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**OPINION**  
BINOJ BASNYAT



**VIEWPOINT**  
Govind Prasad Thapa, Ph.D.



**ENVIRONMENT**  
Batu Uprety

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Aug- 20, 2021  
FORTNIGHTLY

## KUL MAN GHISING Second Inning, Several Challenges

### INSIDE



**KP OLI**  
Loud Opposition



**DEVELOPMENT**  
CICs Increasing Access To  
Local Service Delivery



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# NEW SPOTLIGHT

FORTNIGHTLY

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## Notes From The Editor



Completing the Olympic Games successfully amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, the government and people of Japan have shown that they have the ability and capacity to hold such a big event even in these difficult times. Taking note of the country's prestige in the globe, Japanese government had made every possible effort to contain the risk of COVID-19 in the game. They were successful. The successful completion of Olympic game is a matter of pride for all of us. Although there are several issues, we have covered Tokyo Olympic Games as our lead story. At a time when main opposition party led by K.P. Sharma Oli is waiting to make the government unpopular and gain strength for coming elections, Prime Minister Deuba led government has to show that it is serious to address the ongoing problems of the country. Having been divided within, Nepali Congress Party will suffer badly in the coming elections in case it fails to act. Appointing Kul Man Ghising as the new Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, the coalition government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba has tried to gain public support. Ghising, a man who was responsible to end load shedding era in Nepal, is popular among the common people. Despite pressure from people and then ruling party leader Prachanda, Oli led government did not extend the tenure of Ghising and appointed Hitendra Dev Shakyas as MD. Nepal is going through a transition in all areas including power sector. Although the government has reappointed Ghising, who has not only made Nepal load shedding free but also has turned NEA as a highest profit making public entity, he has to face many challenges ahead including to revive his own long term policies and programs dismantled by his predecessor.

**Keshab Poudel**

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## Indian Ambassador Kwatra Paid A Courtesy Call On Acting COAS



Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinaya Mohan Kwatra paid a courtesy call on acting Chief of Army Staff General Prabhu Ram Sharma at Nepal Army Headquarter

During the meeting, mater related to bilateral relations and mutual interest. According to a press release issued by Public Relations and Information Directorate of Nepal Army, Nepal Army expresses confidence that this kinds of meeting will help to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

## Embassy Of India In Kathmandu Celebrated 75th Independence Day

The 75th Independence Day of India was celebrated at the Embassy of India in Kathmandu on August 15, 2021. The celebration was part of 'AzadiKaAmritMahotsav' which is an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate 75 years of progressive India and remarkable achievements by Indians in all spheres of human endeavour.

The celebrations began with the hoisting of the national flag by Ambassador of India Vinay Mohan Kwatra, who then read out the message of the President of India on the occasion. The President's message highlighted the progress in various fields in the past 75 years and paid tribute to freedom fighters who laid their lives for the independence of India.



The Ambassador felicitated widows and next of kin of deceased

Gorkha soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces by disbursing their dues worth NPR 4.45 Crore and a blanket to each family.

The celebrations witnessed renditions of patriotic songs and dance by teachers and students of Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre of the Embassy and Kendriya Vidyalaya school, Kathmandu.

On this occasion, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) website for the conservation of cultural heritage sites in Nepal was also launched by Ambassador of India Vinay Mohan Kwatra. The government of India is funding projects for the preservation and restoration of Nepal's cultural monuments damaged in the 2015 earthquake under overall assistance of US\$ 50 million.

## Pakistan Provides Ventilators And Medical Equipment

Adnan Javed Khan, Charge d' Affaires of Pakistan to Nepal handed over to Dr. Roshan Pokharel, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Population, 'Made in Pakistan' medical equipment consisting of 30 Ventilators & 30 CPAP Breathing Equipment worth over 19 million Nepali Rupees.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy of Pakistan in Nepal, Pakistan has provided additional medical support to Nepal in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



"The gift of medical equipment is part of Pakistan's COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Program pledged for the SAARC Member States. Earlier last month, the Embassy handed over a cheque of more than 43 million Nepali Rupees to the Government of Nepal as part of COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Program," reads the press release.

"Dr. Roshan Pokharel thanked the Government and the People of Pakistan for contributing generously for Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19 in Nepal".

Adnan Javed Khan reiterated Pakistan's continued commitment to helping Nepal in its efforts to Prevent, Control, and Treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic, read the press release of the embassy.

## NEWSNOTES

### Bhutan Hands Over AstraZeneca Vaccines To Nepal



Nepal received 230,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine provided by Bhutan under a grant. Ministry of Health and Population said that the AstraZeneca vaccines provided by Bhutan have arrived in Nepal.

PM

Sher Bahadur Duda in his tweet said Nepal welcomes the friendly gesture from Bhutan in aiding Nepal's fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many thanks to HM The King and PM Bhutan for the cooperative arrangements in the support of 230000 doses of the Covishield vaccine, which Nepal will reciprocate at a later date

Bhutanese Airlines carrying the vaccine arrived at Tribhuvan International Airport.

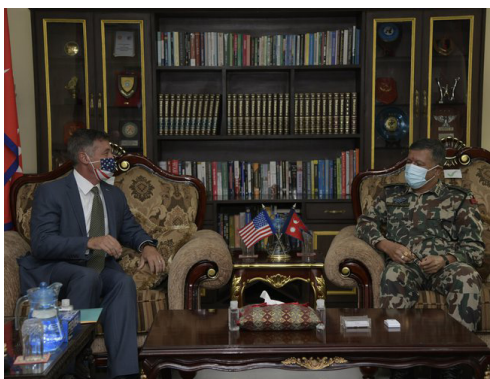
According to the ministry, senior citizens will be inoculated with the AstraZeneca vaccine, on a priority basis and the emphasis will be given to those that had received the first dose of the Covishield vaccine and are yet to receive their second dose.

Covishield and AstraZeneca vaccines are made by the same formula, so those who have received the first dose of Covishield can get their booster of AstraZeneca vaccine as well. Around 1.3 million elderly who had received the first dose of the Covishield vaccine three months ago are yet to receive their second dose.

Bhutan has provided the remaining AstraZeneca vaccines to Nepal as aid after inoculating its citizens.

### US Ambassador Pays Courtesy Call On COAS General Thapa

US ambassador to Nepal Randy W. Berry has paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Purna Chandra Thapa at Nepal Army Headquarter.



According to Public Relations and Information Directorate of Nepal Army, they discussed the issues of bilateral and mutual interest during the meeting.

### Tanahun Hydro Completes Additional Three Tunnels

Tanahun Hydroelectricity Project has completed the construction of three tunnels. The 140-Megawatts project has constructed audit tunnel required for the access to underground surge tank having 30 metre diameter and 65 metre height.

The 437.1-metre tunnel constructed under the package 2 of the project completed on Friday evening, said Chief of the project Achyut Babu Ghimire. "It will facilitate the construction of underground surge tank," he said.

Chinese Sino Hydro Company

has constructed the third tunnel as road development was complex in the mountainous area. Earlier on June 16, main tunnel construction to the power house was completed and on June 4 a 314m tunnel to access the right side of the intake was finished. The project being developed in Byas Municipality-5 and Rishing Rural Municipality-1 of Tanahun district needed tunnels to construct underground surge tank, power house, intake and river diversion work. Ghimire said that it took seven months to construct the audit tunnel to the surge tank. Chinese and Nepali technicians and 400 workers were deployed for the work. Sino Hydro is constructing power house while Song Da Kalika JV will develop the intake. Progress of the project was delayed due to the delay in appointing contractors, cancellation of them and making news appointment but as it continued the work even during the lockdowns, three tunnels are completed by now, said Ghimire. He said that the construction work was continued with physical distance and use of sanitiser and masks. Currently, works to construct tunnel, power house and installation of hydro-mechanical equipment are underway. The contractor company has completed the cable tunnel construction and is working to develop tail race tunnel. As per the third phase of the project, a 220 KV double circuit transmission line is being constructed from Damauli of Tanahun to Bharatpur of Chitwan. Foundation of 26 towers of transmission line is laid and a technical team from India is making preparation for the installation of the infrastructure.





## ADB Provides Rs. 19.5B To Purchase Vaccines Against COVID-19



Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini and Nepal Country Director of ADB Arnaud Cauchois have signed a concessional loan agreement in which ADB

will provide Rs. 19.58 billion to Nepal to purchase vaccines against COVID-19.

The money will be utilised in procuring 15.9 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines which will benefit about 6.8 million people.

Marasini said that the financial support would be instrumental in ensuring safe and effective vaccine to Nepali people. "It will contribute to save lives of Nepali citizens and revive the economy," he said, while adding that the vaccination programs were top priority of the government.

Cauchois expressed confidence that this agreement would be helpful in breaking the deadly cycle of COVID-19 and saving the lives of people, and moving to the economic and social revival. He pledged continuation of such support in the future as well.

The government also plans to make vaccine distribution more effective and enhance community participation in the drive with the new support from the ADB.

# कोरोनाकालको चाडवाडः सकेसम्म नगरौं भेटघाट भाइरसबाट जोगिएर मनाऔंला अर्को साल



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Industrialist Shyam Sundar Lal Kakshapati No More



Renowned tourism entrepreneur Shyam Sundar Lal Kakshapati, the founder of Nanglo Restaurant Chain, passed away on August 9. Former president of Hotel Association Nepal (HAN), Kakshapati died in course of treatment

in Thailand.

He was suffering from mouth cancer and had been receiving treatment in Thailand for the last two months. He is credited for starting the fast food business in Nepal.

Opening the Nanglo Bakery Cafe in Durbar Marg of Kathmandu in 2033 BS (1976 AD), he had also invested in Riverside Spring Resort in Kurintar, a prime tourist destination.

Founder president of Restaurant and Bar Association Nepal (REBAN), Kakshapati was the founder of Shuvatar School.

He is survived by his wife Rani Gurung Kakshapati, a son and a daughter.

### KOICA Provides Scholarship To 18 Government Officials

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has been implementing a Capacity Improvement and Advancement for Tomorrow (CIAT) program as one of the important KOICA's development cooperation programs since 1995.



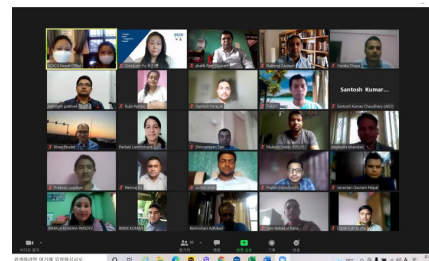
This program aims at leading human resource development (HRD) through short term training and Master's Degree Scholarship Program for government officials and providing capacity building training focusing on sharing Korea's experience and technology for development. Till date we have more than 1800 government officials who have taken part in some training program in Korea under KOICA's support.

However, till date, a total of 146 government officials have successfully completed Master's Degree Course under KOICA's Scholarship Program. The gov-

ernment officials undergoing Master's program under KOICA's support have been recognized for their academic excellence in Korea. This year 18 government officials have been selected to pursue their Master's program in different courses in various reputed Korean Universities. They are tentatively scheduled to leave within August 2021.

In order to facilitate the 2021 group of Master's Program, KOICA and KOICA Alumni Association of Nepal (KAAN) organized a Networking Meeting in a virtual platform on August 06, 2021 with an objective of sharing of experiences and promoting networking between KOICA scholars of 2020 and 2021 as well as providing all the needed information about their program, life in Korea, information about University, departure process and etc. The recent returnees and KAAAN members made a series of presentation to share the important information.

The program was attended by Sunghoon Ko, KOICA Country Director, in his congratulatory remarks he shared the experience of development of Korea and the important role of capable human resource and their role in nation building. He also hoped that after completion of the Master's course, the public officials will be able to contribute more in development of Nepal as well as support in facilitating Nepal and Korea relations.



Besides the long term program KOICA is also implementing a short term fellowship programs as well, due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 this year KOICA has opted to organize 6 different Capacity Building Programs via virtual platform.

Within October 2021 total of 121 government officials from 6 different Ministry / Government Institutions (Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizen, Office of Attorney General, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Ministry of Finance, Department of hydrology) shall be provided training in topics like – Old age income security through Korea know how national pension scheme and Social security, Cyber Crime, Gender Sensitive Educational Environment, Sustainable and Rural Development, Macro Economic Development Strategy, Meteorological instrument and early warning System respectively. All of these programs have been officially requested by the Government of Nepal and shall be implemented under KOICA technical support.



