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**OPINION**  
Dr. Omkar Shrestha



**ARTICLE**  
Hemang Dixit



**VIEWPOINT**  
Laxmi Thapa

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Sept- 17, 2021

FORTNIGHTLY

TOURISM

## Hope For Revival

INSIDE



**POLITICS**  
Clash Course



**NEPAL ELECTRICITY**  
Reliability And Quality



**COAS GENERAL PRABHU RAM SHARMA**  
Dedicated General

HBL

विशेष  
बचत  
खाता



# हर एक विशेष ग्राहकहरुका लागि

सरल, सहज हिमालयन बैंकको 'विशेष बचत खाता'

नाबालक, बृद्ध-बृद्धा, लेखपढ गर्न नजान्ने तथा फरक ढंगले सक्षमहरुका लागि न्यूनतम् मौज्दात रु. २ हजारमा नै विभिन्न बैंकिङ्ग सुविधा निशुल्क पाईने 'विशेष बचत खाता' खोली भविष्यको लागि आजैबाट बचत गर्नुहोस् ।

विस्तृत जानकारीको लागि नजिकको शाखा वा फोन नं ४२२७७४९/४२४६२९८ मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस् ।

\*शर्तहरु लागू हुनेछन् ।

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With the appointment of General Prabhu Ram Sharma as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Nepal Army, Nepal's oldest institution has found a new professional and dedicated leadership. Growing along with the building of modern Nepal, Nepal Army is one of the highly respected institutions of Nepal. Taking the responsibility as the 34th chief of Nepal Army, newly appointed COAS General Sharma is expected to enhance the image and prestige of Nepal Army. In this issues we have covered the appointment of General Sharma as COAS as our lead story. At a time when Nepal has been going through a severe health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal needs to have a stable and strong government to implement the policy decisions. Unfortunately, ongoing political activities are showing intense political chaos resulting in prolonged political instability. Following the surge of COVID-19 pandemic, every sector of Nepalese economy has been badly shaken. However, it is the tourism sector which has suffered the most. At the end of 2019, Nepal received over one million tourists compared to 69000 in the last eight months. Providing job to a million population of the country, tourism's contribution in Nepalese economy is around 7 percent. This means the lowering number of foreign travelers will have a long term economic impact. Although the government has announced some relief packages to the tourism sector, tourism entrepreneurs have complained that they are yet to receive them. As Nepal is celebrating the World Tourism Day in a grim situation, the government needs to provide certain relief to the tourism sector including tax relief, collateral free loan, and revision in the payment of interest rate and so on. Along with this, Nepal also needs to accelerate the vaccination drive to make large numbers of population immune. For this there is a need to have a certain level of political consensus among different political parties.

**Keshab Poudel**

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## Army HQ Bids Farewell To CoAS Thapa

Nepal Army Headquarters formally bid farewell to Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS) General Purna Chandra Thapa.



In the farewell ceremony organized by the Acting Army Chief Prabhu Ram Sharma, the succeeding CoAS, in honor of outgoing Army Chief Thapa,

the Army Headquarters provided tokens of love to the retiring CoAS. The Acting Army Chief, Defence Secretary Begendra Raj Sharma Paudyal, chief of Nepal Police Shailesh Thapa Kshetri, Shailendra Khanal, Chief of Nepal Armed Police Force and Ganesh Regmi of the National Investigation Department presented the tokens of love.

Addressing the ceremony, outgoing army chief Thapa said that his three years' term as the army chief and 42 years' service were full of both challenges and opportunities.

While bidding farewell to the national force of the country, CoAS Thapa said that the upcoming new army chief must remain alert from some elements within the organization, who always want to harm the organization for personal benefits.

Secretary Bigendra Sharma Paudyal believed that the tenure of the new Army Chief would also remain successful and take the force to a new height by continuing the recently implemented three plus one command structure of the army.

## Nepal, India Sing MoU To Build Cultural Sites, Health Posts

Nepal and India have signed MoUs for the reconstruction of 14 cultural heritage sector projects and 103 health sector projects, worth NPR 420 crores.



Embassy of India in Nepal and Central Level Project Implementation Unit (Building) of National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) signed MoUs for the reconstruction of 14 cultural heritage projects (in Lalitpur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Dhading districts).

According to the Embassy of India, 103 health sector projects (in Lalitpur, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchowk, Ramechhap,

Dolakha, Gulmi, Gorkha and Kavre districts) spread across various districts in Nepal will also be constructed.

The MoUs were signed by both sides in the presence of Karun Bansal, First Secretary (Development Partnership & Reconstruction) and Shyam Kishore Singh, Project Director, CLPIU.

According to MoU, Government of India will provide NRs 420 crores to CLPIU, (Building) of NRA which is the implementing agency for both health and cultural heritage sector projects.

The event was attended by officials of the Embassy of India, Central Level Project Implementation Unit (Building) and representatives from Government of India's project consultants INTACH and CBRI.

According to a press release issued by the Embassy of India Kathmandu, under post-earthquake reconstruction package, Government of India (GoI) has allocated total grant of USD 250 million, including US \$50 million each for education, cultural heritage and health sector.

## MCC, Nepal Take 'Positive Steps Toward Compact Ratification

A delegation from the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), led by Vice President of Compact Operations, Fatema Z. Sumar, departed Nepal today after a four-day visit to discuss next steps to advance the ratification of the \$500 million MCC-Nepal Compact.



Sumar and Jonathan Brooks, MCC's

Deputy Vice President for Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America, met with community, business, and political leaders to discuss the economic opportunities provided by the compact and offer any needed clarifications.

"It was a pleasure to be back in Nepal where we had such productive discussions with a wide cross-section of Nepali society from parliamentarians and party leaders to civil society and the business community," said Sumar. "I am encouraged by the support the compact received throughout my trip in so many of our conversations. Through open and honest dialogue, we were able to clarify questions and address misconceptions, particularly those stemming from a deliberate misinformation campaign. I look forward to the Government of Nepal taking the next step to ratify the compact so we can strengthen Nepal's economy for years to come.

The Government of Nepal signed the MCC-Nepal Compact in 2017 after spending nearly three years working with MCC and development experts to design and negotiate



## NEWSNOTES

the grant program. The compact, which is co-funded with an additional \$130 million from the Government of Nepal, consists of two major infrastructure priorities: expanding access to affordable, reliable energy and making Nepal's roads better.

The Electricity Transmission Project will focus on completing a segment of Nepal's 400kV East-West transmission line and the Nepal portion of the second cross-border line with India, totaling approximately 300 km of powerlines – roughly equal to one-third of the entire country. This will enable Nepal to provide more reliable electricity to homes and businesses, modernize Nepal's electricity grid, and support the increased trade of Nepal's surplus energy.

Nepal is the world's second richest country for inland water resources with as many as 6,000 streams, rivers, and tributaries. The Asian Development Bank estimates that if Nepal's hydropower generation expanded by just 20 percent, by 2030 the country's real GDP would increase by 87 percent and exports would increase by 285 percent.

The Road Maintenance Project is designed to introduce a new government-run road maintenance program to better build and maintain Nepal's roads. An underlying cause of Nepal's high transportation costs is poor road quality due to insufficient maintenance. Improved roads will mean safer, more cost effective and efficient transport of goods, services, and people.

"For more than 70 years, the United States and Nepal have enjoyed a friendship built on shared values, including individual freedoms and respect for the sovereignty of all Nations," said Brooks. "The MCC compact is a continuation of our long partnership. The compact will benefit nearly 23 million Nepalis and create high-quality jobs for Nepalis as we extend Nepal's power grid and lower the cost of road transportation.

The U.S. established diplomatic relations with Nepal in 1947 and was one of the first countries to extend development assistance. In 1951, the U.S. and Nepal signed multiple bilateral aid programs as part of the U.S.'s Point Four Program - the first U.S. program designed to improve social, economic and political conditions in developing nations. These programs focused on roads and telecommunications, enabling agriculture, and eliminating malaria. From 1952 to 1986, the U.S. provided more than \$368 million in bilateral development assistance. Then, following the 2015 earthquakes the U.S. provided the largest amount of financial assistance to Nepal – more than \$190 million – for relief, recovery, and the reconstruction of critical infrastructure, including 36 schools and hospitals, and more than 1,600 homes.

According to the U.S Embassy in Nepal MCC is an international development agency of the U.S. Government, working to reduce global poverty through economic growth. Created in 2004, MCC provides time-limited grants and assistance to countries that meet rigorous standards for good governance, fighting corruption and respecting democratic rights.

## Utah National Guard Hands Over Humanitarian Aid To Nepal

Members of the United States Utah Air National Guard's 151st Air Refuelling Wing, in coordination with the US Transportation Command's Denton Program for Private Donations, have provided lifesaving equipment and humanitarian supplies to help reduce human suffering and assist with Nepal's COVID-19 response.

The Utah National Guard is composed of two branches of the United States military, the Air National Guard and Army National Guard, and is committed to fostering strong relationships with the community and other nations and strengthening the long-standing partnerships.

According to the US Embassy, donations of supplies and equipment were transported by members of the 151st ARW on a KC-135 plane in a bid to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. National Guard members also provided a tour of the KC-135 plane and participated in a professional exchange on firefighting with the Nepali Army. The donations targeted the needs identified by the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population and provide critical assistance to Nepal at a critical time.

US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry tweeted, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United States has stood by Nepal and assisted in its effort to stop the devastation caused by COVID-19. This is yet another example of our ongoing support to help Nepal at the time of need."

"It took a lot of dedication and hard work from multiple partners at the local and national levels to make this mission possible," said Major General Michael Turley, the adjutant general, Utah National Guard. "My hope is that our support will preserve lives, provide relief and engender trust with the Nepali people."



## Professor Subedi Appointed Advisor To IUCN

Professor Surya P. Subedi QC, OBE, DCL of the University of Leeds has been appointed by the Bureau of the IUCN Council as Legal Procedures Adviser to the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is also known in short as the World Conservation



Union, is a prestigious international organization.

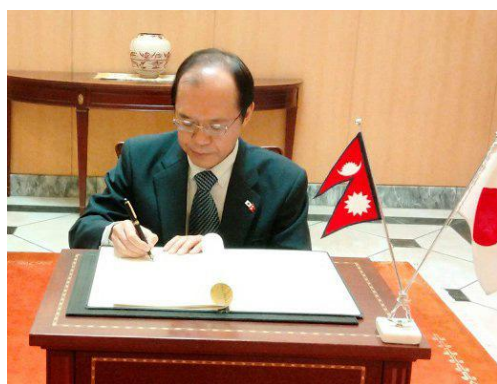
Professor Subedi was appointed to advise them on legal and procedural matters during their World Congress which takes place in every four years and this time it was taking place in the French city of Marseille between 3 and 11 September 2021.

The Congress was to be inaugurated by President Emmanuel Macron of France and Professor Subedi was on his way to France to attend the Opening Ceremony and the full proceedings of the Congress.

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both governments and civil society organizations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 member organizations and the input of more than 18,000 experts. This diversity and vast expertise makes IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

### Japan Supports Improvements In Water Access, Agriculture Income

The Government of Japan has provided grant assistance of US dollars 701,273 (about NRs 83.21 million) for a project on improving water access and agricultural income in Sindhupalchowk District.



According to a press release issued by the Embassy of Japan, the project will be implemented by Peace Winds Japan to stabilize the income and livelihoods of the locals by improving access to water they need and

introducing vegetable cultivation. The grant contract for the project was signed by KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan, and Ms. YAMAGUCHI Nana, Acting Country Representative, Peace Winds Japan.

The project plans to build safe drinking water systems and encourage village committees for managing and maintaining the facilities. The water supply system is expected to assist health and sanitation improvements of the area and also assist to increase agricultural production there. Promotion and support for efficient marketing of local agricultural products with the support by the project are expected to stabilize incomes of local residents. Peace Winds Japan, Japan-based international NGO works with the Institution for Suitable Actions for Prosperity (ISAP), their Nepali partner NGO, to carry out the project in Sunkoshi and Melamchi Municipalities and Balefi Rural Municipality.

Ambassador KIKUTA said, "Japan has been assisting community-based projects like this, in which we can find the improvements in people's daily lives, by collaborating with the nongovernment organizations to make changes especially in remote districts." He stated that although similar projects

are facing difficulties to proceed due to COVID 19, he believes Japan and Nepal can overcome the pandemic, saving peoples' lives together by focusing on the better public health. "I sincerely hope that this project will improve the lives of people of the communities, which will lead to the prosperity of post-COVID Nepal society," the Ambassador added.

### Republic Of Korea Gives \$604,500 Worth Of Oxygen Concentrators

Park Chong-suk, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Nepal, handed over 94 units of oxygen concentrators to Umesh Shrestha, State Minister of Health and Population.

