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OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



VIEWPOINT
Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat



ENVIRONMENT
Batu Uprety

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FORTNIGHTLY



CPN-UML (UNIFIED SOCIALIST)

Newborn Party

INSIDE



NEPALI CONGRESS
Deuba In Command



AFGHAN CRISIS
Implications To Nepal



NEPAL-INDIA
Accelerating Development



अटुट छ यो साथ जुनीजुनीलाई समृद्धिको सौगात, मेरी उनीलाई

मेरी उनीलाई

मुद्दती खाता



उच्च व्याजदर

खाताका विशेषताहरू

- अवधि ६ महिना माथि देखि ५ वर्ष सम्म
- यस खातामा ५० हजार भन्दा माथिको रकम पुनः थप गर्दै जान पनि सकिनेछ
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Over five years of internal disputes finally led to the split of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist). A new party, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist), was born in the same ideological banner under the leadership of former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. Essentially, there is nothing different in the two parties except the top leaders. However, the split may invite a series of political uncertainty and instability in the country's politics. With the formation of new government and fall of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli led government, the country has already seen shakings in administrative units, civil service and police force. For good or bad, this will likely impact on the sense of security. The coming threat will be with the two remaining provincial governments, of Province 1 and 3, as both the governments have a thin majority in the provincial legislature. Given the nature of Nepalese politics, one cannot rule out the possibility of formation of a couple of governments in the coming one and half years. As the division of CPN-UML has brought far reaching consequences, we have decided to look into the formation of new CPN- Unified Socialist as our cover story for this issue. Along with this, we also cover other topics of contemporary importance.

Keshab Poudel

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UK Provides 130,000 Doses Of Astra Zeneca Vaccine



The United Kingdom has granted 130,000 doses of the Astra Zeneca vaccine to Nepal. The consignment was handed over at TIA by Ambassador Nicola Pollitt to chief specialist at Ministry of Health and Population Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh.

“We thank the Government and People of the UK for the cooperation,” tweets Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The British Embassy Kathmandu informed about this in its official Twitter handle.

We’re hopeful that this help protects the most vulnerable people against COVID-19, the embassy said.

Nepal And Thailand Hold Fifth Joint Commission Meeting

Nepal and Thailand discussed the challenges posed by the COVID-19 on the lives and livelihoods of peoples of both the countries and agreed to work together in combating the pandemic.

During the fifth meeting of Nepal-Thailand Joint Commission, which was held virtually, Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thani Thongphakdi, who led their respective delegations to the meeting, also took stock of overall state of bilateral relations between Nepal and Thailand and exchanged views on further promoting cooperation between the two countries.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal thanked the Royal Family of Thailand, the Thai Foreign Ministry, the Veerapuchong Foundation, and the Royal Thai Monastery, Lumbini for providing Nepal with medical equipment and supplies to combat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

On the occasion, a wide range of issues pertaining to Nepal-Thailand relations including technical cooperation,

trade and investment, tourism and culture, people-to-people contacts, and education were discussed.



While underscoring the need of enhancing economic engagements between the two countries, Foreign Secretary Paudyal also apprised the Thai delegation about the policy, legal, institutional and procedural reforms undertaken by the Government of Nepal with a view to creating an enabling environment for foreign investment in the country.

The two sides also exchanged views on enhancing cooperation at the regional level including through BIMSTEC.

The Nepali delegation comprised of the Ambassador

of Nepal to Thailand, senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The Thai delegation comprised of the Royal Thai Ambassador to Nepal, senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the officials of Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA).

COVID-19 Second Surge Badly Affects Vulnerable In Nepal: A Study

World Vision International (WVI) Nepal’s analysis of the impact of COVID-19 reveals that the second surge of COVID-19 in Nepal is having increasing ramifications amongst the most vulnerable in Nepal – on livelihoods, food security and nutrition, health, education, and protection.

According to the analysis, restrictions on movement and lockdowns have affected all aspects of life, from the ability to earn a living, to attend school, to procure food and medicine, and to access health services and routine vaccinations.

World Vision International (WVI) Nepal’s analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on households affirms the need for a multi-stakeholder response to respond to the ongoing effects of COVID-19.



At the time of the household survey, Nepal was experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 and reporting low rates of vaccination. With active intervention and support for vulnerable households, the most significant impacts can be reduced.

A policy brief set out the key findings of the rapid assessment and recommendations for stakeholders to collectively address the impact of the second surge of COVID-19 across multiple sectors on the most affected population. These recommendations will be essential in addressing potential future surges and supporting socio-economic recovery in particular areas such as livelihoods, food security and nutrition, health, education, protection, and disaster reduction.

The brief was also intended to complement other policy and programme based on past and ongoing assessments of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable in Nepal. For WVI Nepal, preparedness plans for future COVID-19 surges and adaptation of its current child-focused multiple sector programmes across 14 districts and 6 provinces, have also taken the recommendations into account.

Interaction With Indian Infrastructure Companies On Opportunities In Nepal

Nepal And Indian Authorities Explore Opportunities For Indian Companies

Embassy of India, in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and in presence of Ministry



of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Govt. of Nepal, organized a virtual interaction with major Indian infrastructure-sector companies on opportunities for

undertaking projects in Nepal.

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), Ms. Namgya Khampa addressed the participants and this was followed by Embassy's presentation on the sector. Keshab Kumar Sharma, Joint Secretary, MoPIT, Govt. of Nepal, also interacted with the participants and answered their queries. The session was moderated by CEO GMR Energy Mr. S N Barde,

In her remarks, DCM underlined that Nepal is one of India's most important neighbors, a special partner and a key actor in India's vision for a connected, integrated South Asian region. She also noted that in Nepal's efforts at economic development, infrastructure sector will play a critical role. Highlighting the emerging opportunities in this sector, DCM advised the companies to keep Nepal in their list of priorities and benefit from the upcoming opportunities.

Nepal Sanskrit University And Indian Embassy Organize International Conference

A one day International Seminar titled 'Sanskrit:



Source of Eastern Culture' was organized by Embassy of India in partnership with Nepal Sanskrit University, Dang on 22 August 2021 on the occasion of World Sanskrit Day.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Ambassador of India to Nepal Shri Vinay Mohan Kwatra in

Kathmandu. The Seminar was held in hybrid mode – physically and virtually – keeping in mind the Covid pandemic.

The event was graced by luminaries like Vangmaya Shatabdi Purush and great scholar of Nepal Satya Mohan Joshi, Padmashri awardee Chamukrishna Shastri and eminent scholars from India, Nepal, US, UK and Italy.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba delivered a video message on the occasion. The President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Vinay Sahasrabudhe also conveyed his best wishes for the event through video message.

Fifteen Sanskrit scholars from Nepal presented their research papers and more than 30 scholars from India and abroad presented their papers and views virtually on different topics including Sanskrit language, literature, Culture, Tantra, grammar Ayurveda, Jyotish and Yoga during the seminar.

Japan-Pledged Remaining COVID-19 Vaccine Arrives In Nepal

Japan-pledged remaining COVID-19 vaccines have arrived in Nepal. According to a press release, the remaining 767,420 doses have arrived in Kathmandu on 21 and 23 August, making the total number of doses to 1,614,740. Ambassador of Japan to Nepal Kikuta stated that this vaccine donation is a symbol of friendship between Japan and Nepal.

These vaccines are managed by COVAX Facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO; and with international communities for the mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic through a dose-sharing scheme.

The half of approximately 1.6 million doses were already delivered to Nepal on August 7 and 8 and have been used in the current vaccination campaign. The exact amount of vaccine donated from Japan to Nepal will be 1,614,740 doses in total. Ambassador KIKUTA stated, "The vaccine donation is a symbol of friendship between Japan and Nepal.

Japan is a country which keeps her words and I am pleased all the more that Japan will provide actually more than pledged 1.6 million doses vaccines by the end of August. We deeply appreciate the dedication and hard work of all related organizations in international community."

The Embassy of Japan is working together with the Government of Nepal; COVAX Facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO; and international community for the mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic as well as for the progress of post-COVID society and economy of Nepal.

The rollout of these vaccines will be administered by the Ministry of Health and Population with the support from UNICEF to reach citizens who are eagerly waiting to receive their jab across all regions.



Defense Secretary Paudyal Pays Courtesy Call On Acting COAS General Sharma

Newly Appointed Secretary at the Ministry of Defense Bigendra Sharma Poudyal paid a courtesy call on Acting COAS General Prabhu Ram Sharma at Nepal Army Headquarter.

During the meeting defense secretary Paudyal and COAS General Sharma discussed matters related to Ministry and Nepal Army.

During the visit of defense secretary Paudyal to Nepal Army Headquarter, he was briefed about the roles and various activities conducted by Nepal Army in various parts of the country and outside.



PM Deuba Inaugurates Jyapu Samaj Bhawan



Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba inaugurated the new building of Jyapu Samaj Jestha Nagarik Ananda Niketan Bhawan at Bagdole, Lalitpur. During the program Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra was also present.

This Bhawan is a model old-age home for senior citizens, and is a modern, disabled-friendly

facility for their proper care. It consists of 110-beds along with health check-up room, kitchen, necessary furniture and other equipments.

The construction of this Bhawan was taken up as a High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) under an Agreement between Government of India (GoI) and Government of Nepal (GoN), with GoI's financial assistance of NPR 5 crores.

According to a press release issued by Embassy of India, implementation of these projects is an important part of our development cooperation. These projects aim at community development at the grass-root level. On this occasion, the Ambassador thanked Jyapu Samaj and noted its contribution to Nepalese society.

EU Nepal Honors Humanitarian Workers



On the occasion of the World Humanitarian Day, European Union in Nepal honored and praised all humanitarian workers who are saving lives and helping the most vulnerable in crisis in Nepal.

“On the World Humanitarian Day,

Stephane Maicon from EU Delegation to Nepal and Finnish Ambassador to Nepal **Pertti Anttinen** visited STIDH Nepal and congratulated health workers for their first-rate service in treating more than 400 COVID patients,” tweeted EU in Nepal.

Nepal Urges Parties In Afghanistan To Ensure Safety, Security And Wellbeing Of People

The Government of Nepal has been closely following the recent developments in Afghanistan. It has urged all parties concerned to ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of the people.

“Nepal broadly supports the call from the international community to respect and facilitate the safe and orderly departure of all those who wish to leave the country through roads, airports or border crossings and calls upon those in a po-

sition to do so for the protection of human life and property and the maintenance of peace, order and stability,” notes a press release issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Nepal wishes to see lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, a fellow member of SAARC, and the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Afghanistan.



Lithuania Hands Over Medical Equipment To Nepal

A consignment of medical equipment and supplies from Lithuania to support Nepal fight the COVID pandemic was handed over to the Ministry of Health and Population.

The consignment was dispatched through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The support of the 13 EU Member States that have extended medical support to Nepal including Lithuania in the recent months is around Euro 12 Million (NPR 1.7 billion).

According to a press release issued by Delegation of the European Union to Nepal, Lithuania is one among the 13 EU Member States – Spain, Finland, France, Belgium, Germany, Slovenia, Austria, Malta, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Hungary being the others, responding to Nepal's call for assistance.

Nepal had appealed to the international community for support of medical equipment and supplies to fight a severe outbreak of Corona Virus on 10 May.

The medical supplies contributed by Lithuania include 5 breathing machines (mechanical ventilators) and 20 oxygen inhalers from the

state reserve, which is administered by the Ministry of Health of Lithuania. The total value of the humanitarian aid provided to Nepal amounts to almost Euro 50,000 (NPR 7.08 million)

“Lithuania stands with the people of Nepal through these testing times. Solidarity and joint efforts are crucial in the fight against the pandemic,” said Ambassador of Lithuania to Nepal Julius Pranevičius.

Representative of the Honorary Consul to Lithuania, joined by charge d'affaires and Deputy Head of EU Delegation to Nepal Stephane Maicon handed over the equipment to Deependra Raman Singh, Chief Specialist at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) at a programme organised at the Ministry of Health on 17 August.



BUSINESS BRIEF

India Hands Over Oxygen Plant To Nepal



Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra handed over a 960 LPM Medical Oxygen Plant to Minister of State for Health Umesh Shrestha at a ceremony organized at the Ministry of Health & Population.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy of India Kathmandu, this is as part of India's robust partnership with Nepal in tackling the

COVID-19 pandemic,

The Medical Oxygen plant has been installed at B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, and is designed to cater to providing 5 Litres Per Minute (LPM) per person amounting to a total capacity of 960 LPM. It thereby carries a capacity to serve 200 patients simultaneously.

At the ceremony, the Ambassador highlighted the significance of the deep rooted and multifaceted partnership between India and Nepal and reiterated that this gift symbolized India's continued commitment to Nepal in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister Shrestha mentioned that the donation of oxygen plant was a critical health infrastructure that would reinforce Nepal's efforts in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. He added that the assistance by Government of India two decades ago in building BPKIHS in Dharan was an important milestone, and addition of oxygen plant today is another milestone that would go a long way in serving people of Nepal particularly Provinces 1 and 2.

Oxygen is a very important clinical gas in health care centres and hospitals for treatment of COVID 19 patients, as has been experienced during the second wave of the pandemic in both India and Nepal.

