

He said that the temporary shelters of the locals displaced by the

floods would be rebuilt immediately.

"The government will provide Rs 50,000 for temporary housing and Rs 500,000 for permanent housing for the flood victims," the PM said, urging the government not to delay formulating a systematic policy to rebuild their shelters. He informed that a technical team had arrived in Helambu along with him to construct the bridges immediately.

Prime Minister Oli handed over 20 million rupees from the Melamchi Drinking Water Development Committee to the flood-hit Helambu Rural Municipality.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Oli went to the Melamchi Drinking Water Source Area in Helambu and the flood-affected areas.

It has been like an annual ritual for the head of the government and the home minister





to visit and inspect the flood and landslide affected areas. All of them would return with huge promises but nothing actually materialized for the victims.

Political leaders hardly ever think why incidents of flood and landslides have been intensifying over the years causing bigger loss and damage. Instead of preparedness for floods and protection of life and property, Nepal's disaster management follows the traditional process of rescue, relief and rehabilitation.

As climate change has started to trigger extreme weathers, Nepal will have to face many severe disasters in the coming days. According to experts, Nepal needs to change the settlement patterns and development works, particularly road construction.

Most of the roads have been passing from river belts and settlements are shifting to lower river belts. Similarly,

rampant construction of rural roads in remote areas needs to be suspended for the time being.

However, making any change in the perception regarding development seems impossible. National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) said that the total deaths caused by the monsoon-induced disaster had reached 51, with 35 injuries and 60 missing, as of July 8.

According to NDRRMA, floods have caused an estimated loss of Rs. 55,342,500 and landslides have caused a loss of Rs. 6,941,500 since the start of this Nepali year.

Similarly, 548 infrastructures have been completely damaged and 148 partially from June 14 to date.

In the 24 hours before the high level visit to Helambu, floods and landslides triggered by torrential rainfall across the country killed seven persons, leaving nearly a dozen injured

and half a dozen others missing. Some 17 houses collapsed, 67 families were displaced in Tanahun.

Sixty-seven families had been displaced in Bandipur Rural Municipality of Tanahu district due to landslide triggered by incessant rains.

Out of the 67 houses at risk, 17 houses were completely destroyed and 15 houses were partially destroyed, said Karuna Gurung, vice-chairman of the Rural Municipality. She said that the entire settlement of Khahare area has been displaced. Similarly, in Ramkot of the district, four houses have collapsed and three houses have been partially damaged. Also, 12 families have been displaced in Dharapani of Ward No. 2.

Of those killed in the 24 hours, three were in Darchula, two in Palpa and one each in Tanahun and Dang districts.

The water flow in Saptakoshi and its tributaries



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Sunkoshi, Bhotekoshi, Tamakoshi, Dudhkoshi, Arun, Tamor and other rivers is expected to increase and some of them will reach near alert level while the flow in the Tinau, Kankai, Kamala, Bagmati and their tributaries will increase significantly, according to experts.

Similarly, the water flow in the Narayani and its tributaries, especially Budhigandaki, Trishuli, Marsyangdi and Kaligandaki, has increased significantly and some of them had reached alarming levels already.

With further activation of monsoon phenomena, several regions have been continuously receiving heavy rainfall, according to senior divisional hydrologist Bikram Zoowa at the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM).

According to Meteorological Forecasting Division un-

der the DHM, the present monsoon trough will remain active for a few days in many parts of the country including Provinces 1, 2, Bagmati, and Lumbini.

Nepal Army In Rescue Mission

Meanwhile, Nepal Army has launched rescue and relief operations to save people from landslide and floods.

Following the torrential rains, landslides and flood affected different parts of Nepal blocking roads, washing out bridges, burying people and houses. Nepal Army has mobilized its forces on its rescue and relief mission across the country to save the life and property of people and open the connectivity.

Nepal Army rescued flood affected people in various wards of Madi Municipality. Dozens of houses have already

been inundated in the ward 1 due to the flood. Similarly, Nepal Army helped open a portion of Tribhuvan Rajpath in Bhainse which is disturbed by the landslide.

Nepal Army also supported landslide victims in Sundarpur Municipality of Lamjung district bringing the people from there to a safer area. In Parbat district, Nepal Army supported the search and rescue mission to find the people missing in landslides.