Similarly, KOICA-KAAN donated 3 units of Oxygen Concentrator to Methinkot Hospital. The Republic of Korea supported about \$604,500 worth of oxygen concentrators to Nepal via KOICA (total 378 Units of Oxygen Concentrator).

This handover was carried out to support Nepal's COVID-19 responses through KOICA's development projects in Nepal in addition to the donation from KOICA Alumni Association of Nepal (KAAN). However, the remaining 281 units of oxygen concentrators shall be handed over to Nepal by the end of September 2021.

According to a press release, KOICA decided to extend support with these oxygen concentrators based on the request of the Ministry of Health and Population due to acute shortage of oxygen supply during the second wave of COVID-19 in Nepal. It is a 9 liters per minute capacity high flow oxygen concentrator manufactured in USA.

Out of these 378 oxygen concentrators KOICA plans to provide 280 units to MoHP, 3 units Methinkot Hospital through KAAAN, 15 units to Nepal Korea Friendship Municipality Hospital, 10 units to Trishuli Hospital, 25 units to Kathmandu University, 25 units to Dhulikhel Hospital, 15 units to Tikapur Hospital and 5 units to Mugu Hospital.

At the handover ceremony the Ambassador expressed that Korea has always considered Nepal as one of its close friends and has always extended its supportive hands to Nepal. He added that Korea will continue its support in various sectors of Nepal's development. He expressed his hope that each of these equipment will be dispatched to the hospitals where they are most needed and effectively utilized.

At the event Minister thanked the Ambassador and the Government of the Republic of Korea for such a meaningful support. He stressed that the support from the Republic of Korea shall be distributed very carefully only to those hospitals having shortage of oxygen supply. He also expressed that such support will continue in the future as well.





## BUSINESS BRIEF

### International Women Entrepreneurs Trade Fair Concludes

The 5th International Women Entrepreneurs Trade Fair 2021 has concluded. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had inaugurated the fair virtually.

The fair was organized by the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal (FWEAN) to promote the internal market and export of goods, agricultural products and handicraft produced in all the seven provinces.

FWEAN President Reeta Simha said the fair would help advocacy, network expansion, information flow, capacity building and marketing for women's economic and social empowerment and transformation.

Niru Rayemajhi Khatri, first vice-president of the FWEAN, said that it was time to focus on online marketing as it has helped the expansion of the domestic market and promotion of the products produced by women entrepreneurs even during the global pandemic.

Shobha Gyawali, second vice president of FWEAN, said the virtual event will be a common ground for exhibition, promotion, marketing and sale of goods



and services and encourage women entrepreneurs to promote their business and products in the international market.

The fair was supported by various organizations such as FCA, The Asia Foundation, International Labor Organization, UKAID, Visa Foundation, and Women's Bank with the technical support of Dolpha Solutions. The fair was sponsored by National Life Insurance, Jyoti Bikas Bank, Sanima Bank, Nepal College of Travel and Tourism Management, Srinagar Agro, Global IME Bank, Laxmi Intercontinental, Citizen Bank, Nimbus, Pashupati Food Industries and the Embassy of Bangladesh in Kathmandu.

### Nepal And Germany Discuss Energy Sector Support

Charge d'affaires of Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany Stephan Russek has paid a courtesy call on Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal at her office in Singha Durbar.



According to the Ministry, Minister Bhusal and Charge d'affaires Stephan Russek discussed the matter of mutual interest. During the meeting, Charge d'affaires Stephan Russek said that Germany has been supporting Nepal's energy sector for a long time and it will further strengthen the support to Nepal.

During the meeting, they also discussed the progress of on-going German supported Chilime-Trishuli and Lekhnath Damauli 220 kV Transmissoin line projects.

Minister Bhusal thanked Federal Republic of Germany for continuous technical and financial support for the overall development of Nepal including energy sector. She assured German envoy that the ministry is committed to complete German supported projects in time.

### NIBL Opens Its 87<sup>th</sup> Branch In Sindhuli Madi

Nepal Investment Bank Limited (NIBL) has expanded its operation by opening its 87<sup>th</sup> branch in Sindhuli Madi, Kamalamai Municipality Ward No. 6, Bagmati Province. The newly opened branch was inaugurated by the mayor of Sindhuli, Khadga Bahadur Khatri, alongside Province Manager Sushil Kumar Shrestha.

The Sindhuli Madi Branch will provide full-





fledged banking services fully catering to local demand, with the aim to aid financial accessibility to customers and widening financial literacy throughout.

NIBL has been catering to its customers from 86 branches, 130 ATMs, 19 extension counters, 10 revenue collection counters and 56 branchless banking counters. The bank, being the recipient of five Bank of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euromoney awards for “Best Bank 2018 and 2021” from the international publication - Euromoney. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A.

## Nepal, World Bank Review Portfolio Performance

Finance Minister Janardan Sharma has instructed officials for the completion of projects within the stipulated time while maintaining quality, and urged all participants to utilize scientific tools and techniques for project implementation.



Highlighting the perspective of general citizens on government projects, Minister Sharma thanked the World Bank for its continued support to the Government of Nepal in the joint portfolio meeting of the Nepal Government and the World Bank.

The joint portfolio review of the Government of Nepal and the World Bank concluded on August 27 covering 27 ongoing World Bank-financed projects with a net commitment of \$3.27 billion.

The concluding meeting was chaired by Finance Secretary, Madhu Kumar Marasini and World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, Faris Hadad-Zervos in the presence of Finance Minister, Janardan Sharma and Vice Chairman of National Planning Commission, Dr. Biswo Poudel.

The concluding meeting was held at the Ministry of Finance with a hybrid model consisting of in-person as well as virtual presence considering the health

protocol. The meeting discussed issues that remain unresolved at the line ministry level and are of strategic importance which require high level attention. The meeting discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on project implementation that had led to delays. In addition, other generic implementation issues such as weak capacity in project management especially at provincial and local levels, frequent turnover of civil servants, procurement delays, safeguard related issues, and slow disbursement were discussed.

Focusing on coordinated and joint efforts for delivering development impacts, Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini requested the participants to build a common understanding to improve the overall implementation environment of the projects. He expressed his appreciation of the assistance provided by the World Bank even during difficult times.

The annual stocktaking exercise is organized to review the performance of ongoing projects, review implementation challenges, and identify measures to resolve such challenges collaboratively. Sectoral meetings that were organized with the relevant line ministries under the chair of respective Secretaries discussed in depth key results achieved under each project, underlying issues and challenges, and agreed actions to resolve such issues. The World Bank’s current project portfolio in Nepal covers energy, transport, earthquake housing reconstruction, education, health, social protection, environment, urban development, water & irrigation, agriculture and livestock, and public financial management sectors.

“While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the pace of development works in Nepal, we are encouraged by the government’s efforts to strengthen implementation and deliver results amid the pandemic’s challenges,” stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. “The pandemic has also provided an opportunity to recalibrate our approach to improve project implementation and capital spending, whereby our projects deliver timely results for the benefit of Nepal.”



# Time To Merge G-7 With G-20



BY: DR. OMKAR SHRESTHA

The recent convening of the G-7 meeting in Cornwall, England, reflects the West's nostalgic desire to go back to their glorious past, assuming as though the post-1975 world (when G-7 was formed) continues to remain unchanged. The world has since moved on. It is a grand display of paradox for the G-7 democratic countries, with a mere 11% of the world's population, mostly greying and aging, to act as representing the global order of 7.7 billion population. The G-7 economic might, in terms of world GDP, has fallen to a paltry 33% (adjusted for purchasing power) - compared to over two-thirds of the world GDP during its heydays in the 1970s. Furthermore, there are various issues where the EU interests diverge from the US interests due to their differing evolving contexts and needs e.g. Germany and France. Addressing tomorrow's challenges with yesterday's institutional instruments and architecture is an exercise in futility and reflection of G-7's obduracy. These institutional infrastructures (built after WW II) now need substantive amendments to reflect today's realities and thus maintain their continued relevance.

The G-7 Group, like a club of kith and kin, loves to hear its own voice in the echo chamber. Hence, instead of being globally inclusive and accommodative to other major economies with it, the G-7 opts to keep them out of it. Meanwhile, it invited India, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Australia (as its "guests") in its Cornwall meeting. It becomes perspicuous as though the Group's only intent is to build an anti-China alliance, which if true, is truly unhelpful to the long-term interest of the planet. During such a global pandemic time, the world would have preferred to see the US and China displaying their solidarity. This is the minimum obligation of the leaders of these two countries to the world – certainly not remaining divided and disengaged.

Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, the

G-7's "pledge", in its final meeting, of providing less than one billion doses is woefully below the WHO's figure of 11 billion doses (WHO's estimated figure for the World's poor nations). The "pledge" was neither country-by-country commitment, nor even bound by any timeline, and is spread over the next year. It is like aiming to reach the moon in a bullock cart. Also, it is to be noted that a "pledge" is merely an expression of non-binding intention.

Meanwhile, the Covid casualties continue to ascend. The casualties have already exceeded 4 million with no sign of deceleration. Thus, the urgent need of the day is to find a global resolution with collaboration among the US, China, India, Russia, and other vaccine-producing countries rather than engaging in a game of seeking the original sources of the virus first. When the house is already on fire, the urgent task is to seek the water to put off the fire than finding out what caused the fire. (There will always be adequate time to find out the virus sources once the pandemic is brought under control). In this pandemic, no country can feel safe until all countries are made safe. Thus, it is unethical for some G-7 countries to keep, in-store, globally scarce vaccines while so many low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) suffer daily casualties due to the shortage of the same vaccines. Releasing those vaccines by these countries to the rest of the world (before their shelf life expires), is not only ethical but also prudent as it serves their own self-interest. These developed countries need to raise their sight beyond their own region.

The G-7 nations' refusal to acknowledge the vaccines as a global public good is hurting their own image. Their insistence on retaining the IPR on the vaccine (to serve the corporate greed of a few vaccine manufacturers) during such a crisis period (even in defiance of US President Biden's desire), is simply inex-



plicable. This underscores that the current IPR regime, which grants an increasingly longer period of protection for every incremental innovation, has outlived its usefulness. A new IPR regime is long overdue. Under the current IPR regime, the risk of stepping in the legal minefields, due to unintentional violation of IPR, is hindering the budding creativities in many countries. Given this, a new IPR regime, reflecting the world economy's new

G-7 to consider merging itself with the G-20. Interestingly, such a merger could be a strategic masterstroke for the G-7 to transform itself as a diverse club of G-7-20. Even after the merger, the G-7 nations will still remain intact with its significant influence over the global agenda except now, it will be perceived as representing two-thirds of the world population from all the continents, 80% of the world trade, and 84% of the world GDP. Its



realities, needs to be developed by G-20 in replacement of the current IPR regime.

It is about time for the G-7 to acknowledge that, in its current form, it has outlived its usefulness. Messrs Jim O'Neill and Alessio, both Fellows at the European Research Institute Bruegel, correctly pointed out (soon after the Cornwall G-7 meeting), that the G-7, "in its current formulation, no longer has a reason to exist, and it should be replaced with a more representative group of countries". (See Council on Foreign Relations – "Where is the G-7 Headed?", 14 June 2021).

With the ready availability of G-20 as an alternative institutional mechanism, it is only sensible for the

legitimacy will be enhanced, and it will be seen as being more inclusive and representative of global needs and concerns. This will also be in line with the suggestion made by Richard Haas, President, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and Charles A. Copchan, its Senior Fellow – the need for a "new concert of powers" of the US, China, the EU, India, Japan, Russia and other important economies, genuinely representing the global community. As often said, nothing can stop the force of an idea whose time has come. The reincarnated form of G-7 as G-7-20 could just be one such idea.

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# Clash Course

*Slamming Common Minimum Program (CM With the announcement by CPN-UML to disrupt the House of Representatives (HoR), Nepal's political course is heading to be chaotic P), leader of main opposition K. P Sharma Oli flayed the coalition government*

By KESHAB POUDEL

If the recent political statements issued by CPN-UML leaders are any indication, they are the beginning of an era of political clashes among the country's major political forces, intensifying and prolonging the political instability.

Nepal's relatively stable political situation has entered into a chaotic order following the split of CPN-UML into two. CPN-UML has announced to disrupt the House demanding clarification from speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota on his role of not taking actions against defector of CPN-UML, which would have prevented the split.

An organized protest against speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota in the HoR by CPN-UML is not haphazard, nor a hasty decision, but the protest is a part of strategy prepared by chairman of CPN-UML K.P. Sharma Oli for a political gain.

Leader Oli alleged that Speaker Sapkota had played a major role in the split of the UML. "We need to take all necessary actions to oust speaker as he is not fit for the position of Speaker. The position is currently held by a person who is involved in splitting the CPN-UML in a wrong and unconstitutional way.

How can we allow the functioning of parliament with such a Speaker?" he asked in the meeting of his party.