## Nepali Coffee Professionals Learn About Voluntary Certification



The EU-Nepal Trade and Investment Program (TIP) organized a three-day training on implementing various voluntary international standards for fourteen participants from different sections of the coffee value chain in Nepal. The training

provided the coffee experts hands-on coaching followed by field visits to commercial coffee farms.

Coffee is grown in over 40 districts in Nepal, but various sections of the coffee value chain, especially farmer groups, still need to increase productivity, quality as well as volume of production. Nepali coffee growers can improve these factors by implementing the Internal Management System (IMS) that can also help them to access premium markets.

Mim Hamal, programme manager at the EU Delegation to Nepal, said the EU prioritizes the development of the coffee sector in Nepal and anticipates it will help narrowing the country's increasing trade deficit. "We know the training will provide members of the coffee sector the required knowhow to implement voluntary standards to increase exports to premium markets."

Many international buyers these days look specifically for certified coffees. In Europe, North America (and South America to a lesser extent), Japan and East Asia, demand for certified coffees has been growing steadily for a number of years. An internal management System (IMS) is a mandatory requirement for many of the certifications.

"Training on issues such as IMS become important as we prepare to expand coffee growing areas in the country by promoting the establishment of coffee estates," said Dr Bishnu Bhattarai, Executive Director at the National Tea and Coffee Development Board.

Funded by the European Union, the Nepal-EU TIP aims to reduce supply side constraints in processing and quality throughout the coffee value chain, create business linkages for farmers, farmers' cooperatives and women entrepreneurial associations to expand sales in domestic and international markets, while developing sensitization materials and tools on quality requirements.

"We hope the training will encourage the participants to implement the things they learn to help boost productivity, production as well as exports," said Narayan Regmi, Joint-Secretary at the Ministry of In-

dustry, Commerce and Supplies. He also expressed commitment to organize similar programs for the benefit of the coffee sector.

## TVS Motor Company Launches RTFi Scooters In Pokhara

TVS Motor Company, a renowned two-wheeler and three-wheeler manufacturer in the globe, announced the Pokhara launch of the BS-VI TVS NTORQ 125 with Race Tuned Fuel Injection (RT-Fi). The scooters were launched at 2:00 p.m. in Batas Brothers Private Limited's showroom. Brand Ambassadors of TVS Nepal, Pradeep Khadka, and Swastima Khadka, also Nepalese film industry superstars, unveiled the scooter. The RT-Fi technology is specially designed to ensure an enjoyable racing experience in all driving conditions.

"We are thrilled to present the TVS NTORQ RTFi with BS-VI compliance in Pokhara today," the General Manager of Batas Brothers Private Limited, stated at the launch of TVS NTORQ RT Fi. With the addition of RT-Fi, the smart scooter is designed to provide a best-in-class ownership experience. He further added, "*We are committed to providing an end-to-end experience for our youthful clients in Pokhara and the surrounding areas with this launch, which will expand on the TVS NTORQ 125 experience.*"

TVS NTORQ 125 is the first Bluetooth-connected scooter in Nepal and has become synonymous with industry-first technology, unrivaled style, and superior performance. The scooter boasts superior performance backed by TVS Racing Pedigree and premieres the SMARTXONNECT™, an innovative Bluetooth-enabled technology paired with an exclusive TVS Connect mobile App. SMARTXONNECT™ enables is a host of first-in-segment additions to the fully digital speedometer, which boasts features such as navigation assist, top speed recorder, in-built lap-timer, phone battery strength display, last parked location assist, service reminder, trip



meter, and multi-ride statistic modes such as Street and Sport.

# US Troops Withdrawal From Afghanistan And Implication To South Asia



BY: BINOJ BASNYAT

The 14th April 2021 US Presidential announcement to withdraw US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces from Afghanistan draws our attention to the affect; this is going to have in the region. The withdrawal is accepting not only a turn back of succession formulated and consumed for the last two decades but may also increase security threats as terrorists and non-state actors like the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as the terra-firma standing for more terrorists' organizations trying to conceive, concoct and train against adversaries will gain some ground. In this turn of events, nation states of South Asia will witness a rise of both dormant and active terrorist threats. Therefore, there is now an expectation, not just from the Afghanistan, but from regional powers particularly China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey and the Central Asian nations to maintain regional security order even after the withdrawal of American and allied forces. This is a political debate that has been around for some time now. But priority has shifted, interests have revised and urgency of risk assessments and preparations have altered after last month.

Afghanistan also known as the "graveyards of Empires" where empires and nations have failed to mollify which the British learned from the 1839-1842 war in Afghanistan. The US decision to withdraw from the longest war is the newest in the sequence. US and Allies forces withdrawal, which was deployed from 2001 after the 9/11 twin tower attack to ensure the land not to be used as a staging area for terrorist attack in the US and Allies homeland will come to an end leaving other challenges to the US and other powers particularly bordering Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a landlocked gateway that lies at the central of Asia with four adversaries; challenging terrain, repelling domestic forces, opposition of rising regional powers and foreign armies, which connects three main terrestrial and cultural provinces: the Iranian plateau in the west, central Asia to the north and the Indian subcontinent to the southeast.

There are approximately 40 militant groups active in South Asia, which holds substantial reasons for operation. The South Asian nations will have to live with the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other non-state actors that may be detrimental for domestic security and South Asian Security.

Presence of the US forces dispirited the extremist forces as well as provided a protected setting for India's functions. American reliance on Pakistan strategic advantage because of her geographic position for operational maneuvering and strategic depth will be missing. There are occasions when the dependence has been used in turn against India contrary to

the last two years when President Trump has explicitly criticized Pakistan for providing shelters to terrorist organizations. The immediate bordering nations will have to live with the return of Taliban to power in Kabul and an encouragement to passionate religious extremist. The Taliban and the Haqqani group had safe heavens in Pakistani grounds after the US forces landed in Afghanistan and were also known to be established by Pakistani security and intelligence institutions. Pakistan will be pulled into the folds situating added challenge to the already fragile security situation. Upsurge of unpredictability in Afghanistan and spill-over upshot to neighboring states will put at risk the likelihood of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Afghanistan is one of the South Asian nations with noticeable influence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and can jeopardize the stability of a broader region. With the political vacuum and divisional socio-religious complexities the Islamic State in Khorasan, the Afghan avatar of ISIS will have new grounds along the disputed Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Evidences express that thousand from Central Asians Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have joined ISIS ranks bordering Afghanistan.

Laskhar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohamed will reposition in South Asia and Afghanistan's fragile and instability will provide them with ample opportunities. India-Pakistan contention will escalate. This is proceeding at an instance when India pushed back Chinese hostility along the Himalayan borders and progressing closer to Washington.

The US decision and the South Asia policy of the US has put India as one of the regional stake holders with a great challenge with China and Russia in one side challenging the US as well as China's confrontational approach with India for being closer to the US.

The rise in recent attacks in Afghanistan on strategic sites and assassination attempt on Mohamed Nasheed, former President of Maldives are instances. The collaboration and co-operation of South Asian nations to counter extremism, acts of terrorism and organized flow of refugees will be more imperative in days ahead when economy is falling and states are confronting challenges posed by COVID-19.

China has been time and again revealed inconsistent approach about US presence in Afghanistan and even blamed it to be the source of instability as well as swerved from its initial purpose of counter terrorism and mutated strategic design to influence the hub of Eurasia and China's bordering states. The withdrawal has been criticized by China as an irresponsible behavior of Washington for severely affecting the peace



process, the deteriorating security situation and regional stability particularly after the May 8th bombing and also called upon the UN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to consider the state of affairs.

The likelihood of a civil disturbances and war in the urban areas of Afghanistan will expose Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest province of China, where China has been accused of committing genocide and crimes against humanity against the Uygur ethnic minorities. The UN human rights committee commission in 2018 conveyed of reliable evidences of Chinese retaining up to a million people in counter extremism centers in Xinjiang. China as an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan and as strategic ally of Pakistan could see a larger role taking into account the sensitivities of Xinjiang province.

Russia was overwhelmed at the hands of US supported Mujahideen and withdrew from Afghanistan three decades ago now with the chances of a post-US role for Moscow in Afghanistan. Russia has been at the forefront for peace in Afghanistan which has not been well trusted by both the Taliban and the Afghan government. The March meeting known as expanded “Troika” of China, Pakistan, Russia and the US along with the Taliban and Afghan delegates came out with a NO to the establishment of an Islamic Emirates and called on the Taliban to abandon plans on the Spring offensive leaving the Taliban annoyed.

Iran bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan has security threats from both with the Taliban regime in Kabul. Iran has links with the Hazaras and also hosted a Taliban delegation opening channels for pursuing better opening.

### What Nepal needs to do

Illegal migration, false documented settlement, more than twenty thousand refugees and non-state actors, bad governance, political instability/trust, economic decline, dissatisfied population, institutional corruption are risks to acts of terrorism.

Stern measures need to be activated by one, strengthening of the law-and-order forces, two, efficient border management procedures, three, review documentation like the citizenship and other national identification and finally immigration mechanism. These measures are prerequisites for accurate data and further course and plan of action.

In institutional capacity development the administration should focus on professionalizing the institution rather than politicization. Second, the source of political instability must be painstakingly considered. Third, corruption the source of slack system of governance needs modification. Fourth, diplomatic attempts for security diplomacy as well as being part of and encouraging and even leading the regional collective arrangements will support the endeavors.

### Conclusion

Uncertainty and intensity of the regional security

status quo will extend across Asia and the world after the withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan. The vacuum will amply or may provide space for violence activities to expand as terrorism and political violence will merely bring in new strategic confrontation in South Asia. With the geopolitical swing India possibly will be comparatively detached in preserving its Afghan interests. Terrorism in South Asia is based on militancy from extremist ideology and fundamentalism adopting a varied causes affects involving independence or separatism, both right-and left-wing beliefs and rebellious religious finitism.

Now is the best time for South Asian nations along with concerned regional organizations to reassess and re-examine regional security risks, threats and challenges. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which agrees on a common framework with a four-pillar plan of action offers a collective outline for this.



In addition to the international framework, existing regional structures and plans of organizations including South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) presents workable documents for regional collaboration on issues related to border security, mutual legal assistance, and law enforcement of the importance of de-

veloping an effective, broad based regional response to any threat. There is also a Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism 1987, August 2008 for “combatting terrorism”, SAARC Terrorist Offensive Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and the SAARC Drug Offensive Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) and an Expert Group on networking Amongst Police Authorities.

Similarly, the summit of BIMSTEC in 2004 expressed concern about the threat of terrorism and established a Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime Sector (CTTCS) to coordinate the sub-region response. The fourth BIMSTEC Kathmandu Summit stressed on the fact that terrorism and transnational organized crimes continue as a great threat to international peace and security and requires sustained efforts and cooperation and comprehensive approach. BIMSTEC nations initiated a joint military exercise to address common challenges as well (in which Nepal did not partake conveying-non-alignment policy).

All in all, it is time that existing international and regional framework on geopolitical security should be examined as the US and NATO forces prepare for withdrawal from Afghanistan triggering the region of standing more vulnerable to political instability and terrorism.

*Basnyat is a strategic Analyst and a former Major General of the Nepali Army*

# Loud Opposition

*Slamming Common Minimum Program (CMP), leader of main opposition K. P Sharma Oli flayed the coalition government*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Observing carefully and quietly all the activities of Sher Bahadur Deuba led coalition government, former prime minister and leader of CPN-UML K.P. Sharma Oli finally came out to slam the government on its Common Minimum Program.

Announced by the leaders of four parties, former Prime Minister Oli found enough ammunition from CMP since it lacks concrete and meaningful programs,

Instead of specific and targeted programs, the CMP talks about vague issues like protection against COVID, concluding Peace Process and Economic Development.

CMP says that it is prioritizing free COVID-19 vaccination to the people, the conclusion of the remaining tasks of the peace process, relief to the COVID hit businesses and workers, an amendment to the constitution as per the understanding among political parties, control of inflation, among others.