According to a press release issued by Public Relations and Information Directorate at Nepal Army Headquarter, Nepal Army is also involved in a search, rescue and relief mission in flood and landslide affected areas of Panchthar, Tanahu, Gulmi, Palpa and Pyuthan districts.

Making Digital The New Normal



BY ASHIKA SHARMA

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary closure of educational institutions to contain the spread of the virus. As a response to this, countries all over the world shifted from a physical learning environment to a virtual learning space to keep the educational activities going. While many countries easily adjusted to the shift from physical to virtual learning, a country like Nepal faced a lot of challenges due to a lack of crisis preparedness capacity.

To meet the educational demand of students during the lockdown, the Government of Nepal launched its first digital portal Sikai Chautari that contained a curriculum in both Nepali and English from grade 1 to grade 10. The system of online education had never been tried at this scale in Nepal, but the digital portal claimed to be effective for students to spend quality time in learning school-based curriculum during the lockdown. Although the online portal proclaimed to be student-friendly, and that it could be accessed by everyone from any corner of Nepal, poor data connectivity, lack of access to laptops and smartphones, power issues, and lack of parental education acted as major impediments to access the online portal resulting in education deprivation for many students in the rural areas of the country. While educational institutions in urban and even semi-urban locations moved ahead with online classes, those students who went to state-owned schools, and low-cost private schools were deprived of online classes, giving rise to uneven opportunities amongst students.

Learning through online platform still pose a serious challenge in Nepal. Unlike private schools located in urban and semi-urban areas, state-run schools, and low-cost private schools are not equipped to run online learning. According to Nepal's education ministry, at least 8.5 million students are enrolled in primary schools or higher education, but the authorities are struggling to make plans on how the students can continue their education through online mediums. The Flash report 2019-20, stated that currently only 13% of schools have internet access, and the MICS report, 2020 stated 45% of students are unlikely to regularly access online or other media. Similarly, the recent Child and Family Tracker survey by UNICEF Nepal showed that more than two-thirds of schoolchildren are deprived of distance learning, and only three out of 10 children have access to television, radio and internet-based learning platforms.

As an immediate emergency action to COVID-19, the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology had introduced an Emergency Action Plan for School Education last

year. This emergency plan included the development of temporary learning facilitation centers and converting them into free Wi-Fi zones as an action point. This was aimed to begin from October/November 2020, but, the government has not yet taken a single step to execute this plan. The action point stated

by the government was perceived to be an ambitious statement made without any proper study. Nepal Economic Forum (2020) also claimed that the GoN failed to build the necessary infrastructure for virtual learning during the COVID-19 period.

Given the limited infrastructure and resources, it is evident that Nepal is slow when it comes to embracing technological changes. While neighboring India took a swift advancement in the digital learning world, Nepal gained popularity

in digital learning only after the pandemic. Nepal has to learn from initiatives made by India to increase its e-learning reach and update its laws and policies to promote it accordingly. In India, rural schools and colleges easily adapted to online learning, thanks to its new era of digital literacy, and the launch of the 'National BroadBand Mis-

sion', which promises bandwidth access to all villages by the year 2020. The survey conducted by the Times of India stated that there is a growing acceptance of online education across various rural areas in India, and it already has the second-highest number of internet which is the second-largest internet marker across the world and aims to reach 624 million active users by February 2021. Furthermore, the government of India also started the initiative "Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA)", which aims to reach out to 40% of India's rural population and offer free digital literacy courses for citizens between the ages of 14 to 60.

WHO recently pointed out the uncertainty about the length of the pandemic. Hence, it is crucial that the government and educational institutes be prepared to take digital education, not as a temporary solution, but to look for a planned solution to deliver it correctly. For this, it has to increase the bandwidth for good internet access, strengthen capacity-building measures in rural areas including mobilizing school teachers, as well as parents in utilizing technology, for effective learning of students in rural areas.

Ashika is a Sociology graduate and is a development professional



Constitutions Galore



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

While we in our part of the world have read about the great flood at the time of Manu, others elsewhere have stories of Noah's Ark and its landing at Mount Ararat. A later event is about Moses receiving the two tablets with the Ten Commandments from God. These orders are the first commands indicating how Jews should conduct their lives on earth. Can this be taken as the first of the constitutions in the history of mankind? Manusmriti or the Laws of Manu, which casts people into four categories, is also an early code for Hindus of around 100 CE. Having a constitution for any country is a prerequisite to look respectable. Now, with 206 listed states worldwide, we are in a situation of constitutions galore!