Following the opposition from the CPN (UML), on 8 September, the meeting of the House of Representatives has been put off. As per their plan, CPN-UML MPs have disrupted the house demanding the resignation of speaker.

According to the leadership, the UML would not allow the

against him taking restraints. However, he also issued indirect threat to use his power to end the disruption taking action against CPN-UML members.

Speaker Sapkota urged the UML lawmakers who were chanting slogans against him to read section B and C of Rule 21 of Parliament Regulation 2075 BS again. Sapkota in the warning tone urged them to not go beyond the grace and norms



session's meeting to move forward until the Speaker responds as to why he did not issue notice about the 14 lawmakers that the UML had taken action on and removed them as members of the HoR," UML chief whip Bishal Bhattarai said addressing the HoR.

Speaker Sapkota had quietly listened to all vulgar slogans

of the parliament. His words indicated that rebel turned Maoist speaker Sapkota does not mind to take any harsh decisions like expelling the MPs.

"If you continue disruption crossing the limit, I will have to take necessary actions to conduct the house," said speaker Sapkota postponing the first day meetings follow-



ing the disruptions.

Earlier in the parliamentary party meeting, CPN-UML Chairman Oli had announced not to let the HoR meeting chaired by Speaker Sapkota to function smoothly.

With the consent, the first day of the meeting of the HoR has been put off. Looking at the speaker's words and the stand taken by CPN-UML, some major clashes are likely in the parliament.

The agitating UML lawmakers have alleged that Speaker Sapkota had played a major role to split the UML by not sacking 14 UML lawmakers including Madhav Kumar Nepal as recommended by the party.

Along with creating obstruction in the HoR, UML Chair-



man Oli has also filed a writ petition against Speaker Sapkota for not taking action against 14 'sacked' lawmakers of the party.

CPN-UML leader Oli's agenda does not end here. By disrupting the house, CPN-UML wants to block 14 former CPN-UML lawmakers from attending the procedures of HoR.

Chairman Oli said that his party won't recognize the pres-

ence of 14 former UML lawmakers 'sacked' by the party for breaching the party's whip in the parliamentary meeting. He maintained that parliament meeting cannot function in the presence of 14 'non-lawmakers' as they are already sacked by the respective party.

With Oli's open stand, there are triangular clashes in the parliamentary politics. Although the front face of present clashes in the parliament is speaker Sapkota, the fight actually is between Oli led CPN-UML Vs Nepal led CPN- Unified Socialist.

"Who is Oli and CPN-UML stopping us from participating in the HoR as a member?," asked Birodh Khatiwada, Member of Parliament leading CPN-Socialist. "How a murderer of HoR like Oli can block us. We need to boycott his presence," said MP Khatiwada.

MP Ram Kumari Jhakri is harsh with former leader Oli. CPN-UML leader is acting like Hitler. We will not allow him to dance freely and implement his will in this legitimate body. Speaker Sapkota needs





to exercise his power suspending them from attending the parliament for a certain period.”

With just little over 13 months for the elections, CPN-UML and CPN-Unified Socialist want to establish mileage for the coming elections. For former Prime Minister Oli, it is more important to make it irrelevant to justify his decision to dissolve the house and call for fresh elections.

“Speaker Sapkota was biased on his decision not to dismiss the lawmakers as recommended by the UML. If 14 rebel members are allowed to take part in HoR, Ram Bahadur Thapa ‘Badal’, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, Prabhu Shah, Lekhraj Bhatta and Gaurishankar Chaudhary should also be allowed in the parliament meeting,” asked CPN-UML leader Subash Chandra Nembang.

Although leaders of ruling parties and prime minister are yet to speak on the disruption, they are united against CPN-UML which wants to create some kind of issue to go to street to mobilize cadres and

public opinion in its favor.

In the current parliamentary stalemate, CPN-UML wants expulsion of its members from speaker Sapkota to justify that he is biased against them. However, Nepal’s political parties have a long history of stalling the House whenever they want to put pressure on the government. When united in 2001, CPN-UML had stalled the House for 64 days.

Following the revival of the house last time, NC and Maoist –Center disrupted the session of the house for several days. However, this is a very different circumstance. The ruling parties need to pass new budget revision bill, political party amendment ordinance and MCC.

If the current level of political dispute does not end any time soon, it will end up with intense political clashes between different political forces.





## NC CONVENTION

# Newcomers Era

*Forthcoming 14th General Convention of Nepali Congress will decide the future of many leaders*

By A CORRESPONDENT

“The time has come to change the leadership of the party. My candidacy for the party president is for the leadership change,” announced vice president Bimalendra Nidhi at a gathering of large num-



bers of his supporter. “My announcement is not for withdrawal but for a contest,” said Nidhi, son of Nepali Congress stalwart late Mahendra Narayan Nidhi.

Dr. Shekhar Koirala, nephew of late B.P. Koirala has also announced to contest the elections for the party president challenging the current leader and prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. “My candidature is not for withdrawal. I am contesting the elections to win.”

Although some others also have announced their candidature, Nidhi and Dr. Koirala’s announcements have meaning and political weight. With the announcement by Dr. Koirala, senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel and general secretary and son of BP Koirala Dr. Shashanka Koirala are in a difficult position.

Living in the same group for a long time opposing Deuba, Poudel and Dr. Shashanka Koirala share the same vote bank. The sudden announcement by Dr. Koirala has put them in dilemma about what to do.

Although Nidhi and Dr. Koirala have announced their candidacy for the president, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba’s leadership is unchallengeable right now.

Having built a strong leadership quality, prime minister Deuba leaves his contemporary Ram Chandra Poudel, who lost the elections last time, far behind.

“The forthcoming convention is highly important. All leaders and cadres of all levels need to be together to conduct the party’s 14th general convention in a unified manner,” said Deuba, opening the district level convention in Bhaktapur. Deuba expressed his belief that the party’s general convention will consolidate internal democracy in the party.

He suggested electing a unanimous leadership of the party through the general convention and giving a message of unity, stating that the general convention would make the party united as it is the forum for formulating the action plan and electing the leadership for the next term.

Stating that the general convention had to be organized amidst the risk of the corona virus infection for saving the Nepali Congress’ legitimacy, the party president called upon all party members to participate in the general convention, fully abiding by the health safety protocols.

“The process for the general con-



vention has started,” Deuba said, adding that the party would be taken ahead more vigorously by electing the leadership through democratic system.

As the NC general convention had kicked off from the ward level, it will take another two months to complete the



entire process to hold central level general convention to elect the party president.

As the General Convention approaches, all the political leaders at the center are busy with their mobiles to reach their well wishers for getting elected as members of general convention.

As a large number of youth participated at the local level elections, NC’s convention will bring many new faces sending many old leaders to pack up. Although he was expelled from the party general membership, former senior leader of Nepali Congress Govinda Raj Joshi still has a large number of followers in the party.

Joshi holds the view that there is no real threat to Deuba’s leadership now. “Deuba will win the elections in the 14th General Convention. However, Nidhi will give formidable challenge in the first round,” said Joshi.

“Following these elections, the leadership era of Ram Chandra Poudel, Krishna Prasad Sitaula and Dr. Shekhar Koirala and many others is going to end in the party.”

“After the elections, Deuba will lead the party as president and Nidhi, Dr. Shashanka Koirala and Prakash Man Singh will likely emerge as troika leadership in the second generation. Ultimately, Nidhi will emerge as a real leader in the next elections winning the party president.”

Politics is always a harsh and difficult sail. Going by the current political trends, it looks like the era of old leadership has gone and new political equation will arrive in the party.

# Dedicated General

*Highly dedicated and qualified, newly appointed Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Prabhu Ram Sharma begins his innings*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every army officer aspires to lead the Nepal's oldest and historic security organization like Nepal Army. Passing all difficult stages in proof of quality, capability and dedication, only a few finally reach the top position of Nepal Army. COAS General Sharma is one of them.

Newly appointed COAS General Sharma passed various steps proving his own quality, competitiveness, dedication and commitment to reach the top post.

COAS General Sharma also has set a new record in the organizational history of Nepal Army. Polite, sober and highly respected general in the rank and file of the army, COAS Sharma is second from Poudel clan after Ranganath Sharma, who had led Nepal Army in the most crucial period after the fall of Bhimsen Thapa, to lead the 300-plus years old Nepal Army.

Having a long experience in the army, maintaining his dignity and dedication, COAS General Sharma has risen to this height of Nepal Army. A resident of Sitapaila, western part of valley, COAS General Sharma's rise to the top of Nepal Army has been smooth. As Ranganath Sharma was the first commoner to lead in the transitional crucial historical period, COAS General Sharma is also a commoner leading the organization in a difficult time.

At a time when Nepal has been facing several challenges in various sectors, Nepal Army, Nepal's oldest institution of nation building, has a very important role to play in guaranteeing national independence. With his professional skills and dedication, COAS General Sharma will handle all the coming challenges.

## Rise to Chief

President Bhandari has approved the government's recommendation to appoint Lt Gen Prabhu Ram Sharma Chief of Nepali Army. With this



decision, Sharma's appointment as the next chief of the army had been officially sealed.

General Sharma assumed the office as the acting Chief from August 9 as outgoing Chief of Army Staff General Purna Chandra Thapa stayed on leave

before retirement.

Thapa retired on September 8 following which Sharma was promoted to the post to take over the responsibilities officially.

Earlier, a cabinet meeting held on July 27 had made the decision to rec-



commend Sharma's name as Acting Chief of the national army as the incumbent army chief to the office of the president. The government had recommended General Staff of Nepali Army Prabhuram Sharma for appointment as the Chief of Army Staff.

#### Appointment of General Sharma

President and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Nepali Army Vidhya Devi Bhandari conferred the rank of General on Lieutenant General Prabhu Ram Sharma, the Officiating Chief of the Army Staff, and appointed him as the 44<sup>th</sup> Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) of the Nepali Army amid an investiture ceremony organised at the Presidential Office, Shital Niwas on September 09, 2021. President Bhandari also administered Oath of Office and Secrecy to General Sharma.

Earlier, a meeting of the Council of Ministers held on August 19, 2021, had decided to make the recommendation in accordance to the Article 267, Sub Para (5) of the Constitution of Nepal.

Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chairman of National Assembly, Minister of Home Affairs, High Level Government Officials, Heads of the Security Organisations and Generals of the Nepali Army were present at the ceremony.

COAS General Sharma received and reviewed a 'Guard of Honour' organized at the Army Headquarters before assuming office effective from today. COAS General Sharma also visited the Army Pavilion, Tundikhel and the Martyr's Memorial in Chhauni and paid homage to the fallen heroes.

COAS General Sharma was commissioned into the Nepali Army as a Second Lieutenant in the year 1984 and was serving as the Chief of General Staff before picking up the current rank and appointment.

#### Bio data of General Prabhu Ram Sharma, 44<sup>th</sup> Chief of Army Staff, Nepali Army

COAS General Prabhu Ram Sharma was born on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1964 in Kathmandu. A graduate of Nepali

Army Academy, he was commissioned into the Purano Gorakh Battalion, one of the oldest Infantry Battalions in the

pany in East Timor (UNTAET-3) in 2001 and the Infantry Battalion in the African Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in



Nepali Army. He completed his Company Command and Staff Course from the Nepali Army War College (1988-89) and Command and Staff Officers Course from Army Command and Staff College (1996-97) Nepal.

An alumni of National Defense College in India, he holds a Master's Degree in History from the Tribhuban University, Nepal, and Master of Philosophy in Defense and Strategic Study from the University of Madras, India.

In addition, he has completed the Technical Officer (TO) course from India. He has also participated in various seminars including in NESA Centre, Washington DC and attended the executive course in the APCSS (Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies) in Hawaii, United States. Gen Sharma is decorated by the prestigious SUPRABAL JANA SEWA SHREE.

COAS General Sharma has held various command and staff appointments at home and abroad during his career. He has commanded an independent Infantry Company and an Infantry Battalion. He also holds the distinction of leading these units in UN Peacekeeping operations.

He first led the infantry com-

2004. He has commanded two Infantry Brigades namely number 3 and 6 Infantry Brigades. Similarly, he successfully commanded the Mid Division in 2017 as the General Officer Commanding (GOC).

He has also held numerous staff appointments at the Brigade and Division Headquarters. Among his notable senior staff appointments are Military Secretary, Director of the Directorate of Recruitment and Selection and the Director of Planning Policy and Staff Duties in the Army Headquarters. He has also held the appointment of Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS), Directorate General of Military Operations (DGMO), Director of Master General of Ordnance (MGO) and Chief of Staff (COS). During his illustrious career, he has also held a diplomatic appointment as Nepal's Military Attaché to Bangladesh from 2008 till 2011. Before becoming the Chief of Army Staff, he was serving as the Chief of General Staff.