Unveiled in presence of Prime Minister Deuba and leaders of the ruling alliance, CPN (Maoist Center) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda, Janata Samajwadi Party, Nepal, Chairman Upendra Yadav and Rashtriya Janamorchha Chair Chitra Bahadur KC, the 11-point priority of the government was prepared by NC leader and coordinator of the task force of the alliance Purna Bahadur Khadka.

Instead of taking specific agenda, the CMP looks merely as a formality to show the solidarity among three major coalition partners. Although CPN-UML faction led by Madhav Kumar Nepal did not attend the program, it is reported that Nepal group also backs the CMP.

As the coalition was formed



against CPN-UML leader Oli and his government, the CMP seems to be more focused on how to revamp the programs and priorities given by previous government. Announced following the presentation of CMP, the white paper of finance minister Janardan Sharma Prabhakar also is full of loaded criticisms against the policies followed by Oli government.

As the CMP expresses its commitments to amend the constitution to accommodate the views of Madhesh based parties, it needs to get support of CPN-UML for two third majorities. Given so much criticism against the policies and programs of outgoing government, taking support is likely to be impossible.

At a time when CPN-UML faction led by Madhav Kumar Nepal continues to maintain its affiliation with the party, the 3-party coalition government will have to face a difficult task to pass the budget and new policies and programs as it does not have majority.

The life of the government solely depends upon CPN-UML led Ne-

pal faction. As former Prime Minister Oli has already made it clear that it will not tolerate violation of party whip any more, voting Deuba led government without splitting the party might cost the membership of the parliament.

In its recent verdicts, Constitutional Court has already defined that violating the party whip is tantamount to leaving the party or subject to eviction from the party as per the Anti-Defection Act.

## Oli's Stand

Carefully consulting on the legal and constitutional issues regarding the provision of anti-defection act and observing the differences within the ruling factions, CPN-UML Chair Oli is looking for spots of weakness to attack the government.

Denouncing the CMP and policies of the Deuba led coalition government, former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli took the rostrum of the House of Representatives. In his fluent and harsh words, Oli has shown



that the main opposition party will not wait to unseat the government in case it seems failing to deliver.

Addressing the Parliament for the first time after the House was restored, Oli said Deuba was made the PM through a mandamus and not through people's mandate. He called the Deuba government a government of a selfish alliance.

He also accused Deuba of trying to undo the progress made by his government. Oli said that the early indications did not give reasons to predict that the government would do well.

"They said the government was acting with the motive of taking revenge against the opposition," said Oli, questioning the government for not clearly saying what it would do with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) agreement which was signed with the US when the Nepali Congress and CPN-MC were partners in the government.

"The government had stated in the CMP that it would review unequal treaties and agreements, but did not clearly state which treaties or



agreements were unequal," said Oli. He said that the CMP did not reflect the values and norms that the Nepali Congress stood for.

On the foreign policy front, Oli criticized Deuba's government for failing to clearly mention that the government would establish its political and administrative control over Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani where India currently has its political and administrative control.

CPN-UML leader Oli said that he would become the prime minister again with thumping majority and his party would establish political and administrative control over Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani after the next general election.

He said the CMP vaguely referred to border problems with neighbors without specifically mentioning the problems and the names of the neighbors.

Oli dared PM Deuba to investigate embezzlement of government money in the Maoist cantonments and Matatirtha land grab case. He also urged the government to probe the Gaur massacre. Oli urged the government to pass the citizenship bill which had been stuck for three years in the Parliament. Oli justified issuance of citizenship ordinance during his prime ministership, which was stayed by the Supreme Court.

"Eligible youths have not been able to get citizenship and passports due to lack of citizenship certificates. They are unable to get jobs. I urge the government to immediately pass the citizenship bill and other urgent bills," he said.

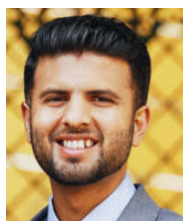
From accusing the Deuba led government on its approaches of foreign policy to criticizing economic policy and health policy, former PM Oli did not spare a chance to question the verdict of the court in removing him.

Accusing the Deuba led government as a government formed under a verdict of the court, former Prime Minister Oli made it clear that he is ready to face the people and come to power through their votes.



# China's Cautious Steps In The Graveyard Of Empires

*Beijing's relationship with the Taliban will be contingent upon a number of factors, two primary ones being Chinese investments and its national security. There is no way that Beijing will 'rush to embrace the Taliban', as speculated in the Western media. It is tactful and will not make the mistake of becoming another victim in the graveyard of empires.*



BY: ABIJIT SHARMA

'We are fine till now with God's grace', replied my Afghani friend from Kabul responding to my text on Saturday as reports started to come in that Taliban were taking over swathes of Afghanistan. 'It might take some time for them to reach Kabul. We are figuring out an escape plan', he added.

But my friend never got the time to conceptualize his escape plan. The very next day after our conversation, dramatic scenes played out in the streets of Kabul as the Taliban marched in in their Humvees wielding machine guns. By late Sunday night, they had taken over the Presidential palace. My follow-up message to my friend asking about his and his family's safety remains undelivered as I write this.

Given its location at the crossroads of Central, South, and Southwest Asia, Afghanistan is not new to volatility. In the 19th and 20th century, the Afghans fought three wars with the British, the final war in 1919 leading Britain to relinquish their control over Afghanistan's foreign affairs. Under the leadership of the then monarchy, this isolated but a relatively peaceful country aimed to chart a road of development and modernity. But fate had other things in store. A coup in 1973 by the then King's very own brother-in-law led to the overthrow of monarchy and introduction of a republican state. Five years later, another coup led to the establishment of a communist state. Dramatic events unfolded in 1979 when this former constitutional monarchy saw Soviet troops on its land to bolster the faltering communist re-

gime. This consequently triggered a violent resistance by US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia backed 'Mujahideen'. It was clear that Afghanistan was now wedged between US and USSR in the cold war. The Soviet troops withdrew in 1988 but the country continued to see a prolonged civil war until 1996. The resulting infighting led to the rise of Taliban in 1996 who ruled until the Americans intervened in 2001.

The notorious turn of events, triggered by both internal and external forces, prove that Afghanistan is of strategic importance to multiple stakeholders. Ironically, every actor who has intervened has failed miserably creating a debacle for itself and the Afghani people. The Taliban's swift ascendancy has shown that the US's twenty years of mission in Afghanistan has also turned to be no different. After all, two decades of its mission worth USD 2 trillion collapsed in just about one week. At the time of this writing, it remains unclear about the type of rule and the form of regime the Taliban will be adopting, but there is a common fear that the country will again plunge into darkness. Aptly describing the US's hasty withdrawal, Global Times, a Chinese state backed media said that '... the US's desperate withdrawal plan shows the unreliability of US commitments to its allies: when its interests require it to abandon allies, Washington will not hesitate to find every excuse to do so'.

Many have now been turning towards China to see its reaction. In a clear case of propaganda, some Western medias have been saying that Beijing would



try to fill the vacuum left behind by the US while others have pointed out that the Chinese leadership would ‘embrace Taliban’ considering the fact that the Chinese played host to a top Taliban leader last month. But these arguments are too naive. Unlike Western forces, China does not harbor intentions to intervene directly in other countries’ affairs. It’s engagement is usually subtle and diplomatic. Beijing’s relationship with the Taliban will thus be pragmatic and contingent upon a number of factors two primary ones being Chinese investments and national security.

In the case of Afghanistan, Beijing’s perennial concern is security. China’s highly volatile Xinjiang region shares a 90km border with Afghanistan. It is thus skeptical that Afghanistan will be a safe haven for the Uighur militant group - East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which has been fighting for the independence of Xinjiang. The ETIM is known to have shared cordial relations with the Taliban. China will thus only establish friendly relations with new government in Kabul if they ensure that they will break off their ties with the ETIM and that their territory will not be used for anti-China activities. There have been hints that the meeting in Tianjin was set up to discuss this. The Chinese Foreign Minister reportedly called on the Taliban to fight and clearly divide itself from ETIM while the visiting Taliban leader also pledged that it would ensure no anti-China activity was held in Afghani soil.

China will also not establish any commercial links with Afghanistan until Kabul can provide assurance that it will be able to maintain stability in the country. China does not really have huge investments in the country currently as compared to Pakistan or other Central Asian countries. But given its location at the crossroads of Central, South, and Southwest Asia, it could play a pivotal role in China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Beijing will be looking to exploit this factor. But it understands that things are not so simple. Already, two of its investments in Afghanistan – the Aynak Copper Mine project and Amu Darya Oil Exploration project – which are worth USD 700 million are halted due to instability. Hence, China will take on a significant investment role only if there is a permissive security and political environment in the country.

But China does not tend to perceive Afghanistan

only through the prism of opportunities. It understands that its economic and strategic interests in Central Asia and Pakistan will stand at risk should a spillover effect from Afghanistan result in the rise of Islamic militancy in the region. The South China Morning Post in one of its op-eds stated that the stability of Afghanistan is key to the success of major belt and road projects in South and Central Asia, including special economic zones and energy and transport infrastructure. China is now the largest trading partner of every one of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Trade has increased more than



100-fold since 1991 and is worth more than US\$50 billion annually. If the Taliban manages to create a relatively stable Afghanistan, China will benefit; but if that does not happen, its investments in Central Asia run at huge risk. The stability of Afghanistan is also key to the success of major belt and road projects in South and Central Asia, including special economic zones and energy and transport infrastructure particularly the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Thus there are many factors for China to consider before it extends its hand of friendship to the Taliban. There is no way that Beijing will ‘rush to embrace the Taliban’, as speculated in the Western media. As a tactful diplomatic force, Beijing will be careful. Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, calling the Taliban ‘a pivotal political force’ hints towards the fact that Beijing is optimistic. But it also wants to wait and see. Andre Small, an expert on China says that Beijing is concerned about the risks of entanglement in Afghanistan, which is seen as a strategic trap that has diminished the other great powers that have involved themselves too deeply. China is tactful and will not make the mistake of becoming another victim in the graveyard of empires.

# Increasing Gap

*Increasing Balance of Payment (BoP) will have long lasting impacts on Nepal's economy*

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the upsurge of COVID-19 cases worldwide, demand for Nepalese workers and products in foreign countries has drastically declined. However, Nepal's import continues to grow. This has resulted in a negative BoP trend.

For the last two decades in general, Nepal's balance of payment never saw any negative trend due to the flow of remittance coming from Gulf and other destinations including Malaysia.

The white paper presented by the government paints this bleak scenario of the national economy. Presenting the white paper at the Federal Parliament, Minister for Finance, Janardan Sharma said that the national coffers has a deficit of Rs 143 billion. Addressing the parliament, the finance minister has also announced that this government would present a new budget.

Nepal's balance of payment (BoP) went on a deficit in the last fiscal year 2021 by Rs. 15.25 billion as imports surged while the BoP in the preceding fiscal year of 2019/20 was in a surplus by Rs. 282 billion.

Similarly, central reserve fund has also been in a deficit by Rs. 146 billion in the last fiscal year whereas it was in a deficit by only Rs. 43 billion four years ago.

"I am not making any accusation against the previous government and the data mentioned in the whitepaper has not been manipulated," said Sharma replying to queries made by the lawmakers in parliament.

Sharma said that the present document was not for a revenge

against the previous government but it is the mirror of the country's economy. Sharma also expressed his skepticism about the vaccination drive launched by the previous government. "I have thoroughly studied the number of the imported vaccines and the actual number of people vaccinated, which shows that the statistics is not as per the one presented by the previous government," he said.

## 'Baseless' White Paper

However, former finance minister Bishnu Poudel has termed the white paper presented by the govern-

cused on criticizing the works of the previous government," said Poudel.

He said that the whitepaper presented in parliament a few days ago by Finance Minister Janardan Sharma has largely ignored the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on the national economy.

However, those who have been watching Nepal's trade scenario see the present scenario as natural, pointing out to Nepal's growing trade deficit with various countries due to lack of products to export.

Tourism and remittance are two major areas contributing to bring balance of payment in Nepal's favor. Following the pandemic, both these sectors suffered badly reducing the earning.

Last fiscal year, Nepal had a trade deficit of Rs.1016.62.