With this DEBEL Medical Oxygen Plant that has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), hospitals now have the option of generating medical oxygen on-site, in a highly cost effective manner. India is the 4th country in the world to develop this technology, which utilizes Pressure Swing Adsorption technique and molecular sieve technology to generate oxygen directly from atmospheric air. The installation of the medical oxygen plant would help in avoiding the dependency of hospitals for scarce oxygen cylinders. This would help in reducing the logistics of transporting cylinders and also provide continuous and reliable oxygen supply available round the clock.

HBL Hands Over Renovated Building To Heart Center

Himalayan Bank Limited under its Corporate Social Responsibility has renovated and handed over the ward of Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre Bansbari, Kathmandu.

The Bank has provided financial support to the hospital worth Rupees Six Hundred Ninety-Two Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty-Two to renovate and maintain their General

Ward so that the hospital could provide better services to its patients. It had been difficult for the patients and the medical team to provide better medical service due to the degraded condition of the Ward.

The ward has been jointly inaugurated by Sushiel Joshi, General Manager of the Bank and Chandra Mani Adhikari, Executive Director of the Hospital. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Abhaya Bahadur Shah, Branch Manager, Maharajgunj, Himalayan Bank Ltd along with other staffs of the Bank as well as Hospital.



Himalayan Bank Signs Agreement With Forestry-based Industry

A business agreement has been signed between Himalayan Bank Limited and Federation of Forestry based Industry and Trade. As per the agreement, a special Credit Package under SME loan is being provided to members of the organization.

The maximum loan limit up to Rs. 12 Crores can be extended to an individual member at the minimum interest rate. Likewise, the Bank has also reduced the Loan Processing Fees, cash margin to be maintained for issuance of Letter of Credit/Bank Guarantee and commission on issuance of Bank Guarantee.

The interested members of the organization can avail this special package from all the branches of the Bank, inside and outside Kathmandu valley. Currently, the Bank has been serving its customers from 71 Branches, 146 ATM Booths and more than 5000 POS terminals.



Upper Trisuli-1 Hydropower Project Construction Begins

Under the investment of a Korean-led company, the construction of 216 MW Upper Trishuli-1, has already begun.

According to the project, the construction began following a first blast to remove rock for the construction of a 246-meter ventilation tunnel. Construction of main entrance tunnel, cable tunnel, main tunnel and other structures has been started.

The Korean company - Doosan Heavy Industries and Construction - has been awarded the contract in engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) model for the construction of the project.

The Upper Trishuli-1 is the largest hydropower project to be constructed with foreign direct investment and the generated power to be used for domestic consumption.

The total estimated cost of the project is USD 647.3 million (inclusive of construction period interest). Nine in-

ternational financial institutions have agreed to invest USD 453.2 million in the project. The remaining amount has been raised from equity. The project will generate 1.53 billion units of energy annually.

Out of the total annual energy generated from the project, 38.75 per cent will be generated in winter and 61.25 per cent in rainy season. The generated energy will be supplied to the national transmission system at the Trishuli-3B substation being constructed by the Nepal Electricity Authority.

The promoter of the project is Nepal Water and Energy Development Company where the Korean government-owned Korea southeast Power Company Limited (KOEN) and the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) under the World Bank Group have invested.

In addition, a maximum of 10 per cent share investment has been ensured for the project affected locals.

Financial management has been made for the project by raising 70

per cent loans and 30 per cent of equity.

The project is considered to be very attractive for the power system of the country as it is close to the Kathmandu load centre and 104 MW of electricity will be generated even in the winter season when there is high demand for electricity.

The construction of the project is targeted to be completed by November 2026.

World Bank's \$ 60M To Improve Higher Education Sector

The Government of Nepal and the World Bank signed a \$60 million financing agreement for the Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program to improve the quality of Nepal's higher education, scale up online learning, and expand access to academic institutions for underprivileged and vulnerable students.

"Investing in human capital is a key priority of the Government of Nepal to help young people in Nepal realize their development potential," stated Madhu Kumar Marasini, Finance Secretary. "This project supports the government's focus on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by strengthening the higher education sector and ensuring students all across Nepal including those from disadvantaged groups have access to quality education amid the pandemic's challenges."

The Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program builds on Nepal's successful higher education projects supported through results-based financing. It will help the Government of Nepal align its higher education sector with labor market needs, boost collabora-

tive research and entrepreneurship, improve governance, and access to quality higher education, especially for disadvantaged students. The COVID-19 pandemic has created strong incentives to expand online platforms and blended learning, which the program will help scale up across Nepal's universities.

The program will also expand targeted scholarships to help disadvantaged students pursue labor market-driven academic programs and support equity grants to higher education institutions in needy and disaster-affected areas in Nepal.

"An important aspect of Nepal's recovery efforts from the pandemic is to ensure that quality higher education is accessible, inclusive, and relevant to the demands of the labor market," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "This is key to helping Nepal build back better and strengthen its resilience. The World Bank is committed to support Nepal in this effort."

HBL, Diners Club International Sign Agreement

Himalayan Bank Limited (HBL) recently signed an agreement with Diners Club International, a subsidiary of Discover Financial Services, and part of the Discover Global Network, to become an issuer of Diners Club cards and a merchant acquirer to expand card acceptance for Diners Club International, Discover and Network Alliance cardholders in Nepal.

"HBL is proud to be the franchisee of Diners Club International in Nepal," said Ashoke SJB Rana, Chief Executive Officer, Himalayan Bank Limited. "By adding Diners Club International to our credit card product mix, we will soon be able to offer our merchants the ability to accept more card brands from around the world as part of Discover Global Network."

HBL will initially focus on growing acceptance in Nepal, enabling 146 ATM locations and more than 5000 point of sale terminals. This will allow Discover Global Network cardholders from Diners Club International, Discover and Network Alliance Partners in India, S. Korea, Brazil, Turkey and beyond to use their cards via HBL when traveling to Nepal. In the second phase of the partnership, HBL will begin issuing Diners Club International cards.

"Through our partnership with Himalayan Bank Limited, we continue to deliver increased global reach that our partners value as we gain acceptance in Nepal," said Annie Zhang, APAC Regional Managing Director International Markets at Discover Global Network. "As a key travel corridor for India, China, Japan, and Korea, this acceptance agreement will enable tourists to use their Diners Club International, Discover and Network Alliance Partner card products in Nepal, driving incremental spend for merchants and honoring customer card choice."



Afghanistan – Through A Wider Historical Lens



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

The last American soldier left Afghanistan today – a ghostly, lonely green spectre reminiscent of the painting of the last British soldier allowed to leave Jalalabad in 1842 to tell the tale after British disaster in Anglo-Afghan war. One wonders what tales the US and NATO soldiers will be telling their neighbours and children back home, what impact this trauma will have on them, and how they will see their own role in the new world order yet to evolve. One wonders what Afghans will be telling themselves too, those that worked with the occupiers and were able to leave the country, those that could not, and – most importantly – the much larger population in the country maimed, displaced or with loved ones that were killed by the occupiers or by those who were opposing them.

We, neighbours of Afghanistan in SAARC, too will have to reflect on these events and what they mean for us, to see things in the larger historical perspective. If anything, unlike the news we have been bombarded with these last few weeks by the Western media and mindlessly regurgitated by our own shallow Sahuji media, Afghanistan is bigger than Kabul airport and much more than the frightened crowd of locals milling about the gates for a chance to be ferried out by the departing occupiers. For the older of those among us, Afghanistan has been in the news and our consciousness for almost five decades, since July 1973 to be exact, when Mohammad Daud Khan (a cousin and brother-in-law of the king) overthrew the monarchy of King Zahir Shah and declared Afghanistan a republic and himself the president.

I still remember that day in Kiev being with fellow hostelites from Afghanistan, all of us students in the former Soviet Union. There wasn't much joy among them on the overthrow of the King, not with the few monarchists obviously but not with the bigger group of communist-leaning among them either. Similar to Nepal, the country is a historically evolved mosaic of at least fourteen major ethnic groups speaking some thirty languages from Indo-European, Turkic and Dravidian families. The only thing that unites them is Islam, but that too is deeply divided first into Sunni and Shia and those further into many more sub-divisions that, similar to other two

Abrahamic faiths of Christianity and Judaism, often regard the other sects as apostates destined for Jahannam (hell). Interestingly, although Mahmud of Ghazni set up an 11th Century empire stretching from much of today's Iran to Western India, the country continued to see the practice of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism well into the 19th Century. Only after the Afghan ruler Amir Abdul Rahman Khan conquered the region in 1896 did north-eastern Kafiristan or Nuristan become Muslim.

Modern Afghanistan dates from 1826 (almost half a century after Prithvi Narayan Shah united modern Nepal) when the Barakzai clan emerged on top after years of infighting and Dost Mohammad Khan became the ruler. He managed a deft diplomacy between contending powers, Russians to the north and the British to the east; but the British invaded in 1939, and had him removed to install a more pliant to them Shah Suja on the throne. (Interestingly 'Shah Suja' is an Afghan term for a Quisling or a Mir Jaffar, the Soviet-installed Babrak Karmal referred to as 2nd Shah Suja, and American-installed Hamid Karzai as 3rd Shah Suja. It is similar to Nepalis using the term Lendhup for Sikkim's turncoat). The situation remained in a flux till the end of the 2nd Anglo-Afghan war when the Gandamak Treaty (similar to the Sugauli Treaty imposed on Nepal in 1815) was signed in May 1879 giving the Delhi Viceroy primacy in Afghan affairs, including in international dealings "as per the wishes and advice of the British government".

More internal instabilities followed, with the assassination of the British envoy and Emirs abdicating and new ones succeeding. It was only in 1880 that the boundaries of modern Afghanistan were drawn by agreement between the British and the Russians. And it was only after the British were weakened following World War I that the new Emir Amanullah Khan declared independence from the British. It was promptly followed by the last and only month-long Anglo-Afghan war in August 1919 resulting in the Treaty of Rawalpindi recognizing the independence of Afghanistan.

Interestingly, Nepal's Rana Shogun Chandra Sumshere supplied Nepali troops to the British to fight

against the Turks, and when the Gallipoli Campaign in the Dardanelles straits was unsuccessful, the British decided to launch the 3rd and last Afghan war, including the use of Nepali troops. One still remembers old Nepali veterans referring to the battles they fought in the ‘Phrantey’ (Frontiers). Within Afghanistan, Emir Amanullah became the first head-of-state in the world to recognize Lenin’s Bolshevik government with whom he signed a friendship treaty before signing the Rawalpindi Treaty with the British. That “special relationship” with the Soviets lasted until December 1979.

It was Daud who set off the current cycle of instability when he overthrew his cousin the King in 1973. Earlier in 1953, he had become a prime minister and introduced many social reforms including allowing women to attend universities and to work. In difficult to comprehend bizarre Byzantine tribal politics, the Afghan communists overthrew and killed Daud in 1978, proclaimed themselves independent of the Soviets and started pursuing nationalistic and Islamic policies. But, as with communists in Nepal, they quickly broke up into factions as conservative and ethnic forces began opposing Daud-introduced social reforms.

In 1979, the American ambassador was killed as was the communist president Taraki. Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 December to bolster his communist successor Babrak Karmal’s regime, prompting widespread Afghan opposition to foreign occupation. The Mujahadeen that included Osama bin Laden, backed by Americans, Pakistanis and the Saudi Wahabis, gained ground forcing the Soviets to eventually withdraw by 1989. The Soviet puppet Najibullah was overthrown by the Mujahadeen in 1992, and took refuge in a UN compound. The Mujahadeen in turn fractured, leading to the rise of the Taliban (as well as al-Qaida) who executed Najibullah and hanged his body publicly. In 1998, Bill Clinton initiated cruise missile attacks against suspected al-Qaida bases in Afghanistan for attacks against US embassies in Africa, missed the Saudis but killed many Afghan civilians. Northern Alliance’s Masood opposing the Taliban was assassinated two days before 9/11 happened in the US. The rest, as they say, is history.

These are historical facts but what do they mean? To help us think through we have two unconventional historians, mostly ignored in orthodox academia, who give us underlying trends: Arnold Toynbee who sees beyond history of countries to civilizations in conflict, and L.S. Stavrianos who sees capitalism re-shaping societies as never before in human history.

If one pursued Toynbee’s thesis, Afghanistan was

the faultline between Syraic (Islamic) and Indic civilizations that, with Western globalization, morphed into one between it and the West. And its ‘universal church’ Islam too is fractured into many sects, the three primary political contenders being the Saudi Wahabis (backed by the Americans for rather crass capitalist interests), the Iranian Shias and the Pakistani Sunnis with Baathist secular reformist forces further to the West in retreat due to Western onslaught, although regrouping with Russian help. How these forces will play out, and in what permutations, in the years ahead is anyone’s guess.