General Prabhu Ram Sharma is married to Mrs Sunita Sharma and the couple is blessed with two daughters, Maunikshya and Shreya. Gen Sharma likes to travel in his leisure time.

## Could Nepal Be The Next Technology Destination? A Conversation With Karvika Thapa, CEO Kimbu Tech



BY: SHREYA GYAWALI

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted one of Nepal's crucial aspects of development- international migration. We saw an influx of returnee migrants forced to find their way back home as a result of job losses in destination countries, and those able to remain abroad continue to face enormous socio- economic challenges. As these returnees wait in anticipation to get back to work, there are millions more hoping to escape the state of unemployment in Nepal. The struggle to obtain vaccine has been a major barrier for people wanting to migrate overseas and as popular destinations such as Australia continue to shut its border, young Nepalese are forced to reconsider their academic and professional plans.

While remittances make up for a big chunk of our national economy, it is an unstable source of income to be dependent on as a country. It is perhaps time for Nepal to consider a more sustainable alternative to development and realise that large scale outmigration does not solve our long-term economic problems. here is a need to explore avenues of opportunities across sectors that can create employment for young people, address the issue of brain drain and most importantly provide them with a choice to remain in Nepal and pursue their dreams.

My recent conversation with Karvika Thapa, CEO of Kimbu Tech; highlighted that Nepal's Information Technology (IT) sector presents ample prospects of growth in terms of driving the economy, creating jobs and possibly reversing the current state of large scale outmigration. A seasoned IT professional with over fourteen

years of experience in the American technology industry, Karvika has worked in capacity of a Sr. Technical Project Lead, Sr. Business Systems Analyst and System Support Specialist across education, healthcare and retail sectors with prominent companies such as Boston Scientific and Merkle. "Even with a promising career and decent lifestyle in the US, it consistently felt like something was missing. I wanted to give back to the community and, the vision to do well in my own country remained unful-

filled," says Karvika reflecting on her decision to return back to Nepal.

With her expertise in and understanding of the global market, Karvika was quick to recognize opportunities that exist for a Nepali IT company to provide high quality services to

**An optimistic technology expert, Karvika sees huge potential in Nepal being the next technology hub in South Asia. The fact that companies like Kimbu Tech are prospering and gaining international clients is reflective of our capacity to deliver quality services.**

international clients. Her company, Kimbu Tech is an international software company based in Nepal providing IT solutions and outsourcing services. Some of their top clients are currently based in the US and Israel. The decision to get back into the workforce and head the company was largely driven by her vision to create more spaces for Nepali women in the IT industry. She acknowledges that issues of skills shortage, lack of expertise and absence of women in tech stem from deep-



rooted structural problems that need to be thoroughly addressed. Leading by example, Karvika works directly with educational institutions, developing curriculums to ensure that young graduates are better equipped to enter the job market. Determined to manifest her goal of engaging more women in tech and leadership positions, she successfully established an all- women support team at Kimbu Tech and continues to collaborate with companies to create opportunities for women to bridge the gap in a male- dominated industry.

An optimistic technology expert, Karvika sees huge potential in Nepal being the next technology hub in South Asia. The fact that companies like Kimbu Tech are prospering and gaining international clients is reflective of our capacity to deliver quality services. She says, “Nepal is undergoing a massive technology wave at the moment, and we must be able to harness it to our benefit. The next five years will be a tech boom for Nepal, and we must not miss the train.” There is also an expanding local market for Nepali tech companies to work across multiple sectors that require technological integration and innovation. Our delay with digital adaptation in comparison to other countries could be an opportunity for us to move to newer and better, locally made technology solutions. However, the path to great business and growth for Nepal’s technology companies is not without its obstacles.

One of the greatest challenges impeding the growth of Nepal’s tech industry is the lack of investment. Karvika notes, “Everyone wants a technology solution but due to Nepal’s unstable market, no one is ready to invest. Local clients are hesitant to provide adequate finance, or they demand an immediate return of investment which is not always possible.” In addition, the absence of a defined margin in the market has caused IT companies to provide services at a very low cost, thus preventing them from competing with other companies in the region. She also mentions, “There is currently a great demand for IT services and outsourcing from Nepal, but not enough people to provide professional services. High rates of youth out- migration has kept us from forming a skilled workforce. “

In terms of Nepal’s population, we are currently experiencing a ‘youth bulge’. Also known as a ‘demographic dividend’, it occurs when there is a shift in the nations age structure reflecting a growing working age population and low dependent population. This demographic trend is largely identified as a ‘window of opportunity’ to accelerate a country’s economic growth before transitioning into an ageing society. Making the most out of this requires adequate investment to upskill and educate our young population, formulate policies

that boost employment and encourage entrepreneurship while creating an environment that is socially and economically conducive for people to stay, rather than migrate overseas. Reflecting on her own experience as a former migrant able to return to a promising career in Nepal, Karvika says “Nepal is an untapped land of opportunities. Given the implementation of good policies, I believe we can engage in world class jobs, earn good money and take our brands to the global market by being right here with our families. With a rapidly growing tech



Karvika Thapa

industry, we must capitalize on the skills, experience and knowledge that a lot of our migrants return with.” She believes there are enormous opportunities for those who specifically bring transferrable skills in problem solving, communication, administration and project management while also highlighting that non-IT qualifications such as in social sciences, highly complement the delivery of technical services.

Migration should be a choice, not a necessity as it is for many Nepali people today. Harnessing our potential to be the next IT destination and capitalizing on the current ‘population bonus’ could possibly steer Nepal on a more sustainable path of economic and social development. We need more success stories like Kimbu Tech, giving us the hope that Nepal is moving towards an incredibly prosperous future.

To all the young Nepali aspirants out there Karvika says, “Nepal is far from perfect in many ways, but imperfections provide spaces for new opportunities. It is the attitude to learn and commitment to work hard that makes each one of us successful, no matter where we are.

# Reliability And Quality

*Ending decades of loadshedding, Kul Man Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority is back to start a mission to supply uninterrupted and quality electricity*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) ended load shedding hours five years ago, there are reports of frequent disruptions in power supply recently. The undeclared power cut goes for hours on days.

As No Light Section, a unit responsible to address grievances of consumers, does not receive the phone call, the consumers have no option other than to live in the darkness.

On media outlets from newspapers to social media, public comments and complaints point out frequent and regular power cuts, yet no one would be there to address the issue.

Known for his action and determination to implement his commitment, MD Ghising, who had made the virtually impossible task of ending the severe loadshedding, has set a mission to provide quality and uninterrupted power supply.

Knowing where the crisis and problem are, MD Ghising has initiated his efforts calling a meeting of all the heads of seven different provinces and Deputy Executive Director of Consumer and Distribution Directorate.

Responding to increasing consumer complaints related to the frequent disruptions of electricity supply and no response from No Light Division of NEA, MD Ghising has taken the initiative to ensure regular, reliable and quality supply of electricity, controlling leakage of electricity and maintaining financial discipline within NEA.

Despite officially ending load shedding, the frequency of electricity interruption has recently increased in many parts of Nepal. MD Ghising's meeting with higher officials discussed frequent power cuts without notice, lack of meters for connections and non-responsive No Light Division,

The virtual meeting has de-



cided to take immediate steps to improve the quality of electricity supply. In his address to the heads of all 7 provinces and deputy directors of Distribution and Consumer Directorate, MD Ghising directed them to take all necessary steps to provide quality electricity and address the public concern by taking stern actions to discipline the organization.

“Along with me, the Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation has also been receiving the complaints regarding frequent electricity cuts and non-responsive No Light Division,” said MD Ghising. “The present need is to immediately address all those concerns, taking stern steps. Our efforts must be to supply quality and regular electricity to consumers.”

He also said that there is the need to maintain discipline within the organization and take necessary steps to control the leakage with the support of and in coordination from local levels and district administrations.

He also said that there is the need to provide three phase meters to increase the demand of electricity among the consumers. “There is the need to strengthen transmission and distribution infrastructure, starting the construction work.”

MD Ghising directed all concerned officials to take necessary steps to complete the projects in time and take actions against those contractors who do not complete projects in stipulated time.

He also directed them to use



all old equipment from store to control expenditure and discourage purchase of new projects. He also said that NEA will take necessary steps to maintain financial discipline not allowing the purchase of the things directly.

MD Ghising also directed concerned NEA's officials to collaborate in coordination with local levels to implement NEA's announcement to improve beautification of city. NEA has recently announced to implement a campaign Brighter and Clean city.

MD Ghising has directed officials to install smart lights in main roads, historical, cultural heritage sites and World Heritage Sites. He has also directed to remove unused polls and wires from the city under beautification programs working to take underground the remaining cables.

Deputy Executive Director of Distribution and Consumer Directorate Manoj Silwal also directed all heads of provinces to work towards controlling the electricity leakage. Deputy Executive Director Silwal also directed them to address frequent power interruption and focus on providing quality electricity to the consumers.

### Improve Transmission And Distribution Systems

Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal said that the time is ripe to give up the foreign gas and connect with domestic electricity. Addressing the 36<sup>th</sup> annual function of Nepal Electricity Authority, Minister Bhusal said that there will be different tariffs for different sectors to increase the consumption of electricity.

Minister Bhusal, who is also the chairperson of the NEA board, said that NEA will also implement the working plan to increase the domestic consumption keeping in mind the possible wastes of energy in rainy season.

She said that the decision has already been taken to introduce different tariffs for winter and rainy seasons



and there will be additional incentives to consumers who used more electricity. Minister Bhusal also said that there is the need to increase the import of electricity. She also directed NEA to intensify the efforts to complete the universal electrification before the targeted time. She also said that there is a need to expand distribution lines in the areas with irrigation facilities.

“Under Nepal's Water, People's Investment Program, 1060 MW Upper Arun, 450 MW Chainpur Seti, 100 MW Tamakoshi Fifth will be implemented. Similarly, 60 MW Upper Modi will be built under employees investment,” said the Minister.

Minister Bhusal said that the construction of 400 kV Butwal-Gorakhpur, Kerung (China)-Ratmati cross border transmission line and north south 400 kV Transmission line will be constructed to evacuate the electricity generated domestically.

She said that NEA has to work further to provide quality electricity to the consumers stressing the need to establish mechanism and enhancing the capacity of distribution centers. The Minister also directed officials to take

necessary steps for automation in the distribution system and installation of smart meter throughout the country.

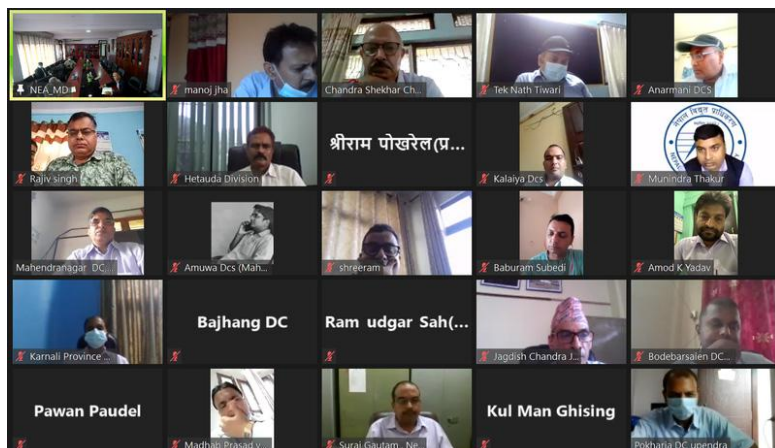
Secretary at the Ministry of Energy, Water Resource and Irrigation Devendra Karki said that learning from the experience of domestically built 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Project, there is the need to immediately start the construction of 1061 MW Upper Tamakoshi Project.

Secretary Karki also stressed the need to improve and expand the transmission and distribution system to meet the demand of industrialists.

Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority Kul Man Ghising said that NEA will provide high quality service to the consumers turning electricity production and distribution system automatic.

MD Ghising said that there is the need to give high priority to expansion and strengthening of distribution system to increase the consumption of electricity. He said that there are many challenges to find the market for the electricity generated by Upper Tamakoshi and other projects saying that the provision will be made to encourage consumption of more electricity in domestic market and export the surplus.

MD Ghising also said that there is the need to increase the domestic consumption of electricity which will have positive impacts on national economic progress and social devel-





opment. “Thus, NEA will focus on the construction of infrastructure, rural electrification, supply for agriculture, irrigation and industrial sector as well as review of current tariff to encourage electric vehicles and induction heaters in households,” said MD Ghising.

## **Completion of 220 kV Kosi Corridor Transmission Line Project**

For a coincidence, a project which had started in his first tenure was completed just a few days after Ghising began his second tenure as MD. Working hard and spending a lot of time to end the stalemate, MD Ghising had a very strong attachment with this strategically valuable transmission line. The first phase of construction of 220 kV Kosi Corridor Transmission line has concluded. Starting from Tumlingtar of Sankhuwasabha to reaching Inaruwa, the 106-km long 220 kV transmission line has 326 towers.