According to the trade statistics of the Department of Customs, the country's trade deficit has increased by 12.49 per cent to Rs. 1,016.62 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

High growth in import has led to the widening trade deficit. The trade deficit had reached Rs. 903.71 bil-

lion in the corresponding period the previous year.

Nepal has had foreign trade with more than 152 countries during this period, with the biggest share of trade and deficit with India.

According to statistics, the country imported goods worth Rs. 724.94 billion from India in the last nine months.

Exports during the review



ment in parliament as a baseless document aimed at tarnishing the image of the former government led by KP Sharma Oli.

Former minister Poudel accused the government of bringing the whitepaper only for objecting to the previous government's works. "Although the white paper presents information about the current economic condition of the country, it is more fo-



period stood at Rs. 68.43 billion. Nepal's trade deficit with India has reached Rs. 656.51 billion.

During the review period, goods worth Rs. 164.13 billion were imported from China while export amounted to only Rs. 796 million.

Nepal's trade deficit with China is now Rs. 163.33 billion.

As imports and exports have increased during the period compared to the same period previous year, the overall foreign trade and trade deficit also increased significantly, the report said.

The total foreign trade volume has increased by 13.64 per cent to Rs. 1,206.16 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

According to the statistics, import of goods has increased significantly. Goods worth Rs. 1,111.39 billion have been imported till mid-April this fiscal year. This is higher by 13.12 per cent than the same period last year.

During the same period last year, Nepal imported goods worth Rs. 982.53 billion in nine months. Nepal imported goods worth Rs. 168 billion from mid-March to mid-April. This is the highest volume of import in a single month of the current fiscal year.

Meanwhile, Nepal's export trade has increased by 20.23 per cent to Rs. 94.76 billion during the review period.

With the increase in exports, its contribution to total trade also risen from 7.62 per cent to 8.42 per cent during the review period.

The share of imports in foreign trade is 92.14 per cent and the share of exports is only 7.86 per cent.

Given Nepal's current trend of import and declining foreign currency from tourism and remittances, the BoP is unlikely to be in Nepal's favor.

## MONETARY POLICY

# Drive For Digitalization

*NRB Unveiled Monetary Policy For Fiscal Year 2021/22 calling to digitalize the banking transactions*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the new government is yet to come out with its new budget amending the old one, Nepal Rastra Bank has faced the most difficult time. Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari unveiled the Monetary Policy for the fiscal year 2021/22 projecting that the inflation would be contained at 6.50 per cent.

Unveiling the monetary policy, Governor Adhikari announced the monetary policy is focused on increasing the broad money by 18 per cent on the basis of the nominal GDP growth target. He also said that the policy will support the economic growth target,

financial institutions going for merger. It has also set a ceiling of Rs 120 million from banks against the deposit of shares.

The governor has announced to promote fiscal year 2021/22 as electronic transaction promotion year. Adhikari said that the policy focus is on developing necessary infrastructures and promoting awareness among people for the electronic payment.

Among others, the bank also set a plan to increase the record of digital transactions and settle digital



He also announced plans to maintain record of digital transactions and settle digital transactions that take place within the country by interlinking digital payment tools. The central bank has also announced plans to establish a national payment gateway to introduce payment cards.

The cash reserve ratio is to be maintained the same as in the past fiscal year, at 3 per cent. He also announced a number of incentives for banks and

transactions that take place within the country by interlinking digital payment tools. The new policy also plans to establish a national payment gateway to introduce payment cards.

Along with others, the policy has also provided a number of incentives for banks and financial institutions going for merger. It has also set a ceiling of Rs 120 million from banks against the deposit of shares.

KUL MAN GHISING

# Second Inning, Several Challenges

*For the previous performance and role of Kul Man Ghising in ending the decades of load shedding and turning a virtually bankrupt public entity into one of the largest profitable ventures, the Government of Nepal reappointed him as the Managing Director of NEA with expectations that his second innings can help build sustainable infrastructure for a future without power cuts and for making NEA an efficient public entity. At a time when NEA's financial state has started to worsen with a loss of over Rs.5 billion, increasing leakage by 6 percent and frequency of power interruptions in a matter of a year, MD Ghising has resumed his job. Given his experience and commitment, MD Ghising will change the present state of affairs at NEA*

BY A CORRESPONDENT

From the first day of assuming office as managing director of NEA, MD Kul Man Ghising has indicated that he will go for sleepless nights for months before setting up all the mechanisms with which he used to work before. Ghising was making the remarks before a large number of media persons and office bearers of NEA.

Interestingly, even hours before Ghising arrived to assume

the office, hundreds of media persons spontaneously gathered at NEA to capture a glimpse of his return.

MD Ghising had made a number of achievements during his first tenure by creating proper institutions and support from NEA's team. As all his creation has been dismantled and employees dispersed, MD Ghising's first step would be to restore the systems.

Built by spending a lot of time and efforts, MD Ghising has to spend time once again in restructuring the system and placing right persons to right tasks. "Although this is one of the biggest challenges of my personal career, I accepted the responsibility endowed by the government upon me. I will fulfill my responsibilities with determination and uphold the high hope of the large number of well-wishers



## COVERSTORY

He said that his primary priority is to further improve service delivery and good governance. He has expressed his commitment to solve the current frequent interruptions of electricity supply. He said that he will concentrate his effort to supply quality and reliable electricity to the consumers and common people.

“I will not give any chance to consumers to complain against the supply of electricity,” said MD Ghising. “I will take all necessary reforms to improve the situation,” said MD Ghising, expressing his commitments.

“My efforts will be directed to institutionalize the achievement made during the past, to increase consumption of the electricity, improvement of quality of electricity and regularity in the supply, completing the construction of transmission lines and distribution systems and projects. My focus will be to take initiative to start new projects, widen electrification, ensure institutional governance and improve service delivery. Deputy Executive Director of Financial Directorate Lekhnath Koirala expressed the hope that MD Ghising will succeed to reduce the current electricity leakage and increase the profit of NEA. Sick NEA needs a doctor and the MD is the doctor. Thus, now the tool is in MD’s hand on how to treat the sick person and treat him well.



for bringing back the system for qualitative and uninterrupted power supply,” said MD Ghising. “As there are many challenges before me, I have also decided to work quietly for at least a month,” said MD Ghising.

What MD Ghising had achieved in his previous stint was because of his dedication and commitment as well as the support of NEA’s team and government. He will have to cultivate them again.

“I should not have come as MD of NEA. However, I returned to NEA and accepted the challenge to fulfill the responsibility given by the government and trust of a large number of public who want me to be in NEA to fulfill their expectations of supplying uninterrupted

and qualitative electricity,” said MD Ghising. “I don’t have grudges against anybody. I will correct the mistakes of past and continue the good work. I have a vision to make NEA better. I don’t have any interest in back biting and opposing others. However, we have to work hard following the direction of the government and implementing the working plan,” said MD Ghising.

After a break of almost 11 months, Ghising is back again to lead Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). However, the situation has worsened with figures going down, for example, to Rs. 3.38 billion from Rs.8.30 billion of a year ago. The leakage has increased from 15 percent to 22 percent and revenue has declined almost Rs. 5 billion.



Following the appointment of Ghising in NEA, incumbent managing director of the NEA Hitendra Dev Shakya has been transferred to the Ministry of Energy.

Ghising, during his four-year tenure at the NEA, was largely credited for ending the decades-long load shedding 'era' in Nepal and had made the institution profitable.

On the proposal of the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irriga-

tion, the Council of Ministers appointed Ghising as the managing director of the NEA. Ghising has been reappointed to the post for the next four years. Ghising has already served NEA successfully, earning huge support from the general public as well.

Ghising was appointed the managing director of NEA for the first time on September 16, 2016. In his first four-year term, he was not only successful in ending the chronic problem of power outage, commonly known as 'load-shedding', in the country but also turned the NEA into a profit-making institution, ending the years of loss-making trend.

Present Revenue Status

When MD Ghising left NEA last year, the profit of NEA was over Rs. 12 billion, the profit margin was Rs.8.38 billion lower compared to the last fiscal year. The total revenue generation of NEA has drastically reduced making the huge loss in the profit margin.

NEA's earnings are dwindling as a result of increase in leakage of electrical energy. The outgoing management also blamed this for the lower demand in manufacturing sector and large volume of import of expensive power from India.

Thanks to the agreement signed during the tenure of Ghising last year, NEA has additional surplus of Rs.5 billion from Khimti alone. As per the new PPA with Khimti the average price of electricity was reduced from Rs. 8 to Rs. 2. Thanks to this, the NEA, which used to pay over Rs 5.5 billion yearly till two years ago, paid merely Rs 80.7 million this year. This had alone saved Rs 5 billion. However, NEA's loss had increased steadily.

NEA's administration





blamed lower energy consumption due to COVID-19 Pandemic, higher leakages and new tariff and imports from India. If power consumption declined, why did Nepal import electricity from India?

When MD Ghising left NEA, the electricity leakage was 14 per cent, However it grew over 18 percent. In his first four year tenure, MD Ghising reduced the leakage from 25.78 per cent in FY 2072/07 to 15 per cent in FY 2076/77.

As there is the need to improve distribution system and complete many transmission lines to prevent paying penalty to private sector investor, MD Ghising has to take many steps.

MD Ghising said he will show his work by doing it and that will be the priority for electricity. He also announced to formulate a plan to give priority to the sector.

At a time when NEA has to pay penalty for the private hydropower producers due to lack of transmission line, the priority of



NEA is to complete the construction of all the transmission line projects so that NEA does not have to pay compensation.

He said that NEA will develop investment modality for Dudhkosi and Upper Arun projects and start the construction of both the projects. NEA will make necessary arrangements for the construction of distribution systems in Terai to provide electricity to the farmers.

In his first four years, MD

Ghising took charges of an institution which was nearly in bankruptcy and there were many incomplete projects including 456 MW Upper Tamakosi, which was badly shaken by earthquake. However, this time, his challenges are much bigger as he has to resume the work to reform distribution system to increase electricity consumption and complete the transmission lines to evacuate the energy from private producers.



# Advancing EbA Options In Nepal



BY: BATU UPRETY

The Climate Change Policy (2019) recognizes, *inter alia*, the adverse impacts of climate change on ecosystems and underscores the importance of building its resilience by implementing a policy of developing and expanding payment for ecosystem services received from ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA). Adaptations options named as community-based or community-led or ecosystem-based or combined are under implementation to reduce adverse effects of climate change on vulnerable communities, their livelihoods and ecosystems - life-supporting system.

Nepal's National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) approved by the Government in September 2010 prioritised nine adaptation programmes for most urgent and immediate adaptation needs. These programmes emphasises, *inter alia*, in implementing community-based adaptation (CbA), building and enhancing adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities, reducing climate-induced disasters, managing forests and ecosystems, and promoting climate-smart urban settlement.

Considering the comparative advantage of the GEF Implementing Agencies, UNDP and UNEP were invited in 2010 to support Nepal in accessing funding from LDC Fund to implement NAPA prioritised adaptation options to reduce adverse effects of glacier melting, and EbA options to restore degraded ecosystems. Implementation of GLOF-related project was completed few years back, and LDCF-supported EbA project which faced unwanted complexities from GEF and the GoN is now under implementation.

In 2009, Convention on Biological Diversity

defined the EbA as the use of biodiversity & ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. EbA covers sustainable management, conservation, rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems to build climate resilience by reducing vulnerability of communities and natural resources to climate change. It enhances ecosystem goods and services.

Adaptation projects in Nepal have addressed



and will address climate vulnerability and ecosystem management in different areas. Four dedicated EbA projects have been implemented and/or are under implementation in Nepal. It does not mean that other projects do not consider EbA options. For example,



Nepal Climate Change Support Programme and Hariyo Ban Projects under implementation (second phase) with support from UK and US governments include activities to conserve biodiversity, restore habitats, and increase income of climate vulnerable people and communities. The TAL and CHAL projects focussed in reducing threats to ecosystem, helping communities to build resilience to the adverse effects of climate change, and improving livelihoods.