Constitutions have in fact been in existence since ancient times. The Code of Justice of the Sumerians was dated as early as 2300 BCE. Then from 1750 BCE, the well known code of Hammurabi of Babylon came into being. The Romans codified their constitution around 450 BCE.

Initially the Pope ruled over the kings and the people of Europe until a division occurred and the Greek Orthodox Church separated from the church at Rome. Henry VIII of England broke away from the Papal rule and formed the Anglican Church with himself as monarch. Later the Protestants of many lands of Europe distanced themselves too from Rome. Because of religious persecution many left Europe for new lands in the Americas.

A constitution, as a written legal document passed by the authorities of a country according to which it is governed, is referred to as being codified. The United Kingdom has no document as such but is governed as per the common law practices of the past, court cases or treaties. A well known historical event was the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 CE by which the then reigning monarch King John of England signed away his power to the people. The French, since 1789 CE, with their many governments – monarchies, republics and empires have had a number of constitutions which have been promulgated periodically over the last three hundred years. They can thus claim to be experts in this field.

King Prithivi Narayan Shah was the creator of modern Nepal when he, starting from his small principality of Gorkha brought about the amalgamation of the 'Baieses and the Chaubises' into his realm. At Kantipur he had to make overtures to the people before he was accepted as a ruler. His 'Divyopadesh' or Divine Counsel on how to deal with the Northern and Southern neighbours was a guideline for conduction of state matters. Subsequent conquests by his successors created a 'Greater Nepal' which lasted for a limited period as the Nepalis were checkmated by the British at Sugauli, to forgo the territories they had conquered. Forty years later, Jung Bahadur managed to get back for Nepal the 'Naya Muluk' or a little part of the territory that the British had taken in 1816 CE.

Constitution in the Western format started in Nepal during the time of Padma Shumsher, one of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers of Nepal. He gave some power to the people by announcing the first written Constitution of Nepal in 1948 (2004 BS).

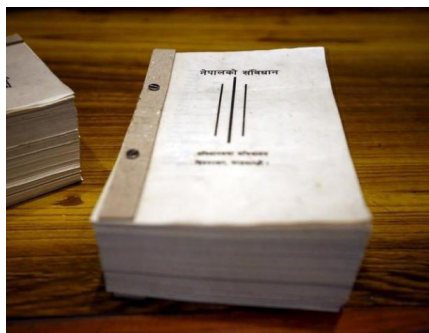
We must recall that talk of a Constitution started from the time when King Tribhuvan came back to Kathmandu in February 2007 after his temporary stay in Delhi. Whilst alighting from the plane he held aloft his right hand and displayed to the public a proposed constitution. That proposed constitution may be said to have been transformed or converted into an Interim Government Act of March 1951.

The third was the constitution drawn up by Bhagwati Prasad Singh and was enacted and proclaimed on 12th February 1959. The fourth in 1962 was with the aid of Sir Ivor Jennings from UK with input of local experts whom King Mahendra had included in the drafting. This constitution had as its bearings the word Panchayati Raj, said to have originated from ancient Vedic times in our part of the world and meaning thereby that it was a form of local administration of day to day affairs. Whilst this concept has been done away in Nepal, it is noteworthy to state that Part IX of the Indian Constitution relates to Panchayats. Panchayati Raj was further formalised in India by the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1993 and currently exists in all states except in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Union Territories. What is worth pondering over is how the word 'Panchayat' became an anathema to our politicians, ever ready to create a rumpus. An amendment to this constitution with the concept of 'Politics for Development' was done during the time of King Birendra in 1975 CE.

The fifth version was the one drawn up by a special committee headed by PM Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and including Nirmal Lama. This constitution of 1990 BS recognises the people as the source of its power and touted as the best in the world was written within a year. With the abolition of monarchy a sixth format of the constitution came into being in 2007 CE.

Our 1st Constituent Assembly didn't finish the task of constitution writing. The 2nd Constituent Assembly brought out a version later presented to the people all over Nepal for comments. The responses were just cursorily discussed over three days, ignored and passed by 2/3rd majority with a show of hands. This constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, 2072 BS (2015 CE) is the seventh in this reckoning and took almost seven years to compile. Two amendments have been made so far and others are expected. Currently it is now being debated over as to whether it should be 'Amended' or 'Rewritten'. Nothing is permanent in this world. Change is something which is going on continuously. Let's await developments!.

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



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