“After the completion of the project, it can pave the way to evacuate the over 2000 MW electricity from the proposed and ongoing hydro power projects that are under construction in Arun and Tamor rivers,” said MD Kul Man Ghising. The line will be charged in 33 KV.

Till the completion of 220 kV station in Inaruwa, the line will be charged to temporarily build 33 kV station to evacuate the electricity from Bhojpur, Sankhuwasabha and Teh-

rathum.

This will end the problems faced by the IPP’s projects to evacuate electricity during rainy season. Following the completion of the transmission line, the Kosi corridor transmission line will be connected to 33 kV in Tirtire situated at Sankhuwasabha. The electricity will be brought to 33 kV line of Chatara. In absence of transmission line, power projects were unable to operate in their full capacity during the rainy seasons. Currently, there are various projects with generating capacity of 33 MW during the rainy season.

According to Rajan Dhakal, Project chief, the construction of three substations has already completed in Tumlingtar and Baneshwor in Sankhuwasabha and Bashantapur in Terathum district. He said that the project is able to complete the work addressing many obstructions with the support from all different stakeholders. Dhakal said that the project is able to create a record of completing a lengthy project in time.

Constructed with the financial support from Nepal Government, Nepal Electricity Authority and concessional loan from Exim Bank of India, the transmission line will evacuate the energy generated by the hydro power projects, which are under constructions in Bhojpur, Terathum, Sankhuwasabha and Taple-

jung of Province 1, to national grid.

The transmission line will carry 516 MW of electricity generated by 28 different projects. NEA has already signed PPA with them. Under the first package, 220 kV double circuit Inaruwa, Basantapur-Baneshwor and Tumlingtar Transmission line has completed with an estimated cost of 30.75 million US dollars. Under the second package, the construction of 220 kV substations in Basantapur, Baneshwor and Tumlingtar has already completed with the cost of 20.53 million dollars.

The construction of 35-km 132 kV Basantapu-Dhungesanghu (Taplejung) transmission line is now underway with an aim to complete it by February 2022.

## **NEA’s Progress 2078**

When MD Ghising completed his first tenure, NEA was financially in a very healthy position with its profit margin of over 12 billion rupees. However, it is disappointing this year.

In terms of expansion of access to electricity, it has made certain progress: 90 percent population has access to electricity. Like in the past, access to electricity has increased in the country. During the period of a year, 7.37 percent new consumers were added, the number of consumers now reaching 4.5 million. The total number of consumers has reached to 5.8 million



with 550000 consumers from community. In total, 90 percent of the population has access to electricity through grid system. Despite coronavirus pandemic, total electrification has completed in 32 districts including Kalikot and Jumla of Karnali district.

### **Electricity Production Declines, Import From India Increases**

In the fiscal year 2077/78, NEA's plant generated electricity worth of Rs. 2.81 billion 6.7 percent less than the fiscal year 2076-77. In fiscal year 2076-077, NEA generated electricity worth of Rs. 3.2 billion. Similarly, the production of electricity from PPA has increased by 8.36 percent compared to last year reaching Rs.3.24 billion. Private sector generated electricity worth of Rs. 2.99 billion in fiscal year 2076/77.

Nepal has imported electricity worth of Rs. 1.73 billion in the fiscal year 2076/77. However, NEA imported electricity from India worth of Rs.2.82 billion over 63.45 percent in this fiscal year due to increased demand and reduction of NEA's production.

Last fiscal year, there was

availability of electricity worth of Rs. 8.87 billion in the system which is 70.4 million units over that of fiscal year 2076/77.

Out of total electricity available in the system, 31.66 percent was of NEA, 31.85 percent private sector and 36.51 percent import from India. In the fiscal year 2077/78, 7.31 billion units of electricity were consumed compared to 52.90 billion units in 2076/77 fiscal year.

### **Electricity Leakage Increases**

During the fiscal year 2077/78, leakage of electricity reached 17.18 percent which is 1.91 percent higher than the previous year. NEA blamed lack of programs, inadequate meter reading caused by COVID-19 pandemic, and other reasons for increased leakage.

### **Profits Decline**

During the fiscal year 2077/78, NEA has made a total earning worth Rs.71.28 billion compared Rs. 76.31 billion in fiscal year 2076/77. This was 6.59 percent lower.

In fiscal year 2077/78, NEA's

total expenditure was Rs.68.45 billion over Rs.61.87 billion, an increase of 10.96 percent. NEA spent Rs.41.46 billion for purchasing electricity compared to Rs.35.12 billion in the fiscal year 2076/77. The amount is 18.05 percent higher.

NEA's net income was Rs.80.35 billion in fiscal year 2077/78 with Rs.68.64 billion operational cost. The total profit was Rs.11.71 billion compared to Rs.23.74 billion in the fiscal year 2076/77. This is less than 50.67 percent.

In the last fiscal year 2077/78, the total profit was Rs. 6 billion before tax, less than 54.73 percent compared to total profit of 13.27 billion in fiscal year 2076/77.

In 2076/77, the net profit was Rs. 11.68 billion compared to 3.51 billion in 2077/78. This is 69.94 percent lower than the previous year.

As MD Ghising is back for the second tenure, NEA will see changes and make progress to pick up the pace he left a year ago.



# Masino, Ushineko, Marsi & Etc



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

During yesteryears the rice that was in vogue was the Masino for those at the top and Ushineko for the common folk. Later one heard of Mansuli, Pokhreli, Buda Subba, Sanu & Jeera Masino and Urza or par-boiled. Initially Nepal was an exporter of rice to India. Following the ushering of Green Revolution by Swaminathan in India, we now import Basmati from there and Taichin from China. Even after celebrating 15<sup>th</sup> Asar as Paddy Plantation Day for fifteen years and introduction of high yielding variety of seeds and fertilizers, our annual production is barely 5 to 6 million tons. An archaic method of tilling with oxen and plough plus dependency on the monsoons still exists. Changes are essential if progress is to be made. Mechanization, is said to be under consideration to increase yields. Setting ducks loose at regular intervals to eat worms, insects and weeds to thereby increase yields is in practice in Japan. Restriction of rice /paddy imports from foreign lands to protect local interests is also enforced. One recalls that during the Panchayat days with an influx of water, carp fish farming was even done in Nepal,

The recent announcement in a state media of an exports surge in Nepal is a misnomer. When one looks closely at the figures one sees that the major share of this was due to the export of Palm Oil which was being brought into the country and then repackaged and sent out again. A similar instance was that of nylon yarn. Carpet exports were third but the garment industry is one which in spite of America's kindness has still to pick up sales. Other items such as suparis and cardamom are said to be items of 'Edhar ka Udhar aur Udhar ka Eidhr.'

Napoleon once said 'England was a nation of shopkeepers'. During the time of Colonial rule, the British took the raw products such as cotton, cane and tea by ship from their colonies to England, refined it and sent the finished items to be sold at a higher price in the countries of origin. Labourers in the colonies were paid a pittance but the cost of the higher labour of the finished product had to be borne by the natives who had initially labored for it! Same pattern was prevalent in mining and other areas.

Our new government must see to it that the people who are producing the grains, fruits vegetables, milk, poultry and its products are given preference for sales within the country. This means putting restrictions on the activities of importers of cheaper and less standard products from outside. Such items should be taxed to make them more expensive than local produce or products.

During the erstwhile Rana days Nepal was said to be an exporter of timber and rice. This saying is now as obsolete as Ram Rajya to say the least. Jumla is now coming to the forefront these days by way of its products viz. apples – rosy red, marshi red rice and yarshagumba! In fact two red party leaders made national headlines when they had a meal of

Jumla red rice at a house in MadyapurThimi whilst debating the pros and cons of a medical centre. The outcome of that consultation has still to be seen as two of the involved are currently out of step. The sale of Jumla Marshi (Red) chamal has increased because of the publicity.

Quinoa, the current craze of some Kathmandu dwellers is the edible seeds of a flowering plant of the amaranth family in South America. Its popularity is paying many dividends to its cultivators. The Yacon plant is also of similar origin and grows well in Nepal. Yacon means water root in the Inca language and it tastes like a mixture of apple, celery and watermelon. Known as Bhain Shau in Nepali it is claimed to reduce blood sugar in some diabetics.

There has always been talk of exotic cuisines such as bird's nest soup, haggis, pirana fishes dish or even the special civet coffee. This coffee is said to have extraordinary taste as it has been partially digested in the intestine of the Asian civet. However the fact remains that it is the many edible legume seeds which are of much demand as a good source of protein. Our channa, or horse gram is said to give the saish or even the cycle-rickshaw peddler the stamina of a horse too! The stress should be on gEDA guddis and those from mountainous areas such as Jumla must be popularised for beneficial nutrition in the population. Quanti, a culturally accepted combination of legumes must be further popularised. Poppy seeds are used for the making of various delicacies. Both flax and hemp seeds have been in use as edibles in our part of the world. Our nutritional experts should be consulted on this aspect. Both plants have other uses too and so should be popularised. Furthermore instead of refined white flour bread or polished white rice we should be eating the normal natural cereals for reasons of our health.

As stated earlier the increased demand of meat of steers, pigs and chickens has led to great difficulties in the disposal of their dung or droppings. The huge amount of this is said to be a contributor to the global warming. Energy from coal or diesel sources must be decreased. Various measures are being taken to reduce gas emissions from iron and steel industries and even from the exhaust fumes of planes and cars. A NotCo concern of Chile is producing from various plant based proteins alternatives to meat, eggs and even milk. This is not surprising for the flesh of animals has developed from the grass that it has grazed on! NotCo produce have been in the market in Chile and are being introduced to the US.

The future is in the use of seeds and cereals. The easiness of growing on the slopes of the small land holding in the mountains means that we must promote such seeds for general mass consumption by 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](http://www.hdixit.org.np). Twitter: @manidixithd*



## UPPER TAMAKOSI HYDROPOWER

# Operation In Capacity

*Following the completion of testing and commissioning of all its units, Upper Tamakoshi has started to run in its full 456 MW capacity from September 9*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Facing several challenges and crisis over the years, 456 MW Upper Tamakosi Hydropower Project has finally completed. Leading the Upper Tamakosi Hydropower Ltd as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) during the entire of its critical period, Bigyan Shrestha finds a high satisfaction and relief in its completion.

Preferring to work quietly, concentrating on the project, CEO Shrestha has been a man of hard work and results. As the project successfully completed testing of its last unit, Shrestha, CEO of Upper Tamakosi Hydropower Ltd, has announced that the commercial operation date (CoD) for entire plant was 9 September 2021 (24 Bhadra 2078).

“As a result of Dhalkebar-Mujjafarpur 400 kV tie line between Nepalese and Indian grids, no supply disruptions occurred during test,” said CEO Shrestha. “The 456 MW ‘Load Rejection Test’ of UTK has been completed successfully. This is the last and important test of the entire project. The test started with worshipping from Hindu guru and Buddhist monk,” writes Bigyan Shrestha, CEO of Upper Tamakosi Hydropower Ltd, on Facebook.

“Thanking everyone involved in this project including Consultant JV Norconsult- Lahmeyer, Civil Contractor Sino Hydro, EM Contractor Andritz Hydro, TL Contractor KEC International.

The project, which was under construction in Bigu Rural Municipality-1, Lama Bagar in Dolakha district for the past 10 years, has reached the stage of commercial production from all six units.

Six units of 76 MW each have been connected to the 456 MW

project constructed under domestic investment.

Earlier, the first unit of the project had started generating 76 MW of electricity commercially from 5 July 2021.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had inaugurated Nepal’s first largest hydropower project under domestic investment virtually from Kathmandu on Monday evening on July 5.

Although the project runs at full capacity from morning to evening and during peak hours, it is planned to run only as per the need at night, Shrestha said.

The project was started for the first time on April 28 by channeling water into the tunnel.

The electricity generated by the project is connected to the newly constructed 220/132 KV New Khimti substation at Phulasi in Manthali Municipality-13 of Ramechhap through a 47 km long 220 KV double circuit transmission line.

The New Khimti Substation is connected to the Nepal Electricity Authority’s 400 KV substation at Dhalkebar.

This project of 822 metres head and daily picking run of the river will be able to operate at full capacity for four-and-a-half hours even in the dry season. The project will generate 2.28 billion units of electricity annual-



ly, Shrestha said.

The revised cost of the project has so far reached Rs. 52 billion excluding interest and the total cost of the project, including interest, is estimated to reach around Rs. 84 billion.

The project, which faced various technical complications, took twice as long as the target period to be completed. The project, which started construction in 2067 BS, had been delayed by six years beyond the target deadline.

From September 9, Upper Tamakoshi was set to supply 456 MW electricity to national grid and start generating income. This will be a game changer in the country’s economy, project’s status and electricity supply.