Of the four dedicated EbA projects, Nepal was included in two international projects - EbA in mountain ecosystems implemented in Nepal, Peru and Uganda with support from the Government of Germany through UNEP, UNDP and IUCN; and enhancing capacity, knowledge and technology support to build climate resilience of vulnerable developing countries, popularly known as EbA South, was implemented in China, Mauritania (dryland), Nepal (highland) and Seychelles (island) with funding from Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) through UNEP. In Nepal, mountain EbA was implemented in Panchase (Kaski, Syanja and Parbat) and EbA South in Chiti, Lamjung. These two global projects contributed in developing methodologies and tools for EbA, building ecosystem resilience, reducing vulnerability of mountain communities, strengthening country capacity, and generating and sharing knowledge, lessons and good practices.

Nepal accessed funding from the LDCF through UNEP to implement two EbA projects - catalysing ecosystem restoration for climate resilient natural capital and rural livelihoods in degraded forests and rangelands; and urban EbA for climate-resilient development in the Kathmandu Valley. The forests and rangelands project that is under implementation aims to increase the capacity of the government and local communities to adapt to climate change by implementing EbA options. This project is expected to restore forests and rangelands in mid-hills of Achham and Salyan and high mountains of Dolakha districts. The urban EbA project will build resilience of local communities of the Kathmandu Valley to the increasing threats of climate-induced flooding, landslides, and drought through EbA options.

The urban EbA project is expected, *inter alia*, to promote groundwater recharge, improve soil stability, and reduce flooding and landslides in the Valley. It will contribute in mainstreaming EbA options into urban planning, documenting knowledge, lessons, learning and best practices, and developing skills. It will fur-

ther contribute, *inter alia*, in protecting water sources, developing flood management tool, constructing conservation ponds, recharging groundwater wells, planting climate-resilient tree species, managing open spaces, and minimising damage from rivers and streams.

UNEP is implementing a regional EbA project to build climate resilience of urban systems in the Asia-Pacific region with the objectives of strengthening institutions and building capacity of city management authorities, demonstrating urban EbA interventions and disseminating knowledge and raising public awareness on urban EbA in pilot cities of Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR and

Myanmar. Specific EbA interventions range from reforestation, agriculture and wetland restoration to support livelihood of urban poor communities.

Nepal's urban EbA project may generate practical lessons and learning, including benefits of EbA options and 'nature-based solutions' in making

cities environmentally comfortable living areas and encourage adaptation advocates at national, regional and international levels in developing and implementing additional EbA options.

With support from the Government of Germany, the Global EbA Fund has been established to support scaling-up EbA options to reduce climate vulnerability. This Fund is led by IUCN and UNEP. Nepal may wish to develop additional EbA projects and access funding from LDCF, SCCF, Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Adaptation Fund as a Party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Funding may also be accessed from the Global EbA Fund, friendly countries, multilateral agencies, and other funding initiatives operated to support the implementation of the Convention, Protocol and Agreement in developing countries. Opportunities exist to reduce adverse effects on climate vulnerable communities and ecosystems, and to benefit from EbA options, both in urban and rural areas. However, it demands for dedicated efforts.

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# The Plights Of Rape Survivors And Criminal Investigation



BY: GOVIND PRASAD THAPA, PH.D.

## Background

Women are subject to criminal victimization, both inside and outside their homes. These usually include harassment, torture, abuses, and sometimes murder in the most deceitful manner. The dowry atrocities, child prostitution, and women trafficking for sexual exploitation have been a disgrace to society. A large number of children are abused for commercial sexual purposes every year often ending up with their health destroyed. As a result, many victims suffer silently. Quite often, the humanitarian needs of the victims are neglected. Rape has a far-reaching and long-term negative impact in all spheres of life affect not only the individual women victims but also her family and the larger community in general.

The objective of this article is to understand the physical, psychosocial problems of the victims of rape and the right approach to intervene in the most professional way possible. In other words, humanizing the law enforcement agencies during the investigation of rape crimes is the call of the time.

In the fiscal year, 2074/2075 the police registered 1480 cases and 727 attempted to rape cases, whereas in the fiscal year 2075/2076 the total number of rape cases were 2230 and 786 attempt to rape cases were recorded. In addition, 211 cases of child sexual abuse were also reported in this fiscal year (Nepal Police). These two-year figures indicate that sexual crimes are increasing in the country. Earlier, child sexual abuse was unheard and unspoken in our society but lately, it has been tormenting society. So, the trend of these crimes is changing. There may be many cases of sexual offenses hidden under the layers of guilt, shame, and societal pressure. Consequently, these go undetected and unpunished, but their victims live with the torment all their lives. The prostituted children are often raped, beaten, sodomized, emotionally abused, tortured, and even killed by pimps, brothel owners, and customers.

The investigation generally contains various steps. Identification of victims, the medical check-up, the

interview, and the intelligence gathering for the arrest of criminals are common. Careless investigation can harm the child. The child must be protected during the process of investigation. Throughout the world, victims' experiences with the criminal justice system vary greatly. In our context, helpless women and children find access to justice difficult since they are typically not courageous enough to confide and approach police offices. Even those who dare to do so, also suffer from the stigmatization of society. On top of these, sometimes, police investigations make the victims suffer from further apathy and distrust of the justice system. The exhibition of insensitiveness of police and other law enforcement officials towards the victims' feelings and lack of techniques to handle women and children victims often discourage victims to report and continue defending their cases in the courts.

Sensitive and professional intervention and investigation are crucial to providing relief and justice to the victims and punishment to the perpetrators. The technical aspects of the investigation (i.e. the application of forensic science) are equally important to prove the guilt. The successful investigation and prosecution of the crime is not the only objective rather victims' rights must be protected at the highest level, which requires the humanization of the entire law enforcement system. The successful investigation and prosecution of sexual assault largely depend upon a structural change of the legal system, a transformation of society's perception of rape victims, a high level of proficiency among the multidisciplinary team, and their ability to work well together.

## Victims-friendly approach

The victim of sexual offenses should be dealt with compassion and support by the family, friends, and law enforcement agencies. The investigation of crimes against women and children requires knowledge, skills, sensitivity, and a particular caring attitude. Male and female officers should be specially trained to deal with such crimes. The pieces of evidence are key factors to prove the mens

rea (criminal intent) and actus reus (criminal act) must be proved in the courts. Many law enforcement officers commit grave mistakes while collecting the primary physical pieces of evidence, i.e. they treat the victim as a piece of evidence only not a human being abused and suffering from loads of psycho-sociological problems. The victim-friendly approach should be kept in mind throughout the investigation and prosecution stages. The rights, needs, and interests of the victims should be properly handled during all the procedures.

The investigation requires a delicate part of interview sessions with the victims and suspects. It is an art unto



itself. The reporting of the offense to the police requires an act of tremendous courage and determination on the part of the victims. The investigating officer, preferably a woman officer while handling sexual offenses, must be extra cautious to respect the dignity of the victims at all times. The victims need supportive and friendly behavior from the police and attorneys. Not only during the investigation but also in the process of adjudication, the courts must handle such cases inhuman behaviors. Quite often, with the lack of knowledge and skills, the victims are re-victimized during the process of investigation and adjudication. An inappropriate way of handling the victims will make them miserable and weak.

There are few important guidelines for the police, attorney, medics, and judges to follow while handling the victims. The environment of the interview should be comfortable for the victim. It should not be crowded and noisy. The victim must feel safe, secure, and confident. The police officers are advised to wear plain clothes and bear a friendly look while taking interviews. The interview should not take a very long time, it may be one hour at a time. The vic-

tims should be encouraged to tell their stories in their way and their language. There should not be any person or relatives of the accused while taking the interviews. Since the frequent change of interviewer makes the victims nervous and repeat their stories, again and again, it is advised that the interview should be taken by one person only and the interview should be recorded for reference purposes. The victim's rights, needs, and interests should be taken care of during such interviews. If the victim wishes to have her lawyer with her, it should be fulfilled. Extra precautions and techniques should be taken while handling child victims and physically and mentally disabled victims.

The interview and handling of the suspect also deserve humanitarian behavior without any prejudices and physical and mental torture. The investigating officers should work hard to collect every bit of pieces of evidence methodically to make the case strong in the court. The pieces of evidence are far stronger than the words in the courts. The victim's private lawyer should be allowed to accompany him/her while taking the interviews.

### Conclusion

The violence and crimes against vulnerable sections of society are considered customary and routine social practices in our societies. These crimes are typically under-reported and poorly investigated. As a result, many victims suffer silently in their lives.

Quite often the rights, humanitarian needs, and interests of the victims and suspects are neglected. The technical part of the investigation, i.e. the application of forensic science, is important to establish the criminal intent and criminal acts but in the name of investigation, the humanitarian perspectives should not be omitted by the law enforcing agencies.

The various agencies responsible for the execution of the criminal justice system have been distant from the other actors. As such, coordination and cooperation between the police, prosecutors, judges, physicians, forensic specialists, social activists, and the jail administration, must be revitalized. There is an acute need for a coalition, not a collision.

The criminalization of politics and politicization of criminal acts are being frequently experienced in our society. These attitudes and practices will only serve the purpose of lawlessness and anarchy. Every citizen has to abide by the law and respect the human rights and values of others.

*Dr. Thapa is retired Additional Inspector General of Nepal Police. Currently, he is President of the Centre for Security and Justice Studies, Nepal.*

# CICs Increasing Access To Local Service Delivery

*DCA has been providing the necessary support to operate the center. One staff is dedicated to work there in coordination with Palika and its IT focal person for technical support.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

For a majority of citizens, particularly the poor, vulnerable and marginalized population of Chaurpati Rural Municipality of Achham District in Sudur Paschim Province, accessing the services provided by the Rural Municipality used to be a tough task. Most of them were left out because they had no knowledge about the services provided by the Municipality.

Following the opening of the Community Information Center (CIC) a few months back, things have been changing drastically for the better. Equipped with computers, smart phones, printers and officer in-charge, CIC has started to provide information to the people about the services available in the Palika.

Although Chaurpati Rural Municipality is a Smart Palika of Sudur

Paschim Province, with the digitalization of services starting there from over a year ago, a large number of people still did not access the services.

Maya Kunwar, Vice Chairperson of Chaurpati Rural Municipality, believes that the establishment of CIC is a major step to inform the people and increase their access to the services delivered by the Palika. “I am pretty sure that CIC helps people to access services offered by Palika,” she asserts.

With funding from DANIDA, DCA supported the establishment of CIC in Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali and Panchadewal Municipality, Accham, as a pilot initiative of DCA Active Citizenship for Inclusive Governance Programme.

Following the success of the first project in Kailari Rural Municipality of Kailali district and Panchadewal Municipality of Achham District that helped the local government become more accessible and transparent for the people, it has been replicated in the European Union (EU) funded Participation, Inclusion and Wider CSOs’ Actions for Responsive, Transparent and Accountable Local governance in Nepal (PARIWARTAN) Project in Achham and Doti Districts.

As per the project document, there is a provision for only two CICs. However, Mangalsen Municipality liked the concept of CIC and it has replicated the center through its own resources



with technical support from PARIWARTAN Project.

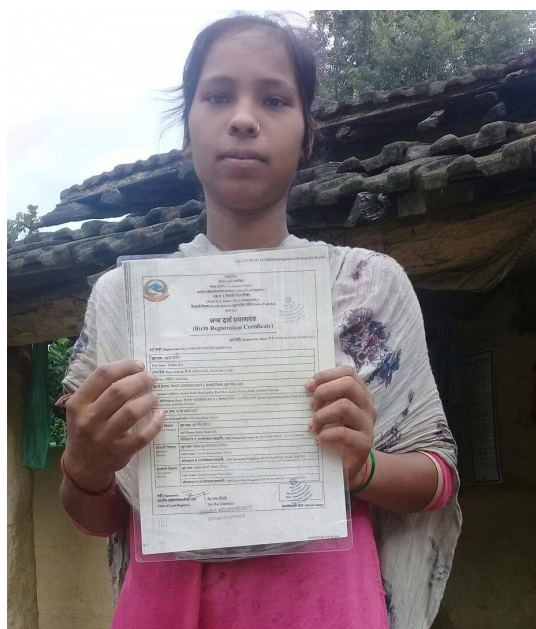
“As Palikas didn’t provide photocopy service and support for people to fill the necessary forms in the past, we used to go outside for such services and had to pay additional money. Thanks to CIC and its officer in charge, we got the support for obtaining the citizenship certificates for me and my husband as well as our marriage certificate and birth registration card of our child,” explains Deepa B.K of Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali. “This support has changed the situation for many now. Having this CIC inside our Palika has saved our money and time, which has simplified our work a lot.”