Stavrianos takes an even more panoramic view of global history than Toynbee. He contends that three societies have dominated human history whose memes, the cultural counterpart of genes, find reflection in today’s societies as well to varying degrees. They are *kinship societies* from the dawn of human history till the rise of *tributary societies* (Toynbee’s civilizations) a few thousand years back. Some five hundred years back, *capitalist societies* arose in Western Europe which is now spread globally and divides the world into colonizers and the colonized, or “Third World-ized”. They each successfully met certain basic human needs of their times but soon faced contradictions: in ecology and human surroundings, in gender relations, in broader social relations and in war-conducting capacities which are “Ariadne’s threads” that are lifelines

More internal instabilities followed, with the assassination of the British envoy and Emirs abdicating and new ones succeeding. It was only in 1880 that the boundaries of modern Afghanistan were drawn by agreement between the British and the Russians.

from our ancient past.

Just take gender relations, as that is the most pronounced issue about Afghanistan currently and which will shackle the way it will negotiate its future. In kinship societies, women were as much part of the daily production process as men and hence more equal than in latter stages. In tributary societies, they were confined to the domestic sphere. However, in capitalist societies, they have been brought out into the factories as labour with traditional household and child-rearing burden only ameliorated to an extent by technology (washing machines, birth control pills, etc.) and only in advanced capitalist societies.

How will kinship and tributary memes still deeply embedded in Afghan culture contend with capitalist revenue needs not only of the Afghan state but also of its collaborators such as Chinese capitalism? How will the future unfold for the four strands of Ariadne’s Thread in this crossroad of Asia? Although only time will tell, we can make sensible conjectures that the road ahead will be very rough for Afghanistan and its neighbours.

CPN-UML (UNIFIED SOCIALIST)

Newborn Party

Relying on same ideology of Marxist and Leninist and eulogizing Pushpa Lal, Madan Bhandari and Manmohan Adhikari, Madhav Kumar Nepal-led newborn party has nothing different from the mother party, Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist and Leninist (CPN-UML). However, former Prime Minister Nepal, one of the founders of CPN-UML, decided to go with the new one. Although it is individually too risky in his five decades of political career to lead the new party, 69-year-old Nepal, former CPN-UML general secretary, had no option left to get rid of the political humiliation he felt from his old colleague K.P. Sharma Oli. As the party has been divided on the ego of two individuals, the unification can take place at any time as vertical splits and mergers are regular characters of Nepalese political parties. Breaking apart is common not only with communist parties but also with the rightist, centrist and regional parties. However, the division is more frequent with the communist parties and Nepal-led faction is a recent instance

BY KESHAB POUDELL

As soon as the Election Commission issued the registration certificate to Communist Party of Nepal Unified Socialist (CPNUS) under the leadership of Madhav Kumar Nepal, years of internal disputes and differences of CPN-UML have come to an end.

With this split, communists have maintained their history of breaking the party and declaring their rival comrade as betrayer, capitalist, bourgeoisie, pro-imperialist, anti-national, anti-democratic and so on. Nepal and Oli, the rival leaders, used these words heavily against each other.

For long, Nepal and Oli had stood side by side, together, to transform a small Naxalites background communist party into a national party with two thirds of majority in the parliament.

Although Maoist Center led by Prachanda and other smaller



radical communist parties like Nepal Communist Party Masal, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party and some fringe parties are there, CPN-UML led all the elections and country's political sphere under the leadership of Nepal and Oli.

Nepal and Oli: Different Characters

Although CPN-UML leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal and K.P. Sharma Oli shared power for long to drive CPN-UML and made it the largest political party of Nepal, their personal backgrounds and family backgrounds are different.

Born in a middle class Brahmin family in Rautahat District, Nepal, who joined the communist movement in his school days, was groomed in an extended family in Gaur. With enough cultivated land, Nepal's family was economically moderate.

However, this was not with K.P. Sharma Oli whose parents migrated from Hill to Jhapa as a marginal farmer. Nepal joined the communist movement with moderate leaders.

However, Oli joined the communist movement as a rebel for a revolution that aimed to wipe out landlords.

Recently migrated, Oli's parents had a bit of difficulty in terms of economic status. Thus, Oli relied on Mainali duo of Jhapa and founders of infamous Jhapa movement to pursue his rebellion.

From his moderate family, Nepal learned the skill of accommodation and reconciliation. However, Oli was groomed in a different atmosphere. Oli's thought is inspired by elimination of enemy class whereas Nepal has the spirit of accommodation.

Oli is blunt, cunning and skilful in attracting the masses. However, Nepal is sober, comparatively with lesser skills of attracting the masses. CPN-UML thrived because Nepal's skill of building organization with compromise and Oli's cunning leadership quality to attract the mass.

Legacy of Party

Inheriting a strong legacy from popular communist leader

Madan Bhandary, who died in a mysterious jeep accident along with his colleague Jeev Raj Ashrit, Nepal and Oli duo, though both of them have different political backgrounds, with Nepal being more on the Marxist side and Oli being a radical Naxalite, had been able to put the party in the current position.

In attracting the masses, late Bhandary knew the skill and had a way to lure the people. The quality of attracting the mass helped him to defeat Nepali Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in general elections in 1990. This win against Bhattarai changed the political future of CPN-UML and landscape of politics of Nepal.

Although the party faced a major split led by Bam Dev Gautam, CP Mainali and others in 1997 on Mahakali ratification issues, Nepal and Oli were able to establish the party's position compelling Gautam's group to merge again.

Facing all kinds of turmoil, Nepal and Oli led the party jointly,



hand by hand. They crushed the internal rebellion successfully time and again forcing many founding members and big stalwarts like Radha Krishna Mainali, CP Mainali, Devi Prasad Ojha, Mohan Chandra Adhikari and Ashok Rai and so many others to quit it.

Following the peace agreement, Nepal Communist Party Maoist, a rebel party led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai emerged as a main challenger to CPN-UML base. In 2008 Constituent Assembly Elections, CPN-UML was nearly wiped out due to the Maoists.

However, the euphoria of Maoist party did not last long. It faded away within three years. In the second elections of Constituent Assembly, CPN-UML, under the leadership of Nepal and Oli, retained its position emerging as the second largest party, pushing Maoists into the third place.

With the promulgation of new constitution and rise of K.P. Sharma Oli as prime minister in 2016, the political reality of Nepal changed. In the local elections of 2017 and national and provincial level of 2018, the election alliance with Maoist had paid Nepal and Oli party well.

The alliance secured two

thirds majority wiping out Nepal's oldest Nepali Congress Party as if it was nowhere. Out of 165 seats contested, Nepali Congress secured just 18 seats and remaining seats went to CPN-UML and Maoist Center alliance.

The merger of 2019 between CPN-UML and Maoist Center had completely changed Nepal's political landscape and communist alliance emerged as the largest party in Nepal.



However, this unity turned out costly for both the factions as they split again.

With the rise of CPN-UML under the leadership of Nepal and Oli,

many communist leaders turned as politically irrelevant. Rising as a small party backed by students in 1990, CPN-UML today held most important positions including President, Prime Minister and Ministers. Many of CPN-UML's sympathizers and party members are leading judiciary and other bureaucratic positions.

Although some of his die-hard supporters, who pushed former general secretary Nepal to the brink to break relations

with Oli, have returned to Oli camp at the last minute, former PM Nepal, a well known communist politician with a caliber of political maneuvering, has the task to show that the split cannot make any difference to him about the followers and defectors.

Merging between CPN-ML and Nepal Communist Party Marxist, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) was born in 1991

after the political change of 1990. There were several splits of small scale happening.

After the split in 1997 on the issue of ratification of Mahakali



Treaty by Bam Dev Gautam led group against Nepal and Oli led CPN-UML, this is the second major split in the party.

After a long process of verifications and application, the Election Commission (EC) has recognized the CPN (Unified Socialist) as a new political party. A meeting of the EC office bearers in the evening of 25 August gave the verification certificate to the CPN (Unified Socialist) led by Nepal.

Although the EC also recognized new political party, Democratic Socialist Party -led by Mahantha Thakur on the same day, the split of CPN-UML under a political heavyweight Nepal is politically important.

With the verification of 56 central members and 30 parliamentarians, the EC registered the new party based on the Ordinance on political parties, 2078 BS.

Nepal's Statement

"I had never imagined splitting the party. However, we are compelled to choose this way and open a new party as UML Chair KP Sharma Oli had closed

the doors for us and our supporters," said Nepal. "Oli attempted to block all avenues with the intention of preventing him from opening a new party or exposing his wrong deeds."

Although almost two dozen of his close comrades including senior leader Bhim Rawal, Yubraj Gyawali, Amrit Bohara, Astalaxmi Shakya, Raghuj Pant, Ghanshyam Bhusal and Yogesh Bhattarai deserted him at the last minute and returned to Oli led fac-

tion, Nepal, who has faced all political humiliation in the last several years from Oli, did not change his mind.

With the support from former Prime Minister Jhalnath Khanal and large numbers of other supporters, Nepal has shown that there is a limit to tolerance from humiliation.

"We had two options - surrender to Oli or open a revolutionary party. Although we are a different party, we are ready for unity or electoral





alliance with communist forces,” said Nepal.

Ideological Base

Although there are two CPN-UML factions with different tail name led by Oli and Nepal, both the parties still hold the same ideology. They will have different election symbols but both the parties have similar flags of sickle and hammer and same posters. Only difference between them are party leaders and elections symbols and one is in ruling side and the other is in opposition.

Chairman of newly formed CPN -Unified Socialist Nepal has made it clear that his party has set a goal to move forward on the path of socialism by protecting the norms and values of people’s multi-party democracy.

The ideology of people’s multi-party democracy propounded by Madan Bhandari is also the core base of Oli led CPN-UML.

The new party believes that freedom with equality could be achieved by ending oppression and discrimination, and the party statute mentioned that party’s strategic goal is scientific socialism.

The statute mentioned that building a basis for socialism along with social justice and democratic norms and values by developing na-

tional capitalism with the country’s socio and economic transformation through peaceful struggle and democratic means are the short-term goals of the party.

“We set up a new party rebelling against wrong tendencies, ideas and values,” said Nepal addressing the media gathering. “We all are equal and there will be no discrimination against any members of our party.” Former Prime Minister Nepal clarified that they had to revolt as the CPN (UML)

leadership did not follow any rules and regulations.

There would be a 151-member central committee including 115 full members with 17 office-bearers comprising one chairperson, one senior leader, seven vice-chairpersons, one general-secretary and seven secretaries as well as 36 alternative members.

Nepal has said it will move forward on the path of socialism by protecting the norms and values of people’s multi-party democracy, a political notion propagated by the

late UML general secretary Madan Bhandari.

The CPN (UML) has already adopted ‘people’s multi-party democracy’ as its guiding principle.

History of CPN-UML

Following the dissolution of parliamentary system and banning of political parties in 1961 by King late Mahendra, Nepal Communist Party also went to exile in India. This paved the way for the division of the party.





Following the division in international communist movements into Soviet Union led faction and Mao led Chinese ideology, Nepalese communists also got divided into two factions.

Supported by then Soviet Union, late Keshar Jung Rayamajhi headed the Nepal Communist Party that was ideologically closer to Soviet Union. Similarly, there were many Communist groups opposed to this camp with claims to be the follower of Mao's revolution.

Within pro-Maoist communist party, the Naxalite party was born in Jhapa led by R.K. Mainali, CP Mainali, K.P. Oli, Jhalnath Khanal and others. At that time youth leaders like Madhav Kumar Nepal were in the middle as Nepal Communist Party Marxist was active under the leadership of Man Mohan Adhikary.

Established with the unification of Kosi Coordination Committee, Naxal Groups and a faction of dissolved Nepal Communist Party in 1976, CPN-UML emerged integrating all, including Nepal Communist Party Marxist.

Although Nepal Communist

Party was established in 1949, there are over two dozen communist parties existing as UML split following 2054 BS over the issue related to the Mahakali treaty.

Split in CPN-UML will have long and short term implications in the country's politics. This split will put Nepal into a chaotic and unstable political course with Prachanda led Maoist, Nepal led CPN-UML Unified Socialist and other fringe communists on one side and Oli led CPN-UML on the other side.

Reaction In CPN-UML

Just a day after the EC issued a certificate of registration to new party, CPN-UML has announced to hold 10th General Convention from November 26 to 28, 2021. Forced by newly formed party to retain the party workers from leaving it, Oli led CPN-UML had no option other than to announce this.

To show his more accommodative and tolerable posture, Oli has formed a seven-member Task Force led by rebel Vice Chairman Bhim Rawal to nominate 10 percent central members and give full shape to the party's various departments.

CPN-UML also formed a Task Force to sort out all the differences and address the demands. The committee includes Vice Chairman Rawal, General Secretary Ishwar Pokharel, Deputy General Secretaries duos Bishnu Prasad Poudel and Ghanashyam Bhusal and Standing Committee members Surendra Pandey and Lekha Raj Bhatta.

Although CPN-UML leader and former prime minister Oli has still many advantages in the party and national politics with big coffers in hand and set up of erstwhile organizations, Nepal's rebellion from the party has to pay him heavy cost.

As CPN-UML has already lost two provincial governments including Lumbini and Gandaki, it will be difficult for UML to retain two remaining governments in Bagmati and Province 1.

Replacing his loyalist chief minister in Bagmati province to reward Ashta Laxmi Shakya as new chief minister, Oli has for now temporarily kept control of the government. However, the formation of new party under the leadership of Madhav Kumar Nepal can make many differences.