Although some question the cost of the project, they are ignoring its contributions to the overall development of northern Dolkha, construction of all weather roads to reach the border to China and opening of the private parties to invest to harness the rivers of Dolkha.

# Shift To Storage Projects

*MD Kul Man Ghising's announcement to construct Dhudhkosi, Upper Arun and Chainpur Seti Hydropower Projects will be a game changer in Nepal's power sector*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Just a few weeks after resuming his second tenure as the Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Kul Man Ghising has started to implement a plan for sustained, uninterrupted and qualitative electricity supply.

As Nepal's power system is based on run-off-the-river plants, there are seasonal variations in generation. With abundance of water, run-off-the-river plants generate electricity in full capacity. However, they produce just 20-25 percent of their capacity during dry seasons resulting in huge gaps in the supply system.

Tired of frequent power cuts without notices over the last one year, consumers have been demanding quality and uninterrupted power supply. Rejoining NEA as its MD for the second tenure, Ghising has already announced that his focus in this tenure will be to provide quality and regular electricity supply to the consumers.

MD Ghising is well aware of the fact that a few big reservoir projects are a pre-requisite to meeting this need. Thus, NEA has decided to push the construction of reservoir and semi-reservoir hydropower projects with priority.

The projects include 635



MW Dhudhkosi Storage Hydropower Project, 1061 MW Upper Arun semi-storage Hydropower Project and 210 MW Chainpur Hydropower Projects. All these three projects are now at final stage of Detailed Project Study Report.

MD Ghising said that the NEA is currently working to complete the Detailed Project Study Report, pre-parsing documents for pre-tenders of contractors, construction of access roads, land acquisition. He said NEA has already started discussions with national and international bilateral and multilateral financing agencies for financial management in parallel.

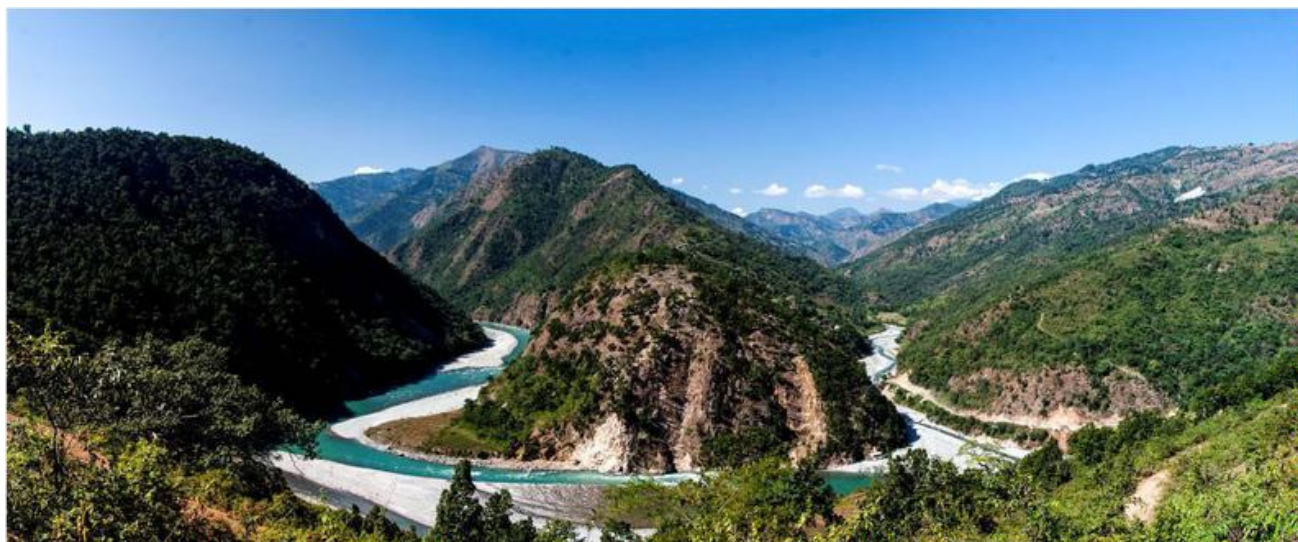
MD Ghising said that NEA is pushing the reservoir and

semi-reservoir projects for matching supply and demand and exporting the remaining electricity in other countries. "We have been doing homework focusing to start the projects within a year," said MD Ghising.

"The construction of reservoir-based and semi-reservoir-based projects are given high priority to balance the daily and seasonal demand and supply, and export surplus electricity to neighboring countries," Ghising said. "We are working hard to complete all the preconstruction works within a year and begin their construction works shortly after."

Ghising said discussions were underway with the European Investment Bank (EIB), Asian In-





Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Korean Exim Bank for investment in the Dudhkoshi, bankrolled by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through the Ministry of Finance. “We will raise money by issuing shares to the general public under Nepal’s Water, People’s Investment program implemented by the government. The return from the project will reach the citizen level,” he said.

The investment for Upper Arun and Chainpur Seti will be mobilized by issuing shares to the general public through the program. The estimated base cost of Dudhkoshi is US\$ 1.53 billion (approximately Rs. 178 billion) and the total cost, including interest for the construction period and taxes, is estimated at around US\$ 2 billion. Among the studied reservoir projects, Dudhkoshi is considered to be relatively cheap and attractive in terms of cost and energy production.

The study has shown that out of 3.44 billion units of energy generated annually from the projects which fall in Khotang, Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu districts, 1.36 billion and 2.8 billion units of energy will be generated in the winter and the rainy season respectively. The project has already issued a public

notice for the construction of access road and acquisition of about 13,000 ropanis of land in Khotang in the flooded area above the dam construction site.

The process of land acquisition in Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu will start soon. The construction of the project is estimated to take seven years. The generated electricity will be connected to the national grid through the proposed Sunkoshi-Dhalkebar 400 kV transmission line. Ghising said that the semi-reservoir Upper Arun would be given high priority and would be promoted as a ‘game changer’ project.

Under the People’s Hydropower Program, the four-digit capacity of the project (1061 MW) and the largest ever project being constructed by the NEA, the public will have 49 per cent of the total share, concessional loan of financial institutions such as World Bank and European Investment Bank and investment from domestic financial institutions, Employees Provident Fund, Citizens Investment Fund.

The federal, provincial and local governments will also invest in the project. The estimated cost of the project is about 1.2 billion excluding interest during the construction peri-

od. NEA plans to raise 30 per cent of the total cost from equity and 70 per cent from loans.

The project will generate 4.53 billion units of energy annually. NEA has moved ahead with the 30 MW Ikhuwa Hydropower Project to be a part of Upper Arun.

Chainpur Seti in Bajhang will be promoted as a game-changer project in the far western region. The federal, provincial and local governments, the project affected and the general public across the country will invest in the project to be constructed under the People’s Hydropower Program.

Tender documents are being prepared for the construction of the project in engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model, construction of access road, land acquisition and other works.

With vision and dedication, MD Guising has proved in his first tenure that ending decades old load shedding was possible. Announcing to start storage and semi-storage projects, MD Guising has indicated that this tenure is for him to shift Nepal’s reliance from run-off-the river project to more dependable and reliable storage projects.

# TOURISM

# Hope For Revival

*As COVID-19 pandemic has badly hit Nepal's tourism sector with shutting down of all its activities due to lack of tourists, financially Nepalese tourism sector is virtually collapsing, affecting the livelihood of almost a million people. Given the current global pandemic scenario, Nepal's tourism sector seems to face dire consequences before the start of a gradual recovery. However, recent news has shown that there is still hope to revive it*

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Mountaineers are found attracted to climb the 8,163-metre-tall Mount Manaslu this autumn. Department of Tourism has granted permission to 160 climbers of 16 expedition groups to climb Mt Manaslu.

Similarly, a group has taken permission to climb Mt Kanchanjanga, according to the Department. A total of Rs 3.146 million has been collected as royalty so far from it. Autumn is considered the best season for climbing mountains. A remarkable number of domestic and foreign mountaineers used to climb mountains in this season.

At a time when the recent dismal data of tourists arrival in Nepal by Nepal Tourism Board shows

a hopeless situation, the attraction of mountaineers to climb the two peaks have given a ray of hope for a slow recovery.

As the nation was overwhelmingly enthusiastic to welcome record numbers of tourists in 2018 and 2019, crossing one million, it is grimmest picture to see the arrival of 66,000 foreign tourists in the first eight months of 2021. Going through these two scenarios, no one needs to have an expertise to know the current state of tourism industry and its implications to the economy.

NTB reports that 66,966 foreign tourists have visited Nepal from January to August. A total of 5,917 foreign tourists entered Nepal via air route in the month of August. Howev-

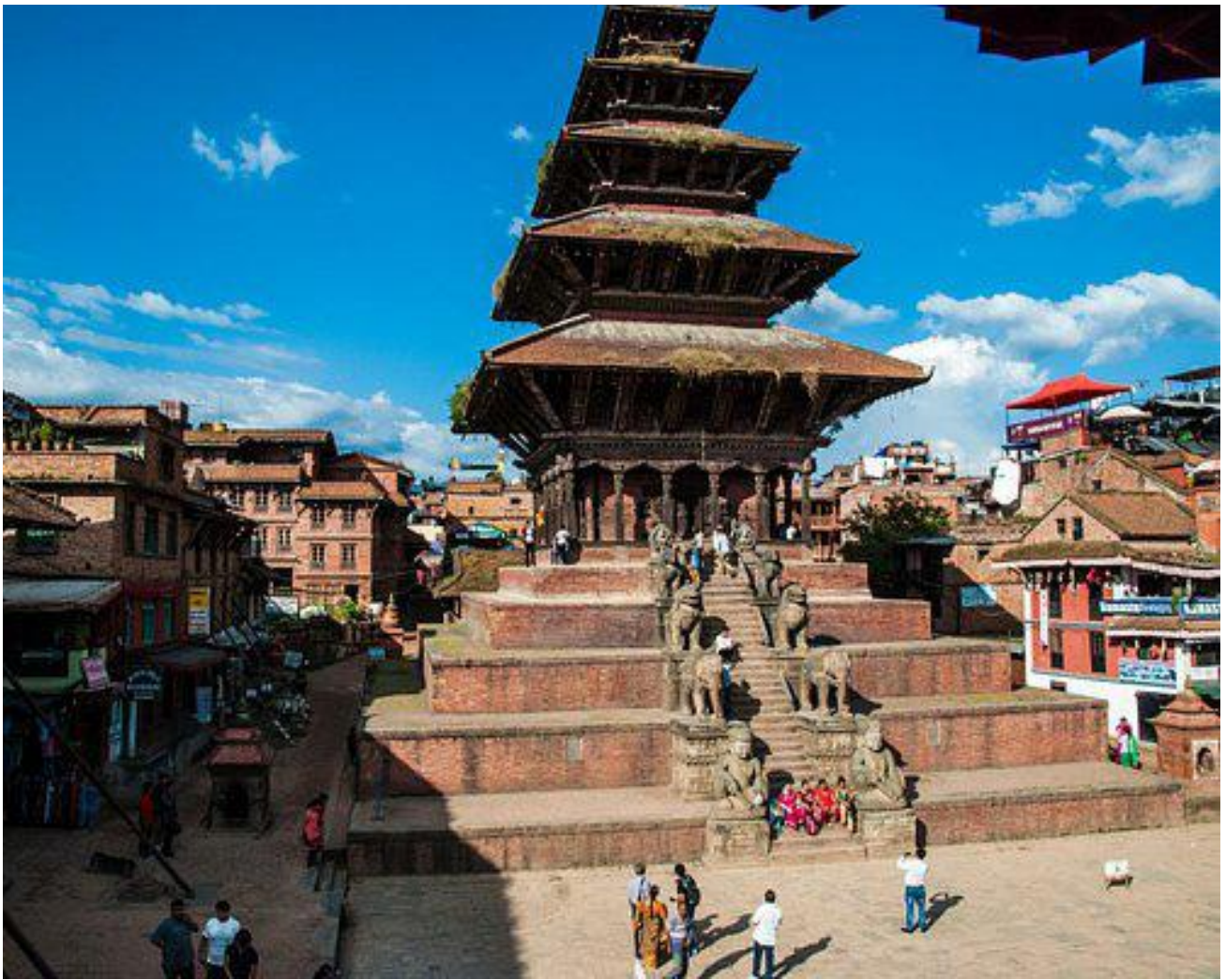
er, 265 tourists had entered Nepal in the same period last year.

According to the official data, 94,749 tourists had visited Nepal in the month of August 2019 before the coronavirus infection was detected in the country. The tourism sector of the country has been mostly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The inflow of foreign tourists to the country is disappointing. NTB Spokesperson Mani Lamichhane, however, said that a scanty number of foreign tourists are visiting Nepal even during the present pandemic.