The CIC center provides quality service to the citizens. “We don’t have to invest much time to look after all the necessary documentation that needs to be prepared by the citizens who come here for different works. This ensures the quality of work and also makes





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Development Organization Nepal (MDO-Nepal) and 1 CIC in Doti District with local NGO Equality Development Center (EDC) are in function. These CICs are in operation in Pachadewal Binayak Municipality, Mangalsen Municipality and Chaurpati Rural Municipality of Achham District and Shikhar Municipality of Doti district under PARIWARTAN Project. In addition to this with support from DANIDA fund, 1 CIC is in operation in Kailari Rural Municipality of Kailai district. There is a plan to handover this CIC for which the process is underway with Kailari Rural Municipality.

The CIC concept applies in the Governance Mechanism to bridging the gap between public service and citizen's access to the service. The concept ensures the Right to Information and enables the environment for marginalized citizens, who are left behind, to access services and resources provided by the public service entity i.e. Government Service Provider. For the operation of the centers, CIC Operating Guidelines 2077 has already been formulated by DCA and local partners and endorsed by the local Municipalities.

Unlike in the past, Nepal's present constitutional approach to local government has emphasized local participation, empowerment and creating institutions for service delivery. However, they demand accountability and transparency in their actions.

As accountability is a relationship between local government and citizens, the local government representatives have to explain and justify their conduct as part of the process. To hold the government accountable, transparency and information about local government's decisions, services and actions to the public are a must.

The Local Government Operation Act, 2017 (the 'LGOA'), which specifies local government functions



and powers and provides a basic structure for the working of municipal assemblies, also emphasizes the need to increase access of people to the services.

In this regard, the establishment of CIC in various Municipalities and Rural Municipalities in Kailali, Achham and Doti will increase people's involvement in Municipal activities.

At a time when the entire country's concern is growing over how to increase access of local people, particularly the marginalized, poor and socially vulnerable, the establishment and operation of CICs in Kailali, Achham and Doti have raised hope and set examples of how all this can help.

With funds from the EU and DCA and in technical collaboration with the Institute of Local Governance Institute (INLOGOS), CICs in Sudur Paschim region are something that can empower the people and can set exam-

the service seekers happy. Hence, we have integrated this service in our periodic plan and have provisioned for a separate staff to operate this center from FY 2078/79," opines Laxmi Sadgawa Tharu, Vice-Chair of Kailari Rural Municipality.

The PARIWARTAN project has been mainly working in 4 sectors and providing support to local government and supporting the establishment of CIC is one of them.

Under this objective, DCA has already established 4 CICs in partnership with local partner NGO and a bilateral MoU with respective Palikas. Currently, 3 CICs in Achham District in partnership with local NGO Malika





ples for many other Municipalities and citizens to be able to understand their rights and be able to enjoy them.

The first batch of CICs were conceptualized almost three years ago when DCA took elected representatives from Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali and Panchadewal Binayak Municipality, Achham, on a field and exposure trip to Odisha, India, in June 2017, where they observed the function of CICs supported by DCA India.

“It was a very good and interesting exposure visit to India to observe CICs operated under the Municipality offices. Newly elected representatives like me really benefited from the visit. We realized that this kind of mechanism would very much help us better serve our citizens as per our commitment in the election,” says Ambika Chalaune, Vice-Chair of Panchadewal Binayak Municipality.

Following the visit, CIC operations were initiated in Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali and Panchadewal Binayak Municipality, Achham, in 2018. Since then, more than 3,000 marginalized people have found resource and support from the CIC to access the local services.

DCA has been providing the necessary support to operate the center. One staff is dedicated to work there in coordination with Palika and its IT focal person for technical support. DCA has also supplied other logistic, and equipment support such as laptop/computer,

CICs have not only been providing information to the community people but also assisting service seekers to fill different forms, with formats that are required, to access local services and resources like social security allowance, Prime Minister’s Employment Fund, disability card, vital registration, etc.

“I had tried a lot to get the disability card but due to illiteracy and disability, I was unable to obtain the card. But the CIC in-charge visited my home and supported me to fill the necessary forms and arranged all the supporting documents. Now I have a disability card (Red Card) and get the Social Security Allowance every quarter. Further, with the support from CIC

photo-copy machine, printer, desk, table to the Palika for a smooth running of the center.

center, I also got a wheelchair which has made my life easy. Now, I can move here and there without anyone’s support. Thanks to CIC and the center in-charge for all the support,” says Namsara B.K. of Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali District.

The staff in charge of the information center visits different wards twice a week to make the community people aware of the services provided by the respective Palikas. This results in building confidence and a sense of belongingness amongst the marginalized communities and CIC so that they do not hesitate to go to the Palika.

Shikhar Municipality, Doti, supported by the PARIWARTAN project operates the CIC center in the Palika which has a provision of a separate staff. The database of all the services provided is presented to the Chief Executive Officer and Palika representatives on a monthly basis. A survey is also carried out monthly to assess the satisfaction level of the citizens who access the services from the Palika. The result shows that more than 85 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the service provided by the Center.

For an efficient operation of the CIC, PARIWARTAN teams have already issued a CIC operation guideline and have provided orientation to the center in-charge and Palika representatives. Palika’s communication officers also provide technical support to the





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fairs and Administration.

The application is also a tool to connect elected representatives with the citizens. It includes a complaints mechanism that is easy and confidential for citizens to use.

“This also ensures people’s right to information as they will have access to all the information related to the Municipality. The Municipality will have enough information to recommend to donors as to where to invest and who the beneficiaries are,” adds Ambika. “Now we can plan ahead - we can allocate budget for water supply systems, enterprise promotion, schools, and health centers in the area where people are in dire need

of such facilities.”

Mukesh Kunwar, IT officer at Chaurpati Rural Municipality, Achham district, believes that the online system will help in the proper use of resources. “These data will be GIS-based so the Municipal authorities sitting in the office can see the exact location of the community households – nearest school, health centers, road, water supply schemes, touristic places, public places among others.” He emphasizes, “Limited internet access and low literacy rates are the main challenges in understanding the intended message and in its successful implementation. However, the establishment of CICs in different locations can bring change, as it will make services accessible to all. EU’s funding provided through DCA has been bringing the



CIC in-charge on a monthly basis.

The CICs in operation in the respective Palikas have proved to be very useful. DCA and its local partners have plans to extend it to other Palikas as well. Discussions have been held on the usefulness of this mechanism to motivate other Palika representatives and its replication.

Since CICs are targeted to serve the people by providing them with much-needed information about the service delivery, coordination with all stakeholders would be crucial in the smooth operation of the centers.

“The local authorities are very enthusiastic about welcoming new ideas and supporting the citizens. They have been adopting new technologies to reach out to more of their people and CIC has been crucial in bridging the gap,” says Ambika Chalaune, Deputy Mayor of Panchadewal Binayak Municipality, Achham district.

As Sudurpaschim Provincial Government has already announced its aim to increase the number of Smart Palika in the Province, the establishment of CICs will go to serve the objective of the Provincial Government. “The Provincial Government is happy to welcome any initiative which supports its effort to make local government accessible and transparent. The establishment of CIC has been helping the local population to access the services provided by local government,” says Naresh Singh Karki, Spokesperson of Sudur Paschim Provincial Government.

With the establishment of CIC, the concept of ‘Smart Palika’ has evolved. “The name Smart Palika, itself is smart, so there’s no doubt that it will help us improve our communication system in reaching to the public easily,” says Jamuna Bohora, Deputy Mayor of Jorayal Rural Municipality, Doti District. Bohora hopes that the launch of CIC will help authorities and locals in many ways including gathering information of the available resources in the Municipality and easily disseminating messages to the service seekers among others. They are prerequisites of Smart Palika. “This will eventually help in the development planning process of the Municipality,” she opines.

“As we are in the process to make it easier to access services by turning the Palikas into smart local govern-



ments, CIC will serve the government’s objective,” shares Basanta Adhikary, Spokesperson of Ministry of Federal Af-

change at the local level, making local governments accessible and accountable and we see its greater potential in the days to come,” Kunwar adds.



## COVID-19

# Surging Infections

*Despite decline of COVID-19 cases in some hilly regions, the infection rate has been increasing in the Kathmandu Valley*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when COVID-19 infections surge again in Nepal, the announcement of the World Bank to provide 4 million doses of Moderna Vaccines through COVAX is highly significant and important.

According to the World Bank, Nepal will get 4 million doses soon. Nepal is the second country globally to have completed agreements with GAVI to procure 4 million doses of Moderna vaccines. Financed by the World Bank, through the COVAX cost-share option, this will diversify and strengthen the country's COVID-19 vaccine portfolio.

"Nepal is an early mover in utilizing the COVAX cost-share scheme, and I am pleased to note that we have finalized an arrangement, despite very challenging circumstances, to bring safe and highly effective vaccines to Nepal," said **Umesh Shrestha, Minister of State for Health and Population**. "Moderna vaccines have helped expand options for vaccinating Nepalis above 12 years of age and fast-track Nepal's progress towards a safer post-COVID world."

Delivery of these vaccines is expected to start by March 2022 and will contribute to Nepal's goal to vaccinate at least 72 percent of its population, as well as children 12-17 years of age for whom the Moderna vaccine is deemed safe and effective.

"We are honored to support the people and Government of Nepal, along with our development partners, by financing the purchase of safe and effective vaccines through the COVAX facility," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "This is a key element of our overall COVID response by helping to meet emergency health needs and strengthening the healthcare and vaccine delivery system."

The World Bank has made available \$104 million to support the Government of Nepal's health response to the pandemic, with \$67.5 million earmarked to purchase and deploy COVID-19 vaccines. Last month, 1,000 oxygen concentrators were brought in through the project while seven oxygen generation plants are being established, one

in each province. These will help strengthen health preparedness in the event of future waves of the pandemic.

"We commend the Government of Nepal for being the first country in South Asia, and one of the first in the world, to join and tap into the COVAX cost-share option," said **Hartwig Schafer, World Bank Vice President for South Asia**. "The World Bank is committed to contin-

uing our support to Nepal's COVID-19 vaccination program, which is critical to helping the people and economy of Nepal build back better from this unprecedented crisis."

The World Bank supports countries' COV-

ID-19 vaccine implementation plans. Countries make choices based on their specific needs and the WHO's recommended policy and guidelines on vaccines, therapeutics, and other tools they adopt. As the threshold for eligibility for IBRD/IDA resources in vaccine purchase, the Bank accepts as eligible for inclusion in the project COVID-19 vaccines that (i) have received regular or emergency licensure or authorization from at least one of the Stringent Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) identified by World Health Organization (WHO) for vaccines procured and/or supplied under the COVAX Facility, as may be amended from time to time by WHO; or (ii) have received WHO Prequalification or WHO Emergency Use Listing. The Moderna vaccine meets these criteria.

## Nepal's COVID-19

Nepal's COVID-19 cases have started to rise again. However, this surge is concentrated in Kathmandu Valley. This rise is a natural outcome of early opening of the valley without making proper preparations and judging the consequences.



Following two and three months of loose lockdown, Nepal has completely opened all the activities just after the change of new government. Even political rallies and other such activities have been frequent. Many people have not followed the health protocol, including masking and social distance. Thus, the achievement Nepal has made to contain the virus to its limit has vanished overnight.

Although the number of positive cases increases in the valley, the good news is that the rate of hospitalization has declined compared to early second wave. With highly dense population and frequent visits by people from different parts of Nepal, Kathmandu Valley is very much vulnerable to upsurge.

With the COVID-19 testing facilities available easily, Kathmandu valley has highest number of testing compared to other cities.

Ministry of Health and Population showed that in over 60 percent of testing, the data is coming from Kathmandu Valley. This may be the reason the number of positive cases has gone up.

Understanding its vulnerability compared to other cities, Ministry of Health has decided to increase the vaccination quotas for Kathmandu Valley in other big cities of Terai.