Ratification Imperative For MCC Compact Agreement



BY: RAM SHARAN MAHAT

The MCC assistance from the United States of America appears to have been originated in response to the UN general assembly's declaration of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000 with targets to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and for gender equality and emphasis on human rights, infrastructure development and improvement in living standard. There was also an emphasis on development partnership with aid from developed countries to achieve the goals in developing countries. After the conclusion in 2015, MDG was succeeded by the UN adoption of Sustainable Development Goals. I recall my participation representing Nepal in the UN International Conference 2002 on Development Finance in Monterrey, Mexico participated by heads of UN, World Bank, IMF, WTO and over 50 heads of state/government and 200 ministers. While addressing the conference, US President George Bush made commitment to raise US development assistance by 50 percent with additional \$5 billion annually through millennium challenge accounts (MCA).

Subsequently the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was established by US Congress in 2004 as foreign aid agency for bipartisan aid to promote economic growth, poverty reduction and strengthening institutions. MCC provides grants to low-income and lower-middle-income countries through competitive selection based on specific criteria and indicators regarding demonstrated commitment to democratic rule, economic freedom, good governance, civil liberties, political rights, funding for education, child health and human development. As of September 2017, MCC had partnerships with 46 countries around the world including Nepal after selection from among a much larger number of candidate countries.

The threshold phase of MCC was approved for Nepal in 2011 at the government request which was followed up by a diagnostic study that concluded energy and transport sectors as binding constraints for higher economic growth for which large scale Compact assistance was required. In 2014 MCC approved to support Compact program with a grant between US \$300 and 700 million. MCA Nepal office was started in 2015 with national experts that conducted detailed feasibility studies for specific projects for negotiation. The Compact agreement was signed in September 2017 with the allocation of \$500 million MCC grant and a \$130 million domestic counterparts for the identified energy and road development projects. The energy component comprises a 400 KV power transmissions line of 312 km length starting from northeast of Kathmandu at Lapsifedi to the west and south side including Kathmandu-Ratmate-Damauli-Butawal, also Ratmate-Hetauda with three major substations, and cross border transmission line from Butawal to Gorakhpur of India. The transportation project includes the repair and up-gradation of certain portions of the East-West highway.

There has been the involvement of each Nepal government and political party while in power-seeking MCC assistance

from the beginning. But unfortunately, the Compact agreement signed in September 2017 is yet to be ratified by parliament as required for every Compact aid receiving country, despite Nepal's prior commitment to ratify it by September 2019. There had been a dispute against the agreement by a section of

the previous ruling Communist Party of Nepal resulting in the obstruction to its presentation for parliamentary ratification. The obstruction stems from various false criticisms based on political prejudice, confusion, falsehoods and misinterpretation of the Compact agreement.

False Criticisms

The critics consider the MCC project as a compromise to national sovereignty misinterpreting the project agreement as US laws prevailing over Nepali laws and calling MCC as part of Indo Pacific strategy (IPS) of the USA with the military alliance. Sovereignty means the supreme power of the state within the territory, with the authority to govern the country free from external control. This argument that MCC undermines national sovereignty is totally false, as the agreement is related to purely development assistance projects and its implementation without any intervention to state authority. There is no component of military or any strategic alliance as part of MCC. There is no need at all for the country to be a member of IPS.

The critics tie the MCC with the IPS pointing out a comment reportedly made by David Ranz, an acting deputy assistant secretary of state department for South Asia during Nepal visit in 2019 indicating the US grant under MCC as part of IPS that seems to have an economic wellbeing objective also in addition to security and governance components. Although there is no connection between MCC and the Indo-Pacific strategy, it is incorrect to conflate the MCC assistance to promote economic growth and poverty alleviation as being the same as the economic wellbeing component of IPS. The Compact agreement prohibits the use of grant aid for security training, military-related activities and affecting environment and maternity. The MCC program of the USA was started much earlier in 2004 and the Compact agreement was signed with Nepal in 2017 before IPS which was announced only in 2018. Obviously, MCC that has global scope can not be considered as a part of IPS with a security component. The critics also consider MCC as a counterweight to China's Belt and Road Initiative. But MCC agreement does not comprise of any element opposed to any particular nation including China. China's closest neighbor Mongolia has also benefitted from MCC Compact assistance.

The Compact assistance is the largest grant Nepal has ever signed. The need for parliamentary ratification of the agreement is to ensure legal status for the provisions of the Compact agreement in case of contradiction with internal regulations. In this context, there is confusion about US laws to prevail in Nepal. It must be understood that the Ministry of law in Nepal has given clearance to the agreement, as MCC guidelines, not nec-

essarily US law, applies with respect to MCC assistance only to prevail in case of contradiction with local regulations, as applicable in all recipient countries.

The procurement and manpower appointments for the project are based on open competitive bidding to ensure greater efficiency and timely project completion. With respect to assistance projects from other development partners also like World Bank and ADB, procurement and other implementation guidelines are defined which do not often conform with domestic regulations. The procurement guideline based on global competitive bidding under the MCC project is uniquely favorable compared to most other bilateral grant assistance that limits the procurement from the donor country.

There are also other false criticisms of the agreement in relation to the need for Indian approval to a project component, project management by MCA, audit authority and intellectual property right about the project, ownership and control of the power transmission line and land, and other issues.

The objection to the need for Indian approval for a project component is not justified. The Indian support is needed only for the use of 120 Indian territories starting from the Nepal-India border to install cross border transmission line from Utawala to Gorakhpur, which will facilitate large-scale export of power to India being generated in Nepali river corridors. This will encourage public and private investment in major clean energy power projects.

There is also confusion about Nepal that is responsible for project management. The critics interpret it as under MCC management without any control from the Nepal government. The agreement has clearly mentioned about government's principal responsibility for overseeing and management of the program. To that end, the government has formed MCA-Nepal under Bikas Samiti Act, with a board of directors chaired by the Finance Secretary and memberships comprised of officials from other relevant ministries and national institutions. The MCA is empowered to oversee, manage and implement the project and related activities on behalf of the government. While MCA recruits manpower with open competitive bidding including foreign nationals for the project as per the agreement, the appointment of senior MCA staff is the government responsibility.

The critics consider the intellectual property right of the project as monopolized by MCC. But Nepal has the intellectual property right relating to project implementation based on project monitoring of design, procurement, construction and other related issues. There is no need to give intellectual property rights to MCC on the use of Nepali contribution of \$ 130 million, while there is no restriction to Nepal in providing the right with regard to the use of COMPACT grant. The report based on project monitoring and evaluation with intellectual property implications can be made open through the website.

There is also confusion about audit authority with respect to the project. Nepal's Auditor General has the right to periodic auditing with respect to funds contributed by both the Nepal government and the MCC grant. In addition, the government

can also permit auditing on the use of an MCC grant to be conducted by an independent auditor approved by MCC and named on the list of local auditors approved by the auditor general or a US certified accounting firm selected in accordance with MCC guidelines. The critics also think of MCC control of transmission line and the used land until an uncertain period which is untrue. These assets are under government ownership and control during project implementation and afterward.

While the agreement contains provisions permitting either side to withdraw from the project with prior notice of 30 days, the critics think the withdrawal right is limited to the MCC side only. Exchange of letters will be required for any change in project scope. They also think MCC can unilaterally amend the agreement which is not correct. Amendment to MCC agreement is possible with a written agreement. There is also an allegation of diplomatic immunity to MCC staff for any harm in course of project implementation. The reality is that diplomatic immunity covers MCC officials located in the US embassy but not to non-diplomatic officials recruited for project execution in the field. Such diplomatic immunity is generally provided to senior officials of other bilateral and multinational bodies with respect to acts performed by them in an official capacity.

Conclusion

The MCC Compact assistance represents purely an economic development project of Nepal to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty with sustainable development by addressing infrastructural constraints, particularly in the energy and transport sectors. The project will increase the supply of electricity and lower transportation costs thereby promoting higher investment, employment opportunities, revenue and economic growth. The construction of a high voltage power transmission line covering a major part of the master plan to evacuate power generation by various major projects will enable power distribution and large-scale export trade.

There has been the involvement of each government in the past to receive MCC assistance in the process of threshold stage and compact agreement. The MCC projects were chosen by the Nepal government itself after detailed studies. The approval by the USA based on competitive selection was in recognition of Nepal's democratic rule, civil rights, economic freedom, anti-corruption and governance laws and human investment. In the pure economic interest of the country, there is the need at present to avoid further unnecessary delay for parliamentary ratification of the agreement. The COMPACT agreement was signed in 2017 by a coalition government led by Nepali Congress with an NCP-Maoist partnership, which was almost like the present government. There is an expectation of parliamentary ratification of the agreement soon, as the opposition party NCP-UML is also supportive of the agreement. There is not any aspect in the Compact agreement that undermines our constitution, foreign policy, autonomy and national interest. Given the criticisms against the agreement based on prejudice, confusion and misinterpretation, clarification can be sought from relevant authorities on any aspect.



NEPALI CONGRESS

Deuba In Command

Accepting the formula presented by his rivals led by Poudel on active membership dispute, PM Deuba has shown he is flexible to retain party unity

By A CORRESPONDENT

By accepting all the demands put forth by his opponents led by Ram Chandra Poudel in settling the active membership issue, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has shown that he does not mind compromising to accommodate his colleagues.

However, his competitors and rivals have not reciprocated with him. Soon after signing the agreement, Poudel has issued another statement asking him to release the name of active members.

To find an amicable settlement on the dispute of active membership, both the groups spent weeks of exercise. Issuing another statement demanding publication of the list of members, Poudel has shown that the battle continues. A decision taken after hectic meetings and discussion for weeks remains fragile.

Coordinated by Krishna Prasad Sitaula with two members, Ramesh Lekhak and Minendra Rijal, the task force handed over the consensus document.

As many thought the committee's report will end the active membership row and the Nepali Congress can hold its 14 general convention as scheduled, senior leader Poudel's statement has shown that there remain many disputes ahead the convention.

The NC had formed the three-member Task Force led by Sitaula to resolve the active membership dispute after the Active Membership Probe Committee was unable to settle the dispute of some districts.

Following the finalization of the active membership, the village

/ town ward convention of the Nepali Congress scheduled for September 3 is now set to be held within the stipulated date.

bership list will be sent to all wards and election committees across the country.

The committee expects the



Leaders and cadres have already started to go to districts and villages for the convention. There are nearly 900,000 active members, who are going to cast their votes at the party's village / town ward conventions. According to the party's statute, the active members can elect their ward committees and regional representatives.

The party has decided to hold its 14th General Convention from November 25-29 in Kathmandu.

The active membership has already been handed over to the party's Central Election Committee after Deuba signed the active membership details. Mahadev Prasad Yadav, coordinator of the Election Committee, informed that the details of the active membership have already been sent to all 77 districts.

According to Yadav, all printing work has been completed and 7,000 to 8,000 bundles of active mem-

election materials to reach 41 accessible districts within the stipulated time as per the plan. However, the remaining 36 districts in the mountains and remote hills have some transportation challenges.

For the convention, the Election Committee has appointed election officers in all districts from the Democratic Lawyers' Society (DLS) affiliated legal practitioners who are considered close to the party.

According to the new statute, the NC Central Working Committee will have a total of 168 members including a president, two vice presidents, two general secretaries, eight joint general secretaries, a treasurer and 154 members.

According to the revised calendar of events endorsed by the party's Central Working Committee, the NC will hold the village and municipal ward level convention on September 3, the village / municipality level con-



means a blow to Poudel.

Knowing this weakness of Poudel, Prime Minister Deuba does not bother much about the political stunt. Although Poudel and his group have recently launched a massive mob against Deuba organizing protest, it does not reduce the control and influence of Deuba. Given the present circumstances, PM Deuba does not have any alternative inside the party.

“It is unacceptable for us to change the date of general convention. We will not allow Sher Bahadur Jee to manipulate the political position of the party,” said senior leader Poudel. “The list of active members must be corrected and the convention should be held in stipulated date,” demanded Poudel.

Although the general convention has already been deferred twice, it is still uncertain about the coming convention given the upsurge of COVID-19. Despite the efforts of Poudel and his group to challenge Deuba’s leadership, they don’t have political strategists and leaders to stand against PM Deuba. Whether one likes it or not, there is no alternative in the NC right now to replace Deuba’s leadership.

vention on September 12, the province assembly regional convention on September 17, the House of Representatives regional convention / district convention with only one constituency will be on September 25.

Similarly, the NC has decided to hold the district level convention with more than one constituency of federal parliament on September 26, the province level convention on October 27 to 29 and the central general convention on November 25 to December 2 in Kathmandu.

Deuba’s Stand

As Prime Minister Deuba is spending much of his time in settling the differences within the ruling alliance for the expansion of the cabinet, his detractors in the party led by Poudel have been making efforts to unseat him from the post of party president in the coming General Convention.

Known for his political shrewdness which he has acquired from his onetime mentor Grija Prasad Koirala,

Prime Minister Deuba too has a big weapon against senior leader Poudel.

As Poudel’s severe political opponent and former associated general secretary Govinda Raj Joshi, whose party general membership is suspended due to the pressure of Poudel and his group, is quietly watching the drama, PM Deuba may use Joshi card against Poudel whenever he feels comfortable.