A total of 8,874 foreign tourists visited Nepal in January, 9,146 in February, 14,977 in March, 22,450 in April, 1,468 in May, 1,143 in June and 2,991 in July of 2021, Lamichhane





added.

Along with Balance of Payment situation of Nepal, tourism sector has started to show its impact across sectors of Nepal's economy. If things do not improve, it will likely create a social and economic upheaval.

Vice President of Confederation of Chamber and Industry (CNI) Raj Bahadur Shah has said that COVID-19 pandemic has rocked Nepal's tourism sector. Addressing interactions with the tourism entrepreneurs, Shah discussed the effects of COVID-19 and ways to revive the tourism sector.

According to tourism entrepreneurs, 17 percent of the hotels have already shut down and there is a growing risk of employment of about 1 million workers employed in the tourism sector.

Participated by representatives of 17 different tourism related institutions, the event stressed the need for special package from the

government to revive the tourism sectors.

#### Special Packages

As tourism sector has been facing a severe economic situation, they have demanded special packages from the government like collateral free loans, tax review and other such facilities to all the tourism entrepreneurs.

They also urged the government to start the opening of tourism sector demanding to revoke 15 days quarantine for the tourists with negative PCR report and two doses of vaccines.

Tourism entrepreneurs have complained that they are yet to get any facilities despite the government announcement of listing tourism sector as highly affected sector.

CNI vice president Shah said that the CNI is always there to take initiatives to address the problems faced by the sector.

#### TIA's Loss

Along with private sector, the drastic reduction of tourism arrivals has also affected public sector like the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN).

As the number of air passengers declined significantly in the fiscal year 2020/21 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of passengers in international flights dropped by 73.27 per cent and the number of passengers in domestic flights fell by 59.46 per cent in the last fiscal year.

The number of international passengers was 4.138 million in 2019 which tumbled to 1.105 million in 2020. Similarly, the number of domestic passengers plummeted to 1.292 million in 2020 from 3.188 million in 2019.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) estimates that passenger flow declined by about 74 per cent in international flights and 50 per cent in domestic flights in the Asia-Pacific region due to COVID-19.

## COVERSTORY

ICAP also projects a decline of 67 to 75 per cent of international passengers and 20 to 30 per cent of domestic passengers in 2021.

With the decrease in passengers, the revenue of CAAN has also declined. CAAN stated in the progress report that its revenue fell 43 per cent and 72 per cent in the fiscal years 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively. Revenue of CAAN stood at Rs. 2.95 billion in the last fiscal year which is 72 per cent less than the revised revenue of Rs. 10.54 billion for the fiscal year 2019/20.

CAAN's capital expenditure also remained low in the last fiscal year. Since the pandemic and the subsequent restrictions stalled work on various development projects being implemented by the authority, its capital expenditure also came down. Of the Rs. 30.64 billion allocated for capital expenditure by the aviation regulatory body in the last fiscal year 2020/21, only Rs. 11.36 billion was spent.

Furthermore, the report stated that the projects related to the development of airport infrastructure being implemented with investment from the govern-

ment of Nepal and loan assistance from donors have been repeatedly pushed back due to the restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The progress report of CAAN stated that the renovation work of the international terminal building and the internal terminal building has completed as per the plan to develop Tribhuvan International Airport as a boutique airport.

The total number of airports in

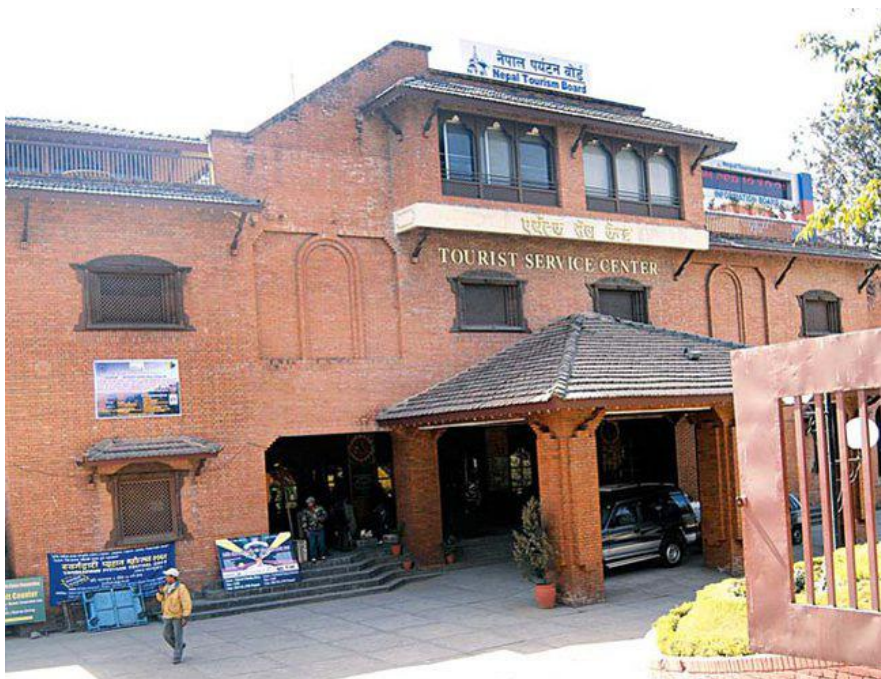
Nepal now stands at 54. Out of them, 37 airports have black-topped runways. However, only 35 of 54 airports are in operation. Currently, Tribhuvan International Airport is the only international airport in the country. Two more international airports, Gautama Buddha International Airport and Pokhara International Airport, are under construction.

### Vaccination and Tourism

The link between tourism recovery and vaccination has already been established. A new report issued by the UN World Tourism Organization warns that an uneven rollout of vaccines around the world means that 'it is unlikely tourism will bounce back to its pre-pandemic levels within a year or two'.

Based on average tourism revenue of 2019, an NTB study estimates monthly tourism loss of Rs 10 billion in the wake of the pandemic. With its contribution of eight per cent to the GDP and direct employment of 243,000, and indirectly almost 1.1 million people, Nepal cannot afford to forego another tourist season, say stakeholders.

"The government has





already announced free visa to foreign visitors and we are also promoting domestic tourism, especially targeting civil servants, which should be pivotal for recovery of the tourism industry,” said Mani Raj Lamichhane, NTB director.

A recent health ministry survey revealed that over two thirds of Nepal’s population has developed antibodies against COVID-19 and inoculation of majority of tourism sector workers should also lure visitors, he added.

But in view of the paradigm shift in global tourism trends, industry experts are not convinced it is enough.

“The government should be aggressively marketing and promoting such positive news because the success of autumn tourist season (September to November) hinges on Nepal’s ability to persuade visitors of their health safety,” said Suman Pandey, secretary/ treasurer of Pacific Asia Travel Association.

According to him, proper promotion and recovery strategy could help revive the tourism industry by up to 50 per cent of the pre-pandemic level. “The main deterrent for tourists wanting to visit Nepal right now is the mandatory quarantine requirement even if they have been fully vaccinated.”

Meanwhile, Spokesperson

for the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Taranath Adhikari informed that the proposal for quarantine waiver for fully vaccinated travelers with negative PCR report has been sent to the Cabinet for deliberations.

Recent global tourism trends have shown that vaccination can re-



vive the tourism industry faster than any other means. Wide vaccinations are prerequisite to revive the tourism industry.

However, Nepal’s pace needs to increase. Although Nepal Government has announced a strategy to immunize all the population in priority group by end of 2021, it has just vaccinated over 20 percent.

With the generous support from different countries and lending of multilateral agencies, Nepal has been

popular tourism city in the suburb of Kathmandu.

Hotel entrepreneurs said they are feeling secured after receiving double doses of vaccines. The vaccination drive became effective in Nagarkot due to the good coordination of the District Health Office, Kavre and Nagarkot-Naldum Tourism Development Committee.

“We feel a sigh of relief after being inoculated. The coronavirus infection rate was also decreasing. With this, we are hopeful of the gradual recovery of pandemic-battered tourism enterprises”, said committee secretary and Mount Everest Hotel’s operator, Pradeep Jung Adhikari.

The successful vaccination drive here has imparted a message that Nagarkot was ‘safe’ with the administration of vaccination service to all hotel operators, grocery and vegetable entrepreneurs.

Some recent events show that there is a ray of hope in the horizon for the gradual revival of Nepalese tourism sector. The question needing answer is this: how will Nepal’s tourism entrepreneurs sustain their ventures given their own depleting financial state?



## FLOOD

# Rising Rain Fury

*Recent extreme rains have indicated that the city dwellers living on the banks of the river have to face more severe floods in the coming days*

By A CORRESPONDENT

“It seems monsoon has completed the phase of slow rain and entered into warmer sun and high intensity rain. The last night’s rainfall has indicated this,” tweets Namindra Dahal, PhD showing the rain pattern of a recent day in different locations.

During the 24 hours periods from Sunday (4 September) evening to Monday (5 September) morning Nagarkot received 118 mm followed by Hariharpur Gadhi Valley 126 mm, Charchare 106.6 and Dharkeri 130.8.

Dahal’s message is clear. With the rising temperature globally, extreme weather is likely to be normal and high intensity rains such as in Kathmandu are now a global phenomenon. From Europe to New York, Nepal and India, intense rains had already created havoc killing people and destroying the property.

Although these kinds of rain and flood used to occur in the valley during the end of monsoon season in the past, the recent rain falls concentrated around some pockets and floods in the river banks is unusual.

As incessant rainfall inundated settlements in Kathmandu valley, Nepal Army mobilized its rescue team to save



the property and life of the people in flood affected areas.

Due to heavy rains overnight, various places in the Valley were inundated.

Rivers including Bagmati, Bishnumati, and Dhobikhola in Kathmandu got swollen as the rainfall did not stop for a while. According to Nepal Army, settlements around Dhobikhola, Sundarighat, and Bagmati River had been inundated.

Heavy and record breaking downpour in the Kathmandu Valley since that Sunday midnight affected normal life as over 800 houses

close to rivers got inundated. Although no human casualty was reported, many houses and a lot of property have been damaged, according to Nepal Police Headquarters.

The rain inundated the settlements along the banks of the Bagmati, Bishnumati, Hanumante, Manohara, Dhobikhola, Balkhu-Tukucha rivers. The police said flood entered in around 882 houses in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts.

According to Kathmandu Police Chief and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ashok Singh, 382 houses were inundated in Kathmandu and 138 people were rescued.

In Bhaktapur, 500 houses of landless squatters were inundated along the Manohara river side of Madhyapur Thimi Municipality-1. Over 150 people affected by the flood have been rescued, according to NDRRMA.

Continuous rains have also affected Kalimati Fruit and Vegetable Market after Bishnumati River entered the area at around 4:30 am on Monday, SSP Singh said. Details of the losses of vegetables and property damaged there area are yet to come.







According to Raj Kumar Rai, a shop owner at Kalimati Market, said that property worth Rs. 20 million was damaged when 250 stalls of the market submerged. Similarly, flood in Balkhu-Tukucha river also affected life of people residing along the river side, said police.

#### **Six killed in Rolpa, Makwanpur**

Although no human casualty was reported in Kathmandu Valley, landslides and floods triggered by continuous rains took six lives and injured four in different parts of the country on Monday.

Monsoon-induced disasters triggered by heavy rains in Rolpa, Makwanpur, Jajarkota and Pyuthan districts after heavy rains took six lives, according to an update of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority (NDRRMA).

#### **Koshi and Kamala Enter Settlement**

The recent rainfall has shown that along with Kathmandu Valley, mountains and mountainous areas are at great risk of landslides. At a time when landslides and subsequent floods are wreaking havoc on many hilly and mountainous areas, flooding in the Tarai trying to divert large rivers has become another challenge.

This time too, Saptakoshi has

cut about one and a half kilometer area in Belka Municipality-8 of Udayapur on the border of Chataraghat of Sunsari.

In the Saptari area, four excavators and three excavators were used to open and divert the river. At the same time, security personnel and locals controlled the river by filling thousands of bags with sand.

“It was becoming difficult to bear the impact of climate change. Climate had changed due to greenhouse gas emissions from the activities of industrialized countries. It has had a negative impact on countries like Nepal,” said Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampa Bhusal.

Similarly, Secretary for Water Resources and Irrigation Sagar Kumar Rai said that the message of eco-friendliness and civilization should be spread by planting trees in open space.

#### **Expert Ajaya Dixit's Views**

“With increasing climate change, cities face many “unknowns”, and therefore investment is needed for disaster preparedness and recovery. Early warning systems for cyclones established in India have provided enough lead time for evacuation and saved lives. Flood warning mechanisms in Nepal that combine community participation with high level science and use of ICT have also saved lives. Such mechanisms need

to be upgraded, replicated and scaled.”