As the Intensive Care Units (ICUs) have already been packed with virus-infected patients in hospitals in the valley, there would be shortage of general beds in the upcoming days if the cases continue to surge in the same rate.

Dr. Anup Bastola, director at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital said that the flow of COVID-19 patients had increased in the hospital in the last 15 days.

“Of the 40 beds separated for infected patients, 25 are currently occupied. Similarly, the 24-bed ICU has already been packed,” said Dr. Bastola. He added that of the infected patients admitted to the hospital, maximum were from out of the Valley.

The situation is similar to TU Teaching Hospital, Maharajgunj as it has also seen a rise in the flow of infected patients. “All 40 ICU beds have been filled with COVID-19 patients and of them, 17 are in ventilator,” said Dr. Santa Kumar Das, COVID focal person at TUTH, adding, “The hospital has separated 115 general beds for treatment of virus-infected people and of them, 85 are currently occupied.”

Along with public hospitals, the situation in pri-

vate hospitals is also the same. All 13 ICU beds at HAMS hospital have been filled with infected patients. “Currently, five patients are under treatment with ventilator facility. Also, 42 out of 49 general beds are also in use for the treatment of infected people,” said Rajbhandari.

The recent surge in cases of novel coronavirus infection has also impacted COVID Unified Hospital. Dr. Bhupendra Bahadur Basnet, chief administrative officer at the hospital, said that the number of virus-infected patients visiting the hospital was increasing day by day.

The hospital has 163 general and High Dependency Unit (HDU) beds and 40 ICU beds. “Currently, 20 are under treatment in the ICU and 88 patients are admitted to the general beds,” said Dr. Basnet, adding that all the hospi-

tals might be overflowed with COVID-19 patients if the daily infections continued to increase in the same manner.

According to Dr Jhalak Sharma Gautam, chief of the National Immunization Programme, about 4,570,553 people have received their first COVID-19 shot. This makes 9.52 per cent of the total population, he added.

Of the three types of a vaccine against COVID-19, among Covishield, Johnson &

Johnson and Vero Cell are being administered in Nepal. As many as 4,570, 553 people have received their doses of the aforementioned vaccine.

Whereas 2,888,360 have received their full dose till now.

For an estimate, in 24 hours, 69,037 people have been vaccinated with the second dose of the Covishield vaccine, 28,871 and 69,111 people have been vaccinated with the first dose and second of the Vero cell vaccine respectively as well as 28,192 people have been vaccinated against Johnson & Johnson.

At the same time, the total number of people receiving a complete shot of the Covishield vaccine has reached 597,819, according to the ministry.

The number of first doses and second doses of the Vero Cell vaccine has reached 272,128 and 1,083,403 respectively. So far, 127,138 people have been vaccinated with Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

As vaccination drive continues and cases of hospitalization of vaccinated people are fewer, there are hopeful signs that the vaccination campaign will help contain COVID-19.





## JAPAN'S SUPPORT

# Friend In Need

*By providing AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine, Japan has shown that it is always with Nepal at the time of crisis*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Former secretary of Nepal Government Dr. Dwarikanath Dhungel, an elderly citizen of Nepal, posted a 'fully vaccinated' card on his Facebook wall thanking the Japanese government for saving the life of people in Nepal.

Dr. Dhungel was not alone in thanking the government of Japan and people of Japan for the help. Hundreds of other elderly people who received the vaccine have similar views towards Japan for the vaccine.

Although Nepal government has knocked on the various countries around the world to provide AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccines to inoculate over 1.4 million elderly populations, Japan gave Nepal a big quantity of vaccines.

As in the past crises, Japanese Government announced 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. Long frustrated by the lack of vaccines, elderly people of Nepal saw their hope renewed with the announcement.

Japan government has handed over the Japanese-made AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to Nepalese authorities by Japanese ambassador to Nepal Kikuta Yutaka, who had quietly taken the initiative to address Nepal's need, as soon as the vaccines landed at Tribhuvan International Airport.

Joint Secretary of North East Asia Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lok Bahadur Thapa, Representative of UNICEF Nepal, Elke Wisch and WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav were present at the event when ambassador Kikuta Yutaka handed over the vaccine to minister of state of Health and Population Umesh Shrestha.

The vaccine donation from Japan to Nepal through COVAX facility was announced by MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan on 13 July.

At the hand-over ceremony, Ambassador Kikuta stated that this donation is "From the People of Japan for the Friendship with Nepal." He also appreciated the cooperation of all the relevant organizations to achieve this, including the Government of Nepal and the international organizations such as CO-

VAX, GAVI, WHO and UNICEF. He also mentioned that the Government of Japan strongly supports the vaccination campaign by Deuba administration, which is necessary for the progress of post-COVID Nepali society and its economic recovery.

"We hope that this vaccine, together with other generous contributions from international community, will help Nepal to ease down various difficulties caused by the COVID-19," the Ambassador stated. Japan has been providing various support for Nepal to tackle with the COVID-19 pandemic with medical equipment for Nepali hospitals to date, the Embassy of Japan will continue working together with Nepal to overcome the pandemic.

"The Government of Nepal sincerely appreciates the Government of Japan for this generous provision of life-saving vaccine to Nepal through COVAX. These Japanese-made AstraZeneca COVID vaccines will be administered to the senior citizens who are waiting for second shots of vaccines of this group," said the press statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The half of Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccine for Nepal airlifted on August 7 and 8 from Japan to Nepal and reaming in coming to Nepal.

Ambassador KIKUTA hopes that these Japanese COVID-19 vaccines will be utilized expeditiously for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, with a good coordination by the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal. In this pandemic, the Embassy of Japan has been tackling COVID-19 together with the Government of Nepal to save more Nepali people's lives.



This vaccination assistance is one of our challenges even in this hardship; Ambassador Kikuta looks forward to working for the post-COVID society and economy of Nepal.

Ambassador Kikuta expressed his hope for the smooth implementation of vaccination campaign and Minister Shrestha took it with thanks and committed to do so. The Embassy of Japan is now coordinating with the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal to this effect.

Ambassador Kikuta informed the Minister of Japan's multiple approaches to fight against COVID-19, mentioning, among others, that Japan took a leading role to establish the COVAX facility and pledged 1,000 million USD in total, and that Japan has been supporting Nepali hospitals under this difficult situation by the medical equipment assistance and made-in Japan ambulances will come in autumn.

Moreover, Ambassador pointed out that Japan has contributed to UNICEF for the cold-chain facility to ensure that the vaccine would reach down as "Last One Mile Support," which will be beneficial for all Nepali people. Ambassador Kikuta shared the view with Minister Shrestha that Japan and Nepal will strengthen the great partnership by their people, as shown in the long history of friendship between the two countries.

## TOKYO OLYMPICS 2020

# Grand Success

*Although countries around the world, including Japan, faced a severe situation due to the rise of COVID-19 cases, with the emergence of its Delta Variant, Japan successfully hosted the 32nd Olympic Events, containing the COVID-19 cases, in the Olympic village. Postponed for a year after the Coronavirus crisis, there were many uncertainties till the last minute. As the cancellation of the Olympic would have done much damage for sports and prestige of Japan, the government of Japan held the game, taking all the precautionary measures. After successfully holding the games, containing the pandemic, the Government of Japan has demonstrated to the domestic and international opponents of holding the games that the events were a great success. With this, the 33rd edition of the Olympic Games would be held in Paris, the capital of France. As the last Olympic was devastating for South Asia with no gold, this time India's Neeraj Chopra's win of a gold has set a new record in the history of India as well as South Asia. For Nepal, its participation was itself a big achievement. Historically, the participation was valuable as Nepal started to take part in the Olympics from 1964's Tokyo Olympic*

By KESHAB POUDEL

National pride is more important than that of a person. This is what the Japanese politicians have shown. Holding the Olympic Games in an unprecedented time of COVID-19 crisis, Japanese prime minister Suga Yoshihide has shown how the political leadership needs to take an individual risk for the sake of national pride.

Successfully holding the games amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese prime minister Suga received global applause, including from US President Joe Biden. His popularity in Japan has gone down to the lowest level for not handling COVID-19 crisis properly.

Although an overwhelming majority of Japanese people backed

him for successfully holding the game, enhancing the pride of the nation, many others disfavored his handling of Coronavirus Pandemic.

Just after completion of the Olympic, Japan's Prime Minister Suga has thanked the country's people for helping the country host the Tokyo Olympics. He said the Games were held under unprecedented re-



strictions after a one-year delay due to the coronavirus pandemic, but Japan fulfilled its duty as the host nation and passed the baton to the 2024 Paris Games. He thanked the public for understanding and cooperation.

Suga praised the athletes for helping a wonderful Olympics materialize, saying he applauds them all regardless of their results. He also said the athletes delivered dream, hope and excitement to youths and everyone else around the world, providing a unique asset for the future.

Along with other world leaders, U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with the Japanese Prime Minister, commending him on the

successful hosting of the Olympic Games and the public health measures that allowed them to be held, a White House statement said.

“President Biden applauded the performance of all the athletes and highlighted the success of Japanese and U.S. Olympians,” the statement said, while noting “the public health measures taken so that Olympic athletes could compete in the best traditions of the Olympic spirit.”

#### **Domestic Support Shrinking**

Despite receiving applause from the globe, a recent survey showed support for the prime minis-

ter was below 30%. This is such low for the first time since he took office in September last year. However, polls over the weekend by the daily Yomiuri showed that 64% of respondents were glad that the Games took place, opposed to 28% who disagreed.

At the global level, Japanese people have also applauded for successfully holding Olympics. People do not see this is enough to support him for his failure in domestic issues.

One of the big successes of Japan was that organizers were able to contain the pandemic in the game. Although a few dozen cases of infection were reported during the game, the organizers were able to contain them not allowing the cases to go out of control.

After the completion of Olympics, Japan has to hold Para Olympic now. As the game will have smaller participation, the organizers do not have to worry much in holding Para Olympic.

#### **32<sup>nd</sup> Olympic**

The recently concluded 32nd Olympics was also unable to challenge United States, sports super power. Although China was able to hold the largest gold medal status till the end of two days, USA secured much needed gold medals to push China and other rivals behind.

Despite serious efforts, China is far from the United States in the overall games. Although it is gradually emerging to show its strength, China needs to wait a long time to better its performance in the overall sports.

Although Russia stood third in the overall medal tally, Japan was third in total gold medal tally followed by United Kingdom. Germany, which used to be a sports power house in the past, is now far behind.

The Tokyo Olympics that was planned for 2020 was deferred by a year due to global pandemic of coronavirus. Japan has successfully accom-



plished the 32nd Summer Olympics Events amidst coronavirus outbreak.

Deferred for a year, expecting to see the decline in COVID-19 Pandemic and audiences in the stadium, the events saw the organizers cancel all the tickets. There was no permission for the audience to be present at the stadium in the Tokyo Olympics due to the menace of coronavirus.

However, as many as 11,300 Olympians from 205 countries had come to take part in the Tokyo edition. The players competed for 340 gold medals, 338 silver and 402 bronze medals in total 33 sports events.

### Nepali Olympic Squads

Starting its participation from Tokyo Olympics in 1964, Nepal continued to show its presence in the latest edition of the event. This Olympic was also very valuable for Nepal in terms of participation. Jeet Bahadur KC had completed the Marathon in 1964 setting a new record. Nepali Olympic team led by Gaurika Singh and Alex Shah has their zeal to improve performance. Although their presence was only just felt, they set new national records in swimming.

Nepali Olympians Gaurika Singh and Alex Shah had hoisted Nepali flag in the inaugural session of the Olympics. Some 93 countries clinched medals in the Olympics while 112 countries including Nepal remained medal less.

Only 65 countries won gold medals in the Tokyo Olympics. The US remained the highest gold medal winner (39) while China secured second position with 38. The host country, Japan, remained the third winner with 27 gold medals. India is the only South Asian country to win a gold medal, two silver and four bronze.

The Tokyo Olympics that kicked off on July 23 was held for 19 days. Japan had hosted the Olympic Games after 57 years. For Nepal, new comers like Singh and Shah are new generation of players who can make a difference in the future.

Given Nepal's own resources and politicization of sports, it will take much longer to make a great success.