NC senior leader Poudel has almost lost his political ground in Tanahu district politics due to rivalry with Joshi. Giving political space to Joshi



Communicating The Ecosystem-Based Adaptation



Nicola Pollitt, currently the British Ambassador to Nepal, in her article ‘climate code red: Nepal at the frontline’ (26 August 2021 in The Kathmandu Post) advises to invest in forests with clear message: “the development of Nijgadh airport is a good example – where valuing the existing forests and biodiversity of the area against what could be gained by constructing the airport would provide useful data to base decisions on.” Further, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) calls to prevent, halt and reverse ecosystems degradation everywhere. It clearly reflects the importance & multiple benefits, and urgency of conserving, managing, restoring and/or creating ecosystems for the benefit of humankind and of all life-forms. Forest ecosystems have additional benefits in meeting human needs, regulating climate change and reducing its impacts. Countries informing about ‘carbon neutrality’ or ‘net zero emission’ also commit for conserving or creating greens.

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) to climate change impact is comparatively a new concept. Although understanding in conserving and sustainably utilising natural resources is deeply rooted with human civilisation, public awareness and understanding on the importance and multi-benefits of EbA is relatively weak at different levels – policy and decision-making to implementation levels. EbA options or EbA mainstreamed into community-based adaptation activities are under implementation to address climate change impacts. Inadequate understanding has limited its use for long-term and sustained multi-benefits. Nepal has implemented and is implementing EbA options at rural areas and will implement in urban municipalities as well (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/08/09/advancing-eba-options-nepal/>).

BY: BATU UPRETY

In recent years, people advocate for EbA, and nature-based solution (NbS) to reduce climate vulnerability and increase benefits by regulating climate, and conserving forests and biodiversity. Payment for ecosystem services (PES) is also practised in few countries. Convention on Biodiversity defines 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 while IUCN defines NbS as actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits. PES, also known as payments for environmental services, deals with the transfer of financial resources from beneficiaries of certain environmental services to those who provide services.

On 18 August 2021, Global EbA Fund, IUCN and UNEP with support from Germany’s Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety organized a webinar on *overcoming barriers to scale-up EbA in Asia-Pacific*. Innovative EbA solutions were shared with examples, experiences and learning to overcome key barriers related to knowledge, governance and financing. It provided inputs to newly launched Global EbA Fund that intends to scale-up EbA options to “build awareness and understanding, address planning and other governance gaps, and seek solutions to finance gaps.” The Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) outlined lack of awareness of the role of natural assets, weak policy and regulatory environment and govern-

ance, and limited access to finance' as key barrier to scale-up NbS, including EbA.

In the webinar, resource persons shared their experiences and urged to raise awareness, enhance understanding and communication, and launch pilot projects based on clear understanding on what, when and where to act. Success of the pilot initiatives would result to scaling-up EbA options at horizontal and vertical scales. Finance, technology, capacity building and partnerships are essential 'means of implementation' for EbAs.

In general, biological treatments are cost-effective, long-lasting and sustainable and provide multiple benefits. Effective implementation of EbA options would benefit people & communities, and sequester carbon, reduce effects of temperature, and provide 'free' oxygen besides conserving water and soil. Importance of 'under-valued' free oxygen was greatly realised by CoVID patients.

Inadequate understanding on EbA results to irrational use of this word. Multi-stakeholders may be unfamiliar to this concept and may have frequently used without properly understanding its real meaning and application. In mid-1990s, environmental impact assessment (EIA) was used as 'buzz' word. A brief field supervision report was also named as 'EIA report'. Still, many people consider project-level EIA as a 'panacea' to all development misconducts due to lack of or inadequate understanding on the type, scale and coverage of assessment.

EbA is an effective and long-lasting sustainable option for climate change impacts. Communication of EbA is equally necessary to multi-stakeholders, policy and decision-makers or politicians to technocrats, EbA options implementers to local beneficiaries or potential victims of climate-induced disasters. Few experiences, lessons, good practices and learning are generated. Climate vulnerable communities enjoy incentives or benefits of ecosystem services they get from implementation of EbA options. This can be enhanced through additional policy initiatives to restore degraded ecosystems. Policy interventions would contribute to expand EbA options at horizontal and vertical scales. Furthermore, loca-

tion-specific knowledge, experiences and learning would add value in advancing EbA options.

Urgency of adaptation is further realised. Qatar's petroleum corporation is included in the top 100 CO₂ emitters list. But its updated NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) focuses on climate change adaptation while Nepal's second NDC can be levelled as 'mitigation focussed' despite our GHGs emissions of only 0.056% of the global totals.



C l i m a t e change advocates are urging governments to take strong measures to reduce GHGs emissions. EbA reduces climate change effects and plants sequester carbon. Realising multi-benefits, countries are now engaged in prioritizing EbAs in whole or partly. How-

ever, it would require enhancing knowledge and understanding in at least 3 levels of organizations that are mandated for policy/decision-making, planning and allocating finance, and implementation.

Planning and implementing organizations responsible for urban settlements in developed and high-income countries are mandated to conserve existing and/or promote/ensure greenery to maintain or create clean, green and healthy environment. Authorities are engaged in raising and/or conserving trees as an integral part of urban development. Evergreen trees with large leaves are effective in sequestering carbons. In a nutshell, EbA provides multiple opportunities to ensure environmental safety, adapt to climate change effects, reduce its potential threats, conserve water and soil and improve their quantity and quality. Understanding the multiple benefits of EbA options, Nepal may wish to promote greening the infrastructures, including urban settlements. *Former Joint-Secretary (Tech) and Chief, Climate Change Management Division, then Ministry of Environment, E-mail: upretybk@gmail.com*

AFGHAN CRISIS

Implications To Nepal

The evacuation of over 1000 Nepalis from Afghanistan indicates that the Afghan crisis has some immediate economic implications for Nepal. However, how long term security implications of the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban are yet to be seen

BY KESHAB POUDELL

“I would like to inform all my near and dear ones that I left Kabul today and arrived in Almaty, Kazakhstan safely. Will be back with more details in coming days,” Rajendra Aryal, country representative of FAO to Afghanistan, wrote on his Facebook wall on August 18.

“Three years in Afghanistan have passed, and it was a tough journey through several rocky roads, turbulences and difficulties. Thanks to the dedication, hard work and motivation of my international and national colleagues, and the strong support and inspiration of my family, I successfully completed this journey with several major achievements. I would like to thank all my friends and colleagues for standing by me throughout this period, and motivating and supporting me to make things happen,” Aryal had written on his Facebook wall on August 14.

Aryal was the only Nepali working in the senior-most position in Afghanistan in the UN. As he had successfully completed his three years two days before the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, he is an eyewitness of the debacle of Afghanistan.

“The U.S. Government has facilitated the departure of all Nepali Gurkhas who worked at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. It was an honor for us to welcome the first flight back to Nepal this morning after a stop in the Middle East. We are grateful for their bravery and service,” US Embassy noted on its Facebook site.

Just after the fall of Afghanistan, the Nepal government called for the evacuation of an estimated 1,500 Nepalis working as security staff with embassies and with international aid

groups in Afghanistan. The U.S. government is the first foreign government to bring Nepali staff safely to Kathmandu.

As there are no regular flights, Nepal has been evacuating stranded Nepalis with coordination from the United States, Germany, Canada, United Kingdom and other countries with evacuating flights.

“We have formally written to embassies requesting them for the evacuation,” said spokesperson Sewa Lamsal of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Lamsal said the government has also set up a panel to determine the exact number of Nepalis working in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan. “The government will make arrangements for their evacuation also,” she said.

As per the MoFA, over 900



Nepalis working in Afghanistan have already returned to Nepal and over 300 are waiting for a flight for repatriation since the Taliban took over Kabul on 18 August.

Rise of Taliban And Fundamentalism

The Taliban victory is likely to embolden jihadists and both Sunni and Shi'ite fundamentalists throughout the neighborhood. With weak security apparatus and poor intelligence, Nepal will need a more cautious approach.

History unfolds in ways that may appear to be totally incomprehensible to us. It may not fit into our logic, may appear to be contrary to the facts that are at hand and our own analysis, which, often guided by our prejudice, may have indicated a different outcome. As soon as the dust settles, we understand things better," said a security analyst.

The victory of the Taliban will have regional and global significance, ideological impact on the short term and the long term implications in Nepal as well.

Nepal has to look at two fundamental realities: The importance of the Taliban victory and how the US, a superpower, will digest this humiliation

and defeat and what course of action it will take. Similarly, how India's policy will guide Afghanistan and how will it react to the upsurge of the Taliban. Given India's past bitter relations with the Taliban, India's security concern will increase and this will have security implications for Nepal as well.

As the US is a superpower and India is a rising superpower and the only neighbor which shares a long open border and cultural, religious and social ties closely with Nepal, India will definitely take Nepal seriously. Nepal too has very limited options in regards to the security concerns of India and toe with it to frame the broader policy on Afghanistan and the Taliban.

As the Taliban victory has tremendous significance for our region, Pakistan and India are competing intensely for their attention.

India will keep a keen eye on how the Kashmir situation is handled by the Taliban, who have now declared that they will not let their territory be used to meddle in other countries af-

fairs.

They have assured the Chinese about their total non-interference about the Uyghur's. The Russians have their concerns about the Chechens, and here also, the Taliban appears to have calmed their nerves.

As for Nepal, we need to observe the situation carefully and move as it unfolds. About recognizing them, we should go slow and it is better for Nepal's interest to follow India.

China, Russia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran and Qatar have indicated that they will likely recognize the Taliban. In this context, China will put pressure on Nepal to follow it. However, Nepal's broader interest will lie with India.

Taliban In Power: What It Means For Nepal

Following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban and the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces, many expect that terror in Afghanistan is over. With the presence so many fringes fundamentalist Jihadi terrorist outfits and weapons in their hand, returning peace in Afghanistan in short term looks merely a dream.

The recent bombings at Kabul airport by Asia's Islamic State affiliate, IS-K shows that Talibani's have



Photo courtesy: Rajendra Aryal's Facebook

a long way to go to control all outfits. According to security experts, this is a major security threat in Afghanistan and globally. The group has a record of lethal attacks and finds the Taliban too moderate.



Photo: U.S. Embassy, Nepal

The Afghan offshoot of the terror organization "Islamic State," known as ISIS-Khorasan, IS-K or ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the attacks. The group takes its name from the Khorasan Province, an area that once included wide swaths of Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia in the Middle Ages.

Afghanistan is now under the control of the Taliban. However, history indicates that terrorism in Afghanistan can not go overnight and it is a matter of concern particularly for a country like Nepal.

Given Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohamed's involvement in the hijacking of New Delhi bound IC-814 Indian Airlines from Tribhuvan International Airport and reaching Kandahar forcing India to release Masood Azhar, a radical Islamist and terrorist and the founder and leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist organization Jaish-e-Mohammed, Nepal needs to be extra cautious on the security issues.

As this organization is very much active globally, one cannot deny the fact that Masood Azhar, who was listed as an international terrorist by United Nations Security Council, will

reposition in South Asia including in Nepal. Afghanistan's fragile state and instability will provide such groups with ample opportunities.

As Nepal and India share a long porous natural border, both countries have the same security challenges. In this regard, Nepal needs to closely share intelligence and security with India to meet the new security challenges. Nepal and Indian security forces have recently developed a better and good understanding of sharing intelligence and security. This will need further strengthening given the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Given Nepal's security reports that a number of Nepali Muslims youth are getting radicalized, Nepali law enforcement agencies need to prepare to get information on radicalizing youth and share with Southern counterpart.

With over 5 percent of the total population of Nepal, Islam was introduced to Nepal a long time ago by Kashmiri traders who first arrived in Kathmandu in the 15th century on their way to Lhasa. The 500-year-old Kashmiri Takiya mosque, a few hundred yards from the former Royal Palace in Kathmandu, is a testimony to this his-

tory.

Muslims lived as a silent minority for centuries at the goodwill of the Nepali state and they are moderate. Inspired by the Maoist rebels, they are radicalized a bit in recent years. They have become more vocal and visible.

With the support from International Muslim Organization, Tablighi Jamaat had hosted an international conference in Saptari close to the Indian border. Although the Nepal government had initially denied the permission, it bowed down under the pressure of Muslim stakeholders.

Despite the commitments of organizers not to allow foreign representatives except India, Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia attended the big conference.

The state started to give due respect to Muslims following the 2006 political change for their active participation in the abolition of the monarchy. Muslim festivals were declared public holidays for the first time in 2008, the year the monarchy was abolished and a democratically elected government led by Maoists took office. Recently, the number of Rohingya refugees has also increased crossing the border of Bangladesh and entering Nepal.

Although Nepal's overwhelming Muslim groups are moderate and peaceful, some elements are always there to provoke them. Three years ago some Rohingya refugees were arrested when they made effort to travel making documents of settlement.

"As 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," wrote Major General (Retired) Binoj Basnyat

and Nepal on a smaller scale.

Whether smaller or bigger, the rise of terrorism and fundamentalism is a matter of concern for the security of the region. As a big country and closer geographically with Afghanistan, the take-over of Kabul by fundamentalists is always a big concern for India.