“In the past few weeks (of 2021), many cities across the world in Germany, Belgium, China, India and Middle east faced floods triggered by unprecedented rainfall. In China, for example, one year's worth of rain came in one day, which expert argue is caused by climate change. Flood risks have amplified many times,” writes Ajay Dixit in South Asian Nadi Sambad.

“Globally city policies seem driven more by economic considerations and asset values rather than by holistic measures of livability and lower disaster risks. Urban planners, architects, engineers, designers, and policy-makers need to engage city dwellers in designing livable, green, and inclusive and people friendly cities with low disaster risks including that from floods.”

“The basic premise for policy and project design should be that all evacuation routes, for people as well as for the safe discharge of floodwaters, must remain uninterrupted. Minimizing increasing risks of climate change requires significant changes in the way urban areas are developed and governed.”

Given the current rainfall, it seems that extreme weather is going to create more havoc in the life of the people living in different parts of the world. It will likely have more effect on low land areas.

# COVID-19 Pandemic And Nepal: WHO Guidelines



BY: LAXMI THAPA

The world is still in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic. It has been reported in media that the efficacy of the two doses of Covid-19 vaccines being administered worldwide is going to wear off soon. Some countries have already started to vaccinate booster doses to elders, who are at great risk of getting seriously ill and dying. Many people have even started to fear that we may have to live with Covid-19 for quite some time.

Unfortunately our country is ignoring the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, which lay specially great emphasis on prioritization of vaccination of elders. Perhaps much life could have been saved if we had followed the WHO guidelines.

## Vaccines Do not Prevent Illness

It is now a common knowledge that the vaccines, in general, save millions of lives each year. Vaccines work by training and preparing the body's natural defenses – the immune system – to recognize and fight off the viruses and bacteria they target. After vaccination, if the body is later exposed to those disease-causing germs, the body is immediately ready to destroy them, preventing illness. However, the Covid-19 vaccine does not prevent being infected but it does help to minimize severity of illness and deaths.

## Why Elders are Given Priority

The WHO guidelines recommend vaccination against Covid-19 giving topmost priority to elders because until the very recent spread of the delta variant the death rate of the younger peoples from the Covid-19 was relatively very low whereas such death rate of the elders from the Covid-19 extremely high.

According to information included in the WHO guidelines in the United States the mortality risk has been estimated to be 90 times higher among 65-74 year olds compared to 18-29 year olds. A similar pattern of significantly higher mortality in older age groups has been observed in multiple other countries. Certainly the mortality rate of elder over 65-75 years must be still much higher.

Countries in Europe, America and also in our region had started their vaccination activity following the WHO guidelines by giving topmost priority to elders. Viewers of television all over the world had been watching how those countries had initiated the Covid-19 vaccination program by administering vaccines to elders.

## Nepal ignored WHO Guidelines

Unfortunately the Covid-19 WHO guidelines followed by all other countries have been ignored by our country. Priority has not been given in our country to vaccinate elders who might be over 75 or 85 or even 95 years in age. They were not included in the long priority list of the people to be vaccinated first.

## Booster Doses and Elders

Many countries are rushing to provide booster doses of Covid-19 vaccine since elderly are at great risk of getting seriously ill and dying

Israel prime minister has recently said that about 420,000 elderly in his country have already received Corona virus booster.

French President Macron has said that Germany and France will start offering Covid-19 booster doses to elderly from September.

## ITS Guidelines

The WHO has brought out on 13 November 2020 guidelines for prioritizing the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the context of limited supply.

In overall public health setting for this epidemiological setting initial focus is on direct reduction of morbidity and mortality, maintenance of most critical essential services and reciprocity. Achievement of further reduction of mortality and morbidity and to contribute to reduction in transmission, to reduce disruption of social and economic functions.

## WHO identified Priority Use Groups

**Stage I** - (Very limited vaccine availability, for 1 – 10% of national population)

- Health workers at high to very high risk of acquiring and transmitting infection
- Older adults defined on the basis of age-based risk specific to /region,

Specific age cut-off to be decided at country level

**Stage II** - (Limited vaccine availability for 11- 20 % of national population)

- Older adults not covered in Stage I
- Health workers at medium risk of acquiring and transmitting infection
- Groups with co morbidities or health states such as pregnancy, determined

to be at significantly higher risk of severe disease or death. Efforts

should be made to ensure that the disadvantaged groups in which there is

under diagnosis of comorbidities are equally included in this category.

- Health workers engaged in immunization delivery (routine programs and Covid-19 vaccination)

- High-priority teachers and school staff
- Remaining teachers and school staff.

**Stage III** - (Vaccine availability for 21 – 50 % of national population)

- Workers, transportation workers, government workers essential to critical functioning of the state not covered by other categories
- Personnel needed for vaccine production and other high risk laboratory staff
- Social employment groups at elevated risk of acquiring infection



# COVID 19: Impact On Education



BY: REEZAN POUDEL

With the surge of COVID pandemic, lockdowns everywhere are causing loss of jobs for many people. Students are out of schools. Although businesses are opening gradually, educational institutions are yet to open.

It is understandable that in the wake of the virus upsurge it was considered dangerous for schools, restaurants, meeting halls, cinemas, theaters and other places with heavy human presence to stay open. Thus, an order was enforced in cities and towns in the affected countries. Schools were closed and children were asked to stay in their homes, for their health.

Apart from Nepal, many countries had shut down their schools, colleges, and universities in the wake of the crisis. However, Nepal government took some of action abruptly like the postponing of the SEE examination less than 24 hours before it was scheduled to start. The examinations of 11th and 12th grades were also postponed indefinitely. It caught many students preparing for the exams by surprise, not to mention their dilemma and their confusion on how their education career will shape up. All these activities have hampered the academic year and date. It is almost sure that this will have an adverse effect on students, their parents and teachers.

As it is said, children are the future pillars and youths are the backbone of the nation. However, this pandemic has created a situation where no one is able to study properly. While schools, colleges and universities have been running online classes, there are no proper facilities of internet and electricity all over Nepal. There are no internet facilities for the lower level classes in rural Nepal. Thus, students are not able to learn the basic things that they should be learning at the childhood age only. For younger students, studying physically and online make a lot of difference in their understanding of the subject matter. Studying online also produces many negative impacts, particularly in the urban areas. With the availability of internet, many students are addicted to mobile phones and laptops. There are many more negative effects on education due to this pandemic.

There are wide disparities in the education system in Nepal. Wide gaps in the quality of education worsen inequality prevailing in the country. As a result, education

opportunity is limited for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The past experiences have shown that the children of disadvantaged groups suffer most in calamities like covid-19 pandemic and disaster. Under these circumstances, what we can say is that children and girls in rural areas particularly from lower castes and economically disadvantaged families are most likely to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While online education system began almost one and a half years ago, many students are struggling to obtain the gadgets required for online classes. Besides students, teachers, who are all experts on blackboard, chalk, book, and classroom teaching, are new to this digital teaching methodology. They are adopting the new methods and handling it like a pro to aid.

In rural parts of Nepal, many children are facing problems because they do not have internet and devices needed to go online. Studies have shown that the Covid- 19 has more impact on the rural areas as compared to urban areas like far west and mid-western regions of Nepal. In the absence of internet and electricity, the students as well as the teachers have been facing the problems.

However, students and teachers do not have to face many problems in urban areas. There is not much of a problem of the internet and electricity facilities here. As this is the first time, education is being imparted through a digital system in Nepal. Many problems have been occurring because teachers and students, having very little experiences about this digital teaching method, are adapting.

Given the current state of teaching and learning, the impact of Covid 19 on educations is extremely worrying. With the upsurge of new variants, one cannot predict the time for normalization. Thus, the government should try to provide internet and electricity facilities to every nook and corner of the country. This way, students of all the levels can study properly without any problem. Similarly, the government should vaccinate all the teachers and students and apply various alternative methods so that the schools and colleges can run physically as soon as possible so that students from the basic to higher levels can learn in proper ways. Also in this situation all of us should be alert about this pandemic and stay home and stay safe.

*Poudel is a student of class XI*



# Sharing Culture

*The 10th edition of the Nepal-EU Virtual Film Festival is to be organized from 17 to 25 of September*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal and Europe are so close and far. Although Nepal and Europe have over five centuries old recorded history of connecting with each other, Nepalese have yet to understand the diversity of European culture, language and lifestyle fully.

Organized by the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal annually, Nepal-EU Film festival is a very popular cultural program in Nepal. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, European Film festival is a popular event for Nepalese youth.

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal presents the Nepal European Union Virtual Film Festival 2021 (NEUFF 2021) on a virtual streaming platform Festival Scope. Now into its 10<sup>th</sup> edition, the NEUFF brings 15 award-winning titles plus 24 other films from 14 European countries to the Nepalese audience from 17 September to 25 September.

“Despite the hardships that have come with the pandemic leading cultural activities to come to a standstill, we keep promoting cultural exchanges and fusion between Nepal and the European Union through the online screening of some of the best European and Nepali films,” said Stephane Maicon, Charge d’Affairs at the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal.

The festival proposes 11 European award winning titles, two of which will be subtitled into Nepali, and three award winning long Nepali feature : ‘Bulbul’ directed by Binod Poudel, ‘Aama Khando’ directed by Dhondup Tsering and ‘Sarita’ directed by Sergio Basso. Similarly, the environmental film from India, ‘I Cannot Give You My Forest’ directed by Nandan Saxena and Kavita Bahl received the National Film Award for best agriculture film.

Two short films: ‘Co-Husbands’ directed by Ganesh Paanday and ‘Split Ends’ directed by Rajan Kathet have enriched the Nepali list

regarding home, family and happiness. Nepali subtitles make the film friendlier and recreational.

One other European film ‘Her Job’ also has Nepali subtitles. The film revolves around the story of an oppressed woman who discovers a new sense of self when she gets her first job as a cleaner in a shopping mall.

Her Job is Labôt’s debut feature film which world premiered in the Discovery section of the 43rd Toronto International Film Festival.

Other movies will propose English subtitles.

In addition to this main selection, the highlight of this year’s festival is that there are 23 films on wildlife conservation, environment and climate change. All of them seek to raise awareness on the importance of the environment around us, the challenges that climate change poses to our flora and fauna and above all the need to find more amicable and sustainable methods to live in harmony with nature.

The short documentary ‘Firefox Guardian’ tells a story about how a local woman conservationist in east Nepal has set out to raise awareness on the need to step up efforts to save the ‘Red Panda’ listed as an endangered species.



of films.

The European film ‘ACASA MY HOME’, Radu Ciornicicu’s first documentary screened at the ‘World Cinema Documentary Competition’ ‘Sundance Film Festival’ challenges our perceptions



The settings of the other environmental films are in different places in Europe and India. They are in the list as the issues they talk about are very much relevant in Nepal.

Besides the main festival, three side events on different aspects

Likewise, the third side event is a discussion on 'Green Film Making' to be facilitated by the Dr. Alberto Battocchi, who will speak about environmental sustainability in audio visual productions. This side event will take place on 24 Sept.

festival.

The full details of the films can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/3h29c5h>.

The festival is free of charge, and a virtual ticket that is provided by the website allows

**NEPAL-EU  
VIRTUAL FILM FESTIVAL  
(NEUFF) SEP 17-25, 2021**

To watch the films, log on to:  
<https://www.festivalscope.com/page/neuff/>  
Site will be active 17-25 September, 2021

**THE AUDITION**  
Director: Ina Weisse  
Country: Germany, France  
Duration: 1 hr 39 min  
A violin teacher takes an intense interest in a student; as they practice for his upcoming exam, pressure mounts and things go awry.  
**AWARDS:** Toronto Film Festival 2019 Discovery, San Sebastián 2019 Competition

of film-making are being organized. The first side event to be organized on 19 September at 2:00 pm local time is a discussion on the 'Artistic and Financial Side of European and Nepali Film Production. Renowned film directors from Europe and Nepal will participate in the discussion.

The second side event is an interaction on the topic 'Women in Films' being organized on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept at 2:00 pm local time. Well-known film directors and festival organizers from Europe and Nepal will discuss on the different aspects of filmmaking and the present state of involvement of women in the industry.

and will start at 2:00 pm.

This year's edition of the festival has one more activity, which seeks to recognize the talents of professional filmmakers through a short film competition on the topic 'Gender Equality. A total of 15 films have been received for this competition.

The submission of films concluded on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August and currently the evaluation process is in progress. The winner of the competition will receive a cash prize of Euro 500. The person will be invited to share experiences on the closing day of the festival and the winning film will be part of the main

every spectator to access all the movies. To watch the films, audiences need to go to the site of Festival Scope using this link: <https://www.festivalscope.com/page/neuff/>. After entering the site which will be active from 17 Sept, a new audience needs to create an account using his/her email address. After creating the account, the audience can sign in to the site and watch any or all films.

Like in the past, different films displayed during the festival will help to enhance the understanding of Nepalese on diversity of European culture, society and geography.

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