### Japan's Success

As a host country, Japan has made a big progress in the game achieving the third position in securing the gold medals. Japan secured 27 gold, 14 silver and 17 bronze with 58 total. Japan stands in the fiftieth place in total medal tally just behind the Unit-

ed Kingdom which secured 22 gold, 21 silver, 22 bronze with 65 total medals.

“We kept our team safe and we’re coming home successful,” said Sarah Hirshland, CEO of the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee. “The Tokyo 2020 Games have been remarkable in so many ways and I’m filled with gratitude and pride.”

A record total of 94 different nations won a medal at Tokyo 2020, in-



ed Kingdom which secured 22 gold, 21 silver, 22 bronze with 65 total medals.

Although Japanese players had competed in their home ground, they were unable to see their supporters due to the restrictions made by Olympic committee to their audiences.

### Team USA On Top

Team USA has finished top on the medal table at Tokyo 2020, winning 113 medals in 28 different sports. A total of 626 athletes competed for the US, clinching 39 gold, 41 silver and 33 bronze medals. China and hosts Japan were closest to matching the US' gold medal haul, winning 38 and 27 respectively.

Team USA's performance at Tokyo ensured it finished top of the medal table -- ranked on golds -- for

cluding Turkmenistan, San Marino and Burkina Faso -- who all claimed their first Olympic medals.

Japan, Italy, Netherlands, Brazil, New Zealand, Chinese Taipei and Turkey also set new records for most medals secured at a single Olympic Games. Foreign media outlets have given their assessments of the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The BBC said, “In Britain, many have loved watching it, and will remember these Olympics as a classic.” The broadcaster mentioned “an array of inspiring performances and innovative new sports” that “captured the imagination.”

But it also said that “whether it was right that the Olympics happened at all will always be a matter

## SPORTS

for debate.” The BBC also said the circumstances surrounding the Tokyo Olympics may make it harder to attract bidders to host the Games in the future.

Reuters reported that “with strict pandemic countermeasures and as COVID-19 variants have surged back around the world, the Olympics fell short of the triumph and finan-

second for an individual ever and the first since Abhinav Bindra’s in 2008, would also ensure India’s richest-ever tally (seven). India finishes 48th, best in four decades; 33rd in terms of overall medals won

The Olympic medal is expected to see an army of young boys with dreams reaching out for the

als with 36 gold, 39 silver and 33 Bronze.

Japan secured third highest gold medal with 27 gold, 12 silver and 17 bronze. Great Britain secured fifth position securing 20 gold medal, 22 silver and 21 bronze followed by Russian Federation with 20 gold, 26 silver and 23. Australia secured 17 gold 7 silver and 22 bronze and Ger-



cial windfall Japan had wanted.”

### **India’s Neeraj Chopra Wins Gold Medal**

Neeraj Chopra won a gold medal, flinging the javelin a staggering 87.58m to top the charts in Tokyo. With this gold, India win seven medals in total with 2 silver and 4 bronze.

The gold, a historic first for the country in track and field, the

javelin. The Asian and Commonwealth golds in 2018, was a turning point in Neeraj’s life in terms of fame and recognition.

However, no country has dominated the Olympics quite like the United States. Although China secured the largest gold medal with 38 golds, 31 silver and 18 bronze with 87 medals, the United States lead the game securing 108 med-

many secured 10 gold, 11 silver and 16 Bronze.

The Summer Games in particular are where the U.S. has found success. Team USA has 1,022 gold medals in the history of the Summer Games and 2,523 total medals.

Indian women had already created history and surpassed all expectations by entering the semifinals of the Games for the first time.

# Higher Study Scholarships

*Nepalese students receive 49 Erasmus+ scholarships to study in Europe*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal has been in the process of strengthening and making new institutions, it needs efficient and specialized manpower trained to run such institutions.

Supporting Nepal's development efforts, European Union has been playing a major role as a partner in the process. Providing scholarships to Nepalese young students for higher education in European Universities is one of these supports.

As in the past, 49 Nepalese students have received Erasmus+ scholarships to study in Europe. After acquiring higher education in Europe, these young Nepalese will return home to play an important role in Nepal.

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal together with the Erasmus Mundus Association Nepal organized a Virtual Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) for the new scholarship recipients of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD) batch 2021-2023 on 20 July.

The Nepalese students have been awarded full scholarships for the period 2021-2023 and they will spend 2 years full-time in prestigious European Universities to pursue their Master's Degrees in various fields. During the Pre-Departure Orientation, the students got useful tips and advice for living and studying in Europe.

The European Union is the largest global donor in education with its Erasmus+ program (2021-2027) budgeted at EUR 26.2 billion. This is nearly double the funding compared to its predecessor programme (2014-2020).

Welcoming the awardees, EU Ambassador to Nepal, H.E. Nona Deprez, said, "Erasmus is one of the most successful programmes of the European Union. People to people connectivity are one of the top priorities of the EU. This is one of the ways that we want to promote our values and share knowledge and experiences with all of you abroad and for all of us to become richer from the experience."

"We hope that these scholarships will help these students to further excel and that they will return to Nepal with enhanced

skills and knowledge useful for the country and themselves, as well as with fond memories of Europe," Ambassador Deprez said.

More than 700 Nepalese students have benefitted from the EU's Erasmus+ Scholarship Programme. The Erasmus+ scholarships also provide opportunities for Europeans to undertake short-term studies and teaching in various universities across Nepal.

Shashank Khaniya, who has been provided the scholarship for Master's Degree in Sustainable Forest and Nature Management (SUFONAMA) said, "I feel really excited after getting news of selection for SUFONAMA program under Erasmus Mundus scholarship. The opportunity to learn from two different universities of Europe is really a lifetime experience for me. I hope to use my knowledge and skills from the program. Furthermore, opportunity to learn culture of the European nations is an added advantage for me." Khaniya will be undertaking his first year in University of Gottingen, Germany and second year in Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Sweden.

Another Erasmus+ Nepal awar-

She will be studying at the SLU-Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, Sweden and in BOKU-Austria.

Niranjan Khadka, Country Representative of Erasmus Mundus Association-Nepal, shared EMA Nepal's current activities and plans. "Due to Covid restrictions, we are working for the promotion of Erasmus scholarships in rural areas of Nepal through webinar by connecting with different colleges and universities. We are also equally focusing on strengthening the networking of EMA Nepal and building it as a common platform to share each other's experience and opportunity," said Khadka.

Pawan Dhakal, who is now doing his master's under Erasmus scholarship program in the UK, following a first semester in Italy, shared his experience of applying for visa after receiving the scholarship, travelling to Europe and getting to know the educational and cultural environment there.

Representatives of the EU Member State Embassies based in Kathmandu and New Delhi also participated in the programme and answered the queries of the students who are looking forward to begin their studies in different countries in Europe. Those present were Ms Katharina Wieser, Ambassador, and Embassy of Austria in New Delhi, Ms Eva Chmelikova, Third Secretary, and Embassy of the Czech Republic in New Delhi, Barked Kofi Scheutz First Secretary, Political and Economic Counsellor of the Royal Danish Embassy in New Delhi.

Stephane Russek, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Germany in Nepal, Ms Sara Lages Range, Attaché, Embassy of Portugal in New Delhi and Dr. Gianluca Rubagotti, Italian Consul General based in Calcutta were also present at the orientation.

In addition to the Erasmus+ scholarships, the EU Delegation in Nepal has been providing ongoing support to the Government of Nepal/Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on Quality Education and Technical and Vocational Training.



dees Pratikshya Shrestha said, "I am feeling really excited to start my Master's degree in the subject of my interest in one of the world's top Agriculture Universities where I shall get good practical exposure, be familiar with high level of technology and enhance my current abilities. I am hoping that I will be more of an asset to my nation upon returning." Pratikshya will be pursuing Master's Degree in plant breeding.



# Make In Nepal



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

The Rising Nepal of 20th July 2021 reported about our new Finance Minister Shri Janardan Sharma's support to make 'Make in Nepal' campaign a success. My thoughts went to my childhood days when I collected stamps and match box labels. Sweden then was a major producer of matches. It was rumoured then that to compete with Sweden, the Japanese had named a town 'Sweden' so that matches produced there could be labelled 'Made in Sweden'! I recollected then that during the Rana rule and Panchayat days many factories had been set up in Nepal. Sadly all these governmental undertakings were disposed off in the name of free enterprise!

A story of around mid-20th Century is that a Japanese, with a stick of sugarcane in his hand got on a train in India. He pared the outside covering of the sugarcane and then ended up by making a fan out of its covering. He followed this by smartly cooling himself with it for the rest of the journey!

During former days it was customary to use, store and reuse goods and materials over the course of years. Now however we are in 'Use and throw away' era as the cost of labour has gone up. It is cheaper to replace goods than repair them. The old order has changed yielding place to new. However a form of re-cycling is being done in the Nepali fashion has me worried by its subterfuge. The district officer in Dhading found that the Family Size large plastic bottles of Coca-Cola, Sprite and Mountain Dew were all being re-used for a look like various aerated soft drinks with a somewhat similar name and cheating rural folk. This is a crime. On the other hand Pokhara has shown that such plastic wastes can be made into pellets and used for asphaltting roads.

As a child I remember using sukuls or mats made of straw. Slippers made of straw were also in use then. Later chatees having cloth tops and soles made of recycled old car tyres replaced these as an improvement. Now the modern equivalents are the rubber made chappals being made in Nepal. One still sees some of the locally made goods such as raddis, bakhos, nanglos, dalos, dokos, wicker baskets, mudas and bedh furnitures. Rautes used to make wooden thekes. Traditional manufacture and usage of goods must be encouraged. After all wooden footwear known as clogs are still in use in Holland as are the leather made wear known as lederhosen or bundhosen in Germany!

A correct step is that all household eatable requirements such as biscuits, furindana or bhujia, pustakari, gudhpak and usables e.g. soap, toothpaste, disinfectants should also be produced locally in Nepal and not be imported into the country. What has recently been in a Facebook post is the necessity of proper packaging or contemporary avatar to attract buyers! Products should look chic not cheap. Finally however it is us Nepali customers to promote local products such as apparel, footwear, cosmetics or other daily requirements. Certain Indi-

an firms i.e. Unilever, Dabur, Britannia and Patanjali are also based in Nepal and are producing household items not just for local consumption but also for sale in regions of Northern India.

With the increasing generation of electricity in the land it is good to know that Hulas is contemplating producing electric cars. However one recalls their Mustang jeep and wonders if electric cars will get a market. Other efforts are to assemble two-wheelers within the country but the reality is that it will just increase our fuel consumption. Cannot these be electric powered? Lowering of electric rates in Nepal is essential to increase domestic and industrial consumption.

Because of the lack of job opportunities many of our countrymen have been forced to go to foreign lands as unskilled labour and where many die and are brought back to Nepal in coffins. Having been overworked to pay back loans taken to go to those lands, many have no choice but to continue on. Some having suffered harsh conditions have come to the conclusion that if they worked just as hard in Nepal they would prosper. Some have started raising goats, pigs, bannels, poultry even kalijes or are growing apples, oranges and even kiwi fruit. Some are working on barren lands with the aid of mechanisation to increase yields. There is going to be some Nepalis who want to go abroad but cannot do so because of the lockdown and the fact that they have not been vaccinated. Such persons too must be helped with finance to work for a livelihood in Nepal. After this they must be helped to find a market and sell the products of their labour. Such steps must be taken to 'Make in Nepal' a reality. Imports from outside need to be restricted.

The creating and making of slogans 'Make in Nepal' is very impressive and beguiles the ordinary Nepali citizen that something is being done for the Nepali producer. However we have got addicted to tendency of doing 'Eidharka Udhar and Udharka Edhar'. The profit in it is very good for not many personnel or production facilities are required. This has led to a stage where the custom made products of this country have to compete with the shiny glitzy products from abroad. Being a member of WTO there are perhaps some restrictions or barricades. We have a duty to ensure self sufficiency by protecting local industries. Some sort of restrictions have to be made with check points at our border to stop agricultural product from outside to come in quite easily into Nepal whilst similar products from here are prevented by various rules and regulations at foreign borders. Cannot we also arrange to enforce such regulations at our border so that foreign farmer's products – vegetables and fruits are not brought in to Nepal to create chaos in our day to day living?

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

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