As Afghanistan is a member of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), it is natural for the countries to express their concerns and hold opinions on the type of regime in Kabul. Naturally, no one can support any fundamentalist, radical regime supporting terrorism. Nepal is no exception.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent tweet shows India's concern over the Taliban. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (August 19) said that an empire on the basis of terror may dominate for some time but its existence is never permanent. This message came amid the Afghanistan crisis after the Taliban took over the post-US troops' withdrawal and fleeing of President Ashraf Ghani.

"The destroying powers, the thinking that builds an empire on the



in New Spotlight.

"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. Corruption, the source of the slack system of governance needs modification. Fourth, diplomatic attempts for security diplomacy as well as being part of an encouraging and even leading the regional collective arrangements will support the endeavors," writes Basnyat.

Recent Afghanistan events showed that every country protects its own interest and protecting national interest is the prime goal of any country. Instead of harping on some rhetoric, Nepal needs to follow real politick to maximize and protect its interest.

After successfully evacuating

Nepalis from Afghanistan, Nepal has made big progress, mobilizing friends to protect the life of people. Despite complications and difficulties, Nepal is successful to avert the humanitarian crisis. Ahead lies a broader issue of national interest and national security.

Nepal In South Asian Context

Although it is geographically far from the region, Afghanistan's internal situation has always affected the South Asian countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh on a larger scale





basis of terror, may dominate for some time in a period of time, but, its existence is never permanent, it cannot suppress humanity for a long time," PM Modi said in his tweet on August 19.

India is following a wait and watch policy on the Taliban regime focusing currently on rescuing stranded Indians and Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. However, it is taking stock of the emerging security situation.

Situated between two big neighbors India and China, with both of them having different approaches towards the Taliban, Nepal is always feeling the pressure. Given the recent statements and activities, China along with Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Turkey will likely give recognition to the Taliban in Kabul.

However, India along with the US and other western countries in-

dicated that they will watch the actions of the Taliban before taking any decisions. Sharing long open borders with India and closer relations with the US and other western countries, Nepal's safety course for its national security is to follow India.

In the words of former foreign minister and scholar Rishikesh Shaha: India's influence has been so dominant

every possible opportunity. This is seen as almost essential for purposes of national identity in the context of the present-day political reality in the world.

Individuals can hold their own opinion and opinion may vary. However, following India on Afghanistan and the Taliban will serve Nepal's broader long-term and short-term national and security interests.



However, there is a section of Nepalis, who consider themselves as staunch nationalists maintaining neutrality in Chinese actions and taking an anti-Indian stand as nationalist. They have started to float the idea for Nepal to take a different stand than India.

"In their zeal to counterbalance the tendency, Nepal's intellectuals are inclined to misrepresent the impact and nature of Nepal's relationship

in all spheres of Nepali life that the Nepali people, by way of reaction, feel impelled to appear different from Indian at

with China, which has been intermittent and never as close as its relationship with India

How To Reduce Risk From Cascading Disasters In The Himalayas

Recent tragedies in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region show that cascading disasters – where one incident sets off another – present new and complex risk scenarios, and need to be planned for

BY: SANTOSH NEPAL, ARUN BHAKTA SHRESTHA, AMINA MAHARJAN

At the beginning of the monsoon season this year, floods caused havoc in Nepal and India along the Mahakali and Koshi rivers. In the western catchment of the Koshi basin, northeast of Kathmandu, intense rainfall and related hazards triggered unprecedented damage in the Melamchi-Indrawati watershed.

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region is prone to numerous types of disasters because of its steep terrain, fragile geology, and intense and variable precipitation. Floods and landslides are common during the monsoon season. Every year, hundreds of people are killed and widespread damage is caused to critical infrastructure, settlements and farmlands. Now, it seems that we are seeing more ‘cascading disasters’ – where one disaster sets off another – that need to be planned for urgently.

The Melamchi disasters

From 13 to 15 June, the Melamchi-Indrawati watershed area experienced incessant rain. Even though the rainfall was not extreme, locals and experts were surprised by the nature of the flood and the extensive damage it caused in the riparian areas.

Among other destruction, the flood damaged the headworks of the Melamchi Water Supply Project. This inter-basin water transfer project, described by officials as a “project of national pride”, aims to provide regular drinking water to the residents of Kathmandu. The flood also destroyed 176 households and 178 hectares of rice paddies downstream in Melamchi Bazaar.

In between, over a stretch of about 30 km, the flood destroyed 13 suspension bridges, seven motorable bridges, and stretches of road, disconnecting many villages. The massive deposition of sediment and debris can be seen up to 70 km downstream from the Helambu area, where the disaster began.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the floods – including mudflow that inundated parts of Melamchi Bazaar – were caused not only by rain in upstream areas, but also by temporary dams created by landslides in the upper stretches of the river. Terrestrial and satellite images show large landslides in two locations, Ghyang and Bremthang. According to the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology’s records, a landslide blocked the Melamchi River for about 45 minutes. A sudden increase in water level was observed at around 7pm on 15 June, indicating the outburst and release of the impounded water. A technical report published by ICIMOD also suggests that the

Melamchi flood disaster cannot be attributed to a single cause. Rather, it was the result of multiple anthropogenic and climatic factors and processes that occurred at various locations along the river.

On 31 July, nearly one-and-a-half months after the first incident, another flood caused further infrastructure damage and debris deposition in the Melamchi watershed area. The huge area of a very old landslide, and accumulated sediment behind it, have been destabilised. Due to the continuing erosion of the landslide and sediment by the river, this area will likely remain a site of hazards for some time to come. The local municipality has appealed to those living in high-risk zones to move to safer locations.

Changes in the nature of flood disasters

Over the past decade, the nature of floods in the Hindu Kush Himalaya seems to have changed. In February 2021, falling rock and ice below Ronti peak created a massive flood surge and killed more than 200 people in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, India. It also caused severe damage to physical infrastructure, including hydropower plants.

This was similar to the 2012 floods in the Seti River in Pokhara, Nepal. The Seti flood was also caused by a



massive rockfall from the southern flank of the Annapurna IV mountain, which triggered flash floods downstream. Similarly, in the Uttarakhand flood of 2013, torrential rains caused a chain of events including landslides and floods. The Chorabari

FORUM

Lake outburst and debris flow killed over 6,000 people and damaged roads, buildings and infrastructure.

Cascading disasters in the Himalayas

These incidents are all cascading disasters, and their incidence seems to be increasing. In such cases, one hazard can trigger others, and the cumulative impact can be much greater than that of a single hazard. These cascading disasters show that even a small hazard event that starts in the high mountains can cause damage to a large area, both upstream and downstream.

In mountainous countries like Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan, the possibility of such cascading disasters occurring in a multi-hazard fashion is relatively high. Landslides, floods, glacial lake outburst floods and avalanches that occur upstream can cause damage to property and impact local lives and livelihoods much further downstream. Compared with annual floods, such disasters occur at intervals of several years, so the nature of the damage is often greater and unexpected. Likewise, infrastructure in mountainous regions is not designed for such complex challenges.

What can we do to minimise complex risk?

Although it is possible to forecast floods a few days in advance through weather forecasts and hydrodynamic modelling, there is no mechanism to predict cascading hazards in mountainous areas. Therefore, awareness and preparedness, before disasters occur, is the most practical approach to reduce risk.

People from the Melamchi area shared that, despite the massive damage to infrastructure and settlements, many lives were saved because upstream residents informed those downstream about the landslide and debris dam in the upper reaches of the Melamchi River, and warned of the potential risk of dam burst. This shows the importance of early warning, and how both formal and informal communication between upper and lower riparian communities can play an instrumental role in reducing disaster risk.

The community-based flood early warning system along the Ratu River in eastern Nepal uses an informal mechanism by which upstream communities in Nepal relay information on rising water levels to downstream communities in Bihar, India. It is necessary to further develop early warning systems that can indicate the risk of cascading hazards and potential impacts. These systems can be developed with local communities in mind so that their capacity can be built for risk assessment and response, including for transboundary rivers.

Recent cascading disasters also highlight the importance and urgency of climate-resilient development planning. The risk of disasters in the mountains increases when land-use guidelines are ignored or flouted during the development of mountain infrastructure. Utmost care should be taken to ensure climate resilience when planning physical structures in flood-prone areas with potential risks.

In the case of Melamchi, we can see that the damaged structures were close to flood-prone areas around Melamchi Bazaar, and that many buildings had been constructed on the floodplain. Similarly, the construction of rural roads has increased the risk of landslides and sedimentation. At the community level, insurance and diversified livelihood options are other approaches to minimise and spread the risk. Overall, we need

integrated and thorough risk assessment while planning any development in the hills and mountains.

Studies have shown that the frequency of cascading disasters in the Hindu Kush Himalayas is likely to increase in the future due to climate change. Changes in precipitation patterns (such as extreme rainfall) seem to exacerbate cascading hazards. As the cascading nature of disasters is relatively new but being observed regionwide, and given their potential for large-scale damage across borders, there is also a need for regional cooperation to better understand this phenomenon and prepare accordingly.

Cooperate on cascading disasters across borders

On 18 June 2021, the Tama Koshi River (a catchment east of the Indrawati) on the Tibetan side was blocked by a landslide, creating potential flood risk for downstream areas in Nepal. However, the Chinese authorities notified their Nepali counterparts about the blockage and the local authority relayed this information to communities downstream. At the same time, the water level of the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project reservoir was lowered by a few metres to reduce possible damage. The Chinese authorities later cleared the landslide, allowing the river to resume its course and averting a major incident.

In contrast, a small glacial lake outburst flood in Tibet in 2016 created major damage in the Nepalese section of the watershed, including to the Upper Bhote Koshi Hydroelectric Project. The successful risk mitigation on the Tama Koshi and the communication between agencies in China and Nepal clearly shows the need for and importance of transboundary collaboration and cooperation in disaster risk reduction, including for cascading hazards.

Finally, every monsoon teaches us lessons in disaster management, but we do not apply those lessons when the monsoon rains stop after a few months. As a result, we experience



similar disasters in the next monsoon. It is high time that we learn from these experiences, build up the resilience of communities, and prioritise disaster risk reduction as an integral part of our development planning.

Source: The Third Pole

<https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/climate/opinion-reduce-risk-from-cascading-disasters-himalayas/>

Accelerating Development

Nepal and India agree to follow up on the decisions taken by OSM

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the establishment of Oversight Mechanism (OSM) and holding of meetings regularly, the pace of Nepal-India cooperation has intensified and this has helped project implementation and resolution of the ground level issues.

At a time when India has been providing support to Nepal in various development sectors through different channels, both the sides realize the need for a better coordination. The OSM is a response to the need.

From Arun III to roads, hospitals, schools, heritage sites, transmissions and earthquake reconstructions, India has been supporting Nepal in different sectors.

To review the projects and their progress, Nepal and India held the OSM meeting recently. Co-chaired by foreign secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra, the meeting carried out a comprehensive review of bilateral cooperation projects since its 8th meeting held on 17th August 2020. Both sides deliberated on the issues at length and agreed to expedite the implementation of the projects. The meeting was held in Kathmandu

Nepal and India agreed to follow up on the decisions of Oversight Mechanism (OSM) through regular co-ordination to support project implementation and resolve ground-level issues.

According to a press release, both chairs also noted with appreciation COVID-19 related cooperation, including supply of medicines, medi-

cal equipment, beds, ICU, ventilators, and vaccines to Nepal by India.

The OSM Mechanism was set up in 2016 to monitor the progress of various India assisted projects and initiatives. The meeting was attended by representatives of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government of Nepal, Officers of the

The meeting recognized the progress in reconstruction of houses in Gorkha and Nuwakot which is almost nearing completion of 13 road packages in Terai area of Nepal, satisfactory progress in Arun-III project as well in most of the road and transmission line projects under Government of India's Lines of Credit and commencement of



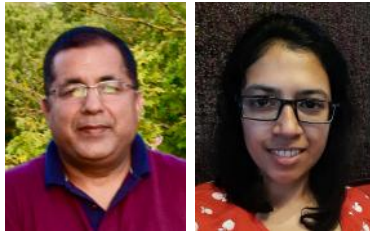
Embassy of India in Kathmandu, Consultants, Contractors and other stakeholders engaged in implementation of the projects.

The co-chairs noted the progress made in various development projects in the last one year, despite the constraints posed by the COVID-pandemic. They discussed the strength and resolve of the bilateral partnership and the proactive support and facilitation extended by both sides.

construction of Integrated Check Post at Nepalgunj.

Both co-chairs agreed to hold the next meeting of the Oversight Mechanism on a mutually convenient date. Given the last few years' experiences, what one can see is the high level of progress in the projects at the ground. Establishment of OSM and its regular meeting has made a drastic change in the project implementation.

The Sociology Of Flood Management: Learning From Below



BY: DR. DHRUBA GAUTAM AND PRATISTHA PYAKUREL

The fact Nepal has made great strides in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) in the past few years makes us wonder why so many people are still being affected by monsoon disasters, and, more importantly, why those affected in previous years are still struggling to recover. Though we look outside, trying to find complicated measures to fix the problem, the solution may be here with us, in simple things.

The search for the answer

With the advent of monsoon this year, Nepali media has been flooded with reports of floods. According to the government's DRR Portal, there were 14 flood incidents just between June 18 to July 18, 2021. In the same period, 35 people went missing and 63 died, most due to the flooding. And these are just the officially recorded numbers. The actual magnitude of loss is likely to be much higher and increasing daily as we wade through the monsoon season. Although we hear such news every year, it always comes as a shock, and it should, because losing lives and property is no laughing matter. The tragedy is that we are unable to prevent irrevocable loss despite the fact that we know that every year, the monsoon brings heavy rains and, in consequence, devastating floods. The country allocates a huge sum of money for DRRM and has mobilized many disaster management committees and experts and developed a wealth of policy documents for DRRM. What then are we missing?

The bright side

Nepal has made great strides in DRRM in the past few years. It has developed numerous acts, regulations, guidelines, policies, and strategic action plans, not just at the federal level but also at provincial and local government levels. For disaster-related coordination and disaster preparedness and humanitarian assistance, it has national, provincial, district as well as local emergency operation centers. There are also disaster and climate change learning centers in various municipalities. In fact, as mandated by the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2017), there are disaster management committees at all three tiers of the government. Altogether 753 municipal offices are in operation to ensure proper flood management. In addition, weather forecast and early warning system (EWS)

are being promoted across the country for their contribution to preparedness, and the government's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has a separate Flood Forecasting Division on whose website rain forecasts and warning signs can be viewed live. Innovative ways of communicating risk information are being explored. When there is a mishap, the nation's security forces are well trained in search and rescue. Regarding finance, there are emergency and disaster management funds at the local, district and province levels as well as the well-endowed federal-level Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund. Furthermore, different tiers of the government have made disaster management plans and fund mobilization guidelines.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) leads, facilitates, and supports federal, provincial, and local governments on disaster risk reduction, response, and reconstruction. Under it, the government has made several attempts to prepare for the rainy season this year. Unlike in the past, humanitarian clusters were activated before any disaster event. After a national monsoon emergency response plan was made, provincial governments also followed suit. Their plans outline the responsibilities of different ministries, security forces, Nepal Telecommunications Authority, and the Red Cross as well as other humanitarian and development partners. With the objective of encouraging the involvement of the private sector in DRRM, the roles of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce are also covered in the federal-level response. Some features included are maps of helipads, open spaces and evacuation centers which could be useful for immediate assistance and temporary relocation following a disaster event. There are also records of stockpiles which could be used for immediate response.

Nepal is now facing the double trouble of the monsoon and COVID-19. The second wave of the pandemic has yet

to subside and experts are already warning of the next surge in infections. While COVID-19 necessitates physical distancing, fleeing from the dangers of monsoon floods inevitably causes crowding. The government has recognized the risks and identified a number of measures in its monsoon response plan. These include readying search-and-rescue materials such as rubber boats and stretchers that are not easily contaminated, managing adequate personal protective equipment for both rescuers and the affected, stockpiling health supplies to fight COVID-19, equipping hospitals with facilities to treat COVID-19 as well as dispose of contaminated items, provisioning for the disinfection of the houses of infected people, and pre-evacuation of people living in areas at high risk of flooding.

Beside addressing this year's monsoon, NDRRMA has also been working on a 10-year campaign to build a disaster-resilient Nepal. It touches on topics such as building the capacity of provincial and local governments to integrate risk considerations into development planning; the establishment of emergency operation centers in all seven provinces and 77 districts and in key municipalities at high risk; the establishment of a national platform to communicate risk information; disaster risk financing with insurance of private houses and public buildings; integrated settlements for communities in high-risk locations; guidelines and a system to reconstruct infrastructure damaged by disasters; revision of the building code to integrate key risks such as floods, fires and lightning strikes and create incentives for their implementation; multi-hazard risk assessment and mapping; reduction of glacial lake outburst flood risks; EWS using all forms of media for all hazards; design standards to integrate disaster and climate risks into plans for roads, water supply and irrigation; restructuring of NDRRMA to include a 'training and research directorate' for disaster risk reduction, and so forth.

Dust under the carpet

At first glance, the system looks close to perfect, so why is it that so many people are still being devastated by monsoon disasters and why are those who were affected in the past still struggling to recover? As we look outside trying to find complicated measures to fix the problem, the solution may be here with us, in simple things. Perhaps it is time to dig deeper within the system. If we are to clean the room properly, we must also remove the dust from under the carpet.

Our systems, plans and activities are remarkable in design but not so clever in implementation at the ground level. Nepal tends to develop plans and policy documents ritualistically rather according to need. Most provinces and municipalities prepare plans and policy documents just because they are required to and tend to adopt the policy templates prepared by the federal level. Thus, their legislative frameworks lack real

contextualization. Not having staff with adequate expertise in the subject adds to the burden. Oftentimes, consultants are hired to draft plans and policy documents. While this practice is not inherently bad, when such consultants do not carry out adequate field-level consultations, the resultant policy documents are overly theoretical and fail to address real needs with local, workable solutions. The documents are filled with technical jargon, making it difficult for general people to grasp the idea. Furthermore, local people's indigenous skills, experience and wisdom are often neglected. If development organizations wished to integrate indigenous flood management practices into their projects, they would have difficulty finding an authentic repository of such good practices since there has been no concrete national effort to document such valuable indigenous knowledge or include them in local DRRM plans. There are, for example, indigenous strategies to predict floods (e.g. observing the shapes of clouds, nesting patterns of birds, and digestion of cattle), safeguard building structures (e.g. increasing plinth levels, using bamboo for construction, making trenches or dams in front of houses), save lives (e.g. early evacuation, using banana trunk boats for search and rescue, mobilizing a messenger for early

warning) and protecting livestock and agriculture (e.g. farming flood-resistant crops, storing grains on the first floor and in mud vessels, shifting animals to higher grounds). These methods are cost effective, readily available, easy to implement, and reliable for local communities. They foster a sense of belonging and should be included in local plans.

Nepal did see an exemplary shift in focus from 'disaster

response' to 'disaster preparedness' in its disaster legislative framework, but if we scrutinize the ground-level situation, we see that the focus is still on disaster response rather than on disaster preparedness, particularly in terms of budget allocation. As the saying goes, a stitch in time saves nine. Far less budget would be required for riverbank protection than for the reconstruction of a town after a destructive flood. Another issue is that when a flood occurs, it is seen as a single isolated event. If we look at the bigger picture of a river basin, it is easy to understand that everything is interconnected. Isolated effort to control a stretch of river will not bear fruit; instead, multi-year flood preparedness programs with a "watershed approach" are needed. Since water basins are not limited within a single administrative boundary, inter-government coordination is pivotal, and coordination and collaboration among communities, too, becomes vital.

Forming disaster management committees and assigning disaster risk reduction (DRR) focal persons are praise-



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worthy endeavors by the government, but there is a need for improving the technical skills of such persons. High staff turnover and poor institutional memory are other major challenges that need to be addressed by proper handing over of jobs. Similarly, local, district, and provincial emergency operation centers need to be staffed and equipped with appropriate tools and equipment if they are to be fully operational. That way, it will be possible to have updated database at the local level, which could then be compiled at the district and provincial levels to form a complete federal-level picture. A disaster information management system has yet to receive the attention it requires. Having all the information about frequently affected areas and areas at high risk disaster at our fingertips through the establishment and strengthening of an information management system would not only help to formulate a practicable workplan but also facilitate quick response.

The 10-year campaign to build a disaster-resilient Nepal looks promising. Only time will tell whether the set targets will bring measurable results or just remain as embellishments on paper. Moving forward, it would be useful to consider the sociology of floods, learning from the ground, and what has already been completed (or not) and identify what could be done differently. For instance, many capacity-building activities are carried out every year as “events” but not as part of a “process”. We need to consider questions like these: How will the proposed training add value to the existing executive system? How will we ensure that trainees apply their learning on the ground? How will the challenges faced by emergency operation centers that have already been established in several districts and provinces be addressed? How will we ensure that the people living in high-risk areas and most in need of insurance are able to access insurance schemes, and that there are no implications due to ethnic and socio-economic differences? While reconstructing infrastructure damaged by disasters, what new and improved technology and indigenous knowledge will be used for cost effectiveness, durability, and resilience? After revising the building code, what additional measures need to be taken to assure full compliance? Along with mobilization of different media for risk communication, what infrastructural changes and forecast models will be adopted to ensure a more reliable forecast technology? When reports of multi-hazard risk assessment and maps are prepared, how will we ensure that they cover local issues and do not just duplicate the reports of other locations? After establishing a ‘training and research directorate’, what system will be established to feed the findings of research into annual plans and programs?

Voices from the ground

Building resilient communities has become a buzz word in the DRRM sector. It is important to study the sociological dimension of disasters in order to make communities resilient in true sense. Disasters have differential impacts on people depending on their gender, age, class, ethnicity and so forth. Oftentimes, the poor, the elderly, minorities, children, and women are the hardest hit. Acknowledging these differential impacts in

policy documents is good. But are we really asking questions to the right people when designing risk-reduction programs and relief packages? We could learn a lot by asking questions to people who have still not recovered from previous disasters, those who have been displaced or are living in tents. Every community is unique. Thus, it is crucial to investigate the physical and environmental features that make a community more or less prone to flooding, the attitudes residents have about flood hazards, precautionary flood-control measures implemented by the local people and their coping behaviors, major obstacles to flood prevention in communities, how residents perceive the effectiveness of available flood-control measures, the existence of variation in ethnic and socio-economic factors in flood vulnerability, and the impacts and modes of adaptation.

It is easy to blame the government for disaster loss and damage, but analysis of the devastation caused by previous hazardous events shows a collective failure on the parts of the

government, development partners and the general public. Most of the houses swept away during floods are those constructed alongside riverbanks, far too close to waterways. The government obviously would not want to throw away precious resources to rebuild houses in places at risk of future flood. And if current settlement areas are not appropriate, then who will find an appropriate land for reconstruction

and where? Building settlement areas and markets on floodplains in the hope of saving money is idiocy. Unfortunately, the hunger for short-term profit in monetary terms has blinded people from seeing long-term impacts on the environment, infrastructure and lives and properties. Another reason for the willful ignoring of the truth is that the environment is often seen as a common property and thus, as per the principle of the “tragedy of the common”, individuals neglect the wellbeing of society in the pursuit of personal gain.

This tendency can be addressed with a two-pronged approach. First of all, the government must enforce protective measures by increasing inspection and strictly punishing law breakers. Second, people should be made aware of the long-term consequences of their actions through appropriate channels, adhering to the principles of “social and behavior change communication”.

The main objective of DRRM is to protect the communities. When a disaster strikes, the first responders are often those belonging to the same or neighboring communities. Hence, a community should always be at the center of all DRRM endeavors. Behavioral response, social change, and political, economic, and environmental approaches are equally important as floods occur at the interface of society, technology and environment and are fundamentally the outcomes of the interactions of these characteristics.

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Climate Change Intensifies Disasters



BY: REEZAN POUDEL

Climate is an average statistical weather pattern of a large geographical area over a period of 30 years, for an example. Since 1950 A.D. the global climate has changed significantly to alter the weather phenomena permanently in various places of Earth. Nepal has also seen the changes in its weather pattern over the last 5 decades.

Although Nepal contributes only about 0.027% of the total greenhouse gas emission, it is also experiencing the effects of climate change and it will be likely to face more severe climate disasters in the coming days.

According to a study, the temperature of Nepal has increased by 0.06 Celsius per year due to various greenhouse gases and pollutants emitted globally. If the temperature continues to increase, it will have a greater impact on Nepal's water resources. The fast melting of snow will likely dry rivers and rivulets. Similarly, the glacier lake outburst will increase the flood and change in the rain pattern will further intensify it. Due to these various reasons, we can conclude that Nepal is also facing negative impacts of climate change.

Climate change is a phenomenon of change in climate of a place for a significantly long period due to various causes. Climate change has been deeply studied by the scientists from all over the world using statistical data, satellite image, Antarctica expeditions, investigations of vulnerable places and computer models.

Due to increase of generation of green house gases, climate has changed drastically in the last few decades. It has become a serious issue. For this, we humans are responsible for it. As there is an increase in the industries and vehicles, pollution is also increasing. Due to an excessive increase in level of pollution, the climate change will further intensify. The air around us has become toxic and polluted and it is very harmful to breathe because of

this. These toxic air pollutants cause serious diseases.

Nowadays we see excessive rain in some areas and extremely low rain in some areas, these all are because of change in climate. Human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels and clearing of forests have intensified the natural greenhouse effect, causing global warming.

Everyone including an individual, organization, and government needs to contribute to tackling this issue. As an individual, we all have some responsibilities. We should not cut forests and should avoid burning fuels. We should plant trees rather than cutting them. We should think of using clean energy like solar in our houses and other places. We should think of using environment-friendly power like hydro-power and wind energy etc.

With so much activities, we have already damaged the earth. These changes that we have caused to the ecosystem are not reversible. The only thing we can do is try to make the biosphere a better place to live in. As the level of pollution has continued to increase and temperature is rising, the earth's temperature will rise day by day leading to the extinction of human life. We have to work to reduce carbon emissions to reduce the negative

impacts of climate change all over the world. Starting from ourselves is the best solution to fight against the climate change and make our planet the same as it was before.

As Dr. Martin Luther King eloquently put it in 1968, human progress "never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals.

If all the people get involved in doing activities that have no negative impact on climate, we can bring change and sustain our environment as the most viable for humanity. One should start from oneself, then only the impacts of climate change can be reduced.

(Poudel is a student of Class XI)



Turning The Tide: Addressing Gender Biases In Media



BY: NOVELA ACHARYA

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, it is an important determinant for productivity and economic growth. Although it is one of the UN's key Sustainable Development Goals, most of the societies around the world are far from achieving equality by all measures. Progresses made are laudable, still women and girls are under-represented in various spheres, be it power positions, science and technology, business or the television and print media. Gender imbalance in the media is not only an outcome of biased journalism but a result of a social milieu. Moreover, gender imbalanced media coverage fortifies and perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes in the society. It has become pertinent to know and understand why such biases exist and what can be done to end such practices so that women and girls are given equal platform which influences their success in the fields they are contributing to.

There is clearly a gender division of duties and responsibilities in the society and the effect of this is prominent in the media too. First of all, women are underrepresented in the media platforms which reflects the societal norms of their unimportance. Gender bias is very rampant in the media. Few women in Nepal occupy influential posts in journalism. A research was carried out in 2016 by Sancharika Samuha, a forum of women journalists and communicators in Nepal, to find out the percentage of women media personnel belonging to various age groups. The data suggested that 76.3 percent of women in the media belonged to the age group of 20-30 years. This figure sharply declined for the age group of 30-40 years and reached 12.8 percent. This shows that sustained professional and leadership development through media ends before the prime age of 40 years. Employable engagement and overall retention of women as a life-long profession in the mass media sector ultimately is at rock bottom, below 2.5 percent.

Looking into the current scenario especially for a country like Nepal, women's attraction in mass media is solely driven by the intuition of becoming a celebrity quickly rather than a sustained objective of changing one's life or societal causes through the platform. This raises many questions in the perspective of women's interest in media platforms and media houses' interest in retaining professional journalists in the sector. There are clearly some fundamental issues that need to be addressed at the earliest. The remedy is to have a two-pronged strategy that focuses on both ends, that is the development of women as a professional media person and creating women-friendly environments in media platforms itself.

In terms of media coverage as well, the platform given to women is very minimal. Even if women are given space, they are mostly found to be featured around topics such as beauty, lifestyle, entertainment and sometimes, if not often the social issues, whereas men are mostly featured around critical and significant

topics such as politics, world affairs, national security, business etc. When we turn on the television or flip the pages of the newspapers or magazines, we find that personal information of the women are given utmost importance such as their marital status, family, clothing, appearance whereas on the other hand for men, they are featured with regard to their policy stances. By covering the men and women differently, the media is negatively influencing the women's eminence that they could gain in important spectrums in the society.

Women are mostly not seen on the panel discussions on topics such as foreign policy, healthcare systems, economic policy because they must be excluded on purpose either with the thought process that they are not bold enough to give opinions on such important fields or with the fear that they might perform exceptionally well compared to the male panelists invited. It is often noticed that even if women are invited for talk shows on television, they are generally shown as a source of visual pleasure rather than focussing on the things that they have to say or residing in the content of the program. Women's invisibility or unimportant visibility can lead to them being taken not so seriously, question their credibility with regard to the work that they are doing or overshadow all the hard work that they have put in to reach where they have reached or where they dream of reaching in the future.

When coming to the news stories produced by a male and a female journalist, there is also clearly a difference. As per a report by the Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), female journalists or reporters prepare stories keeping women as the central subjects, which is not usually the case with the male journalists. Women are more likely to quote other women in their stories which reflects less gender biases in their work. Media personnel should practice self-monitoring, self-examination and self-awareness to remind themselves time and again that biases on the basis of gender shouldn't show up in their work both intentionally as well as unintentionally.

With respect to the field of political affairs, women are far less likely to get media attention compared to their male counterparts. Present day politics is highly media centric and the voters rely exclusively on the media as a source of their information



about the electoral candidates. Less or no feature of women candidates or deleterious reporting by the media can have damaging effects on the chances of women candidates to win the election, threaten their longevity in the political arena and more importantly lessen their chances in the higher office. Not only that, the ambitious young women can get discouraged to enter the political sphere with the fear of being sidelined, leading to continued under representation of women in politics in the future.

The culture of masculinity in politics has always existed which makes it worse for women politicians if the media doesn't support them or portray them as credible enough to run for higher offices. It is instrumental that the media break the conventional barriers and stop showing femininity as a disadvantageous factor for women to move higher in the political ladder. Media need to stop using sexist lenses to portray female candidates and focus more on their extensive resumes, their past successes and their future aspirations for the citizens and the nation.

Women's voices need more inclusion in the media which is vital to build a feminist leadership. Inclusion of women's perspectives is also crucial for the diversification of the voices in the society as well as to reach a range of solutions to the problems happening currently, from politics to the health pandemic. Media sector is the front liner in opinion building and shaping which ultimately expedites the process of socio-economic transformation and reduces the gender disparity not only in underdeveloped countries but also in developed countries like the USA, the UK and several Scandinavian countries. Hence, the media, which has a critical role to play, should focus on creating gender transformative content and not overlook the gender dimension in anything they prepare to pass in the public eye so that this brings positive change in the society and the nation at large.

The author holds a Master of Science degree in Gender and Development Studies from the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand.

ACCESIBLE TOURISM

To Boost Economy

An IFC study shows promoting accessible tourism can help Nepal drive sector recovery and boost economy

By A CORRESPONDENT

Badly hit by the upsurge of COVID-19, Nepal's economic sector is looking for an early recovery and boost to economy. At a time when everyone is searching a way out, a recently released report by International Finance Corporation (IFC) has shown that promoting accessible tourism can help Nepal bring about changes.

Investing in disability-friendly infrastructure and services can help hoteliers and entrepreneurs tap the accessible tourism market in Nepal, a growing segment globally, while driving economic growth and accelerating recovery, reveals the new IFC study.

The report—Open to All: A Survey on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Nepal's Hotels—covers 90 starred hotels in major cities. While 95 percent of the participating hoteliers are aware of accessible tourism as a concept, they have not invested in necessary measures to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

With existing facilities limited to ramps and lifts in most hotels, only 17 percent of the surveyed hotels put up signs to help visually-impaired guests and 74 percent of the hotels did not have any Braille signage on door plaques and room directories, according to the survey. Further, only about 9 percent of the hotels had staff who were trained in or had basic knowledge of sign language while only 33 percent of the participating hotels had extra wheelchairs for guests.

The poor numbers were attributed to a range of factors including old structures, remote locations, and fewer guests with disabilities. Many of the surveyed hotels also cited extra cost as a key deterrent to building ramps, purchasing wheelchairs, or providing other accessible infrastructure and services.

"Globally, the concept of accessible or inclusive tourism has gained ground in recent times. Accessibility at tourism destinations is key to responsible and sus-

tainable tourism to ensure everyone can be part of the tourism experience, regardless of physical limitations, disabilities, or age," said Wendy Werner, IFC Country Manager for Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. "Accessible tourism is not only a human right, it also makes business sense."

According to the World Health Organization, globally, around one billion people are affected by some form of disability. According to disability rights experts in Nepal, as more persons with physical limitations and disabilities travel around the world, a focus on accessible infrastructure in hotels as well as tourism destinations can boost the number of foreign tourists in the country.

"Currently, around 2,000 tourists with disabilities visit Nepal every year," said President of the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal, Mitra Lal Sharma. "But, with improved facilities and conditions that are more disability-friendly, the number could easily go up to over 10,000 tourists a year."

"Although accessible tourism is relatively new in Nepal, we are confident that with adequate support, we can push ourselves to explore and attract this growing segment of tourists to our country," said President of Hotel Association of Nepal, Shreejana Rana.

The study recommends, going forward, the government, the private sector, and donor agencies will need to work together to create a conducive environment by incorporating universal accessibility practices into relevant legal and policy provisions, with the involvement of persons with disabilities.

The study was conducted by the Society of Economic Journalists-Nepal, in collaboration with the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal, with financial and technical assistance from IFC.



Bending with The Wind



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

I remember reading some time back book 'The Wind Cannot Read' by Richard Mason. Titled after a Japanese poem, it reminded me that the bamboo plant survives because it bends with the wind. I was therefore glad to read recently that the local authorities in Doti were planting bamboos along the river banks to prevent ravages by the waters during the monsoon season. This was a very good move – in fact killing two birds with one stone. Like the Chinese culture and cuisine, we have in Nepal a bamboo dependent heritage. I remember reciting as a child the ditty,

Tama tusa, ghara ghara moosa,
Okhale bajiyako kan samata!

We in Nepal have eaten and grown up with tusa shoots from various Pareba / other bhirs or from cultivated bamboo groves. Bamboo shoots are delicacies for pandas too whilst the mature stem, being utilised for scaffolding, bridges, houses and buildings in countries of Asia is an essential item.

When our rivers are being excavated willy-nilly for gravel, sand and boulders the likelihood of damage to the banks increases manifold. One has only to think of the massive destruction that increased global warming has done with fires in US and Canada. The estimate is that 364,000 acres of forests have been destroyed. Together with this the floods in China and Europe have done extensive damage. Drastic steps must be taken by every one of us all over the world to save it, with its flora and fauna, for future generations. Thankfully we in Nepal had days of tree planting forays and also laid stress on Community forestry in the Panchayat days. Whilst new projects are essential e.g. new airport and the road to it, tree cutting should be a minimum and three or four saplings planted in the area for every tree cut.

A thought expressed in Nepali papers is about the planting of trees along our city roads. The current favourite seems to be jacaranda which, when in bloom, presents a very pleasant vision to our eyes. The disadvantage of this tree is the shedding of flowers and leaves which soon occurs and creates an expensive clearing up requirement. Perhaps we need to opt for evergreen trees which do not shed leaves too often. During late King Birendra's reign the road to Tribhuvan International Airport at Kathmandu had been planted with cherry blossom saplings from Japan and was a very nice sight on one's drive to the airport. Sadly many have now died but some have been replaced by Asare phool and aaro trees which are more suited for Nepal. In this context I recollect seeing the small berries and crab apple trees along city road pavements in Ottawa, Canada. On enquiry I was told that these have been planted so that the birds of the city will have something to eat. What consciousness! Let our horticultural experts advise us about appropriate trees for our pavements.

The book 'Mutiny on the Bounty' narrates the tale of the ship that sailed from England in 1747 CE to Tahiti to col-

lect breadfruit saplings for transplantation in the West Indies. The aim was that when grown these would provide a cheap food source for the slaves that the British had in the Caribbean! My point here is that we have to plant trees which produce food which the people can feed on too. During the time of PM Nagendra

Prasad Rijal he had had planted mango saplings along the East West highway with very good intentions. Whether adequate care was taken of these saplings and if any produced mangoes I am not sure. Apples and oranges growing are prevalent in Nepal but stress needs to be given to widespread development of planting trees of kattar, lapsi, pomellos, guavas, avocado, kiwi, ainselu and other fruits for consumption by the Nepalis. We should be self sufficient and not importing such items from outside of Nepal.

The word bread in breadfruit, turn my thoughts to the phrase; 'Man does not live by bread alone'. Our new government should last for eighteen months. Besides efforts in the agricultural sector, the stress by it has also to be on manufacturing various items that are daily requirements of us Nepalis. To ensure this, there should be a work force paid adequately, but it also must work in a diligent fashion, without the political, union shenanigans to disrupt work. This is a prime national need for producing goods for Nepal. One notes that the Nepalis working in the Police force in Singapore are highly regarded. Other Nepali working in Korea, Japan and Gulf Countries are exemplary workers. How come they don't show that same diligence in the home country? I recall that a nephew of mine was in China just prior to the Olympics staged there in 2008. When he saw the massive constructions he had enquired about unionism and was told that there was none there! All were working for the needs of the nation. Why can't the Nepali workers work as diligently in Nepal as they do elsewhere? Is it because of laxity, laziness or because we have no civic sense?

Ultimately of course it is the cost of the energy that is necessary for development. Electricity rates for both industrial and domestic use must be reduced so that Nepali citizens profit by it. One recalls with fondness the electric trolley bus service between Bhaktapur and Kathmandu and the electric appliances imported by National Trading for sale at reduced rates to the Nepalis in the past. Import of carbon emission fuels must be reduced and use of electricity for both industrial and domestic purposes must be encouraged. This means that electric rates must be reduced for the whole country. Production and import of electrical appliances must be facilitated. After all, with the extensive hullabaloo about hydropower production in the country, this is the least that this newly formed government can do to ease hardships us Nepalis.

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

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न धुँदा जाने, न रुँदा जाने
त्यसैले कोरोना लाग्ने नदिन
भीडभाडमा नजाने



कोरोना संक्रमणबाट बच्नका लागि जनस्वास्थ्यका शत्रु मापदण्डको पालना गरौं



मास्क लगाऔं



भौतिक दूरी कायम गरौं



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