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**VIEWPOINT**  
Khadga Bahadur Bisht



**OPINION**  
Dr. K. Uprety



**ENVIRONMENT**  
Batu Uprety

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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FORTNIGHTLY



**NEPALI CONGRESS**

## Demise Of Koirala Legacy

**INSIDE**



**ELECTRICITY DEMAND**  
Managing Gap



**MELAMCHI PROJECT**  
Uncertain Again



**OMNICRON VARIANT**  
Havoc All Over



# अब बचत खातामा मुद्दतीको प्रतिफल

## सम्भव छ !



### विशेषताहरू

- बचत खातामा १ लाख पुगेपछि स्वतः मुद्दतीमा परिणत हुने सुविधा ।
- समयावधि इच्छा अनुसार (१ वर्षदेखि ५ वर्षसम्म) हुने ।
- परिणत भएको रकममा बैंकले मुद्दती खातामा प्रकाशित गरेको उच्चतम व्याजदर कायम हुने ।
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With the completion of its 14th convention, Nepali Congress will be different now in terms of its ideology and personality. One of the changes is the end of influence of Koiralas in the internal Nepali Congress politics. Although anti-Koirala group had made efforts to reduce Koirala clan influence, built on the legacy of founder of the party late BP Koirala, Koiralas continued till the last elections. Although the contest for the leadership was fought between BP's diehard follower Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and BP's nephew Dr. Shekhar Koirala, both of them dissociated themselves from BP's belief. Contesting as a unanimous candidate of opponents of BP's thought, Prime Minister Deuba's candidates represented no love of Koirala. Even BP's own nephew Dr. Shekhar Koirala, who claims himself as self made leader, disassociating himself from BP, set up his elections team with all anti-BP and anti-Koirala names. Some pro-BP people like Dr. Minendra Rijal, who was with Dr. Shekhar, lost the elections badly. As the overwhelming majority of newly elected members represented anti-Koirala and BP thought, this election has heralded a new course for Nepali Congress. Started under the leadership of GP Koirala, the decline of NC's old ideological legacy has completed now. The new question is: can NC survive?

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor



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PANAUTI

# Past and Present

*French Ambassador Launch The Photo Book On Panuti: Past And Present*

By A CORRESPONENT

With its historic importance, the book on Panuti: Past and Present is historically very valuable book. The photo book PANAUTI: PAST-PRESENT [1976-2020] was officially launched by the French Ambassador Gilles Bourbao.

Supported by French government in early days to revive Panauti, the entire landscape of the Panauti has changed now. In this scenario inauguration by French ambassador to Nepal is highly valuable.

Organized by the Alliance Française Katmandou it was attended by the Mayors of Lalitpur Metropolitan City and of Panauti Municipality Chiribabu Maharjan and Bhim Neupane respectively, researchers, students and the friends from the media.

This photo book, which is published in both French and English languages, illustrates the changes the town of Panauti has gone through from 1976 until 2020 and shows the ambitious renovation project carried out by the French researchers, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French development agencies aimed at preserving Panauti's architectural heritage.

It also highlights the local cultural heritage and how the current uncontrolled urbanization threatens it. The photobook is the work of Gérard Toffin, the French social anthropologist, and Prasant Shrestha, the photographer from Panauti.

Toffin has been carrying our researches in the Banepa Valley since the 1970s. The publication of this photo book was funded by the Alliance Française Katmandou and will be available for purchase at Vajra Books, Mandala Book Point, and Panauti Study Center.

The sale proceedings will go towards the social fund of P3RAM GROUP from Panauti.

## *Panauti: Past And Present (1976-2020)*

By French Ambassador Gilles Bourbao

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to be here amongst you today for the launching of the photobook Panauti: Past – Present [1976-2020].

There is a fine tradition in the French administration called the principle of continuity of public service. This principle provides that the State maintains its commitments despite the

chitectural heritage. It is therefore with great pleasure that I participate in the launch of this book today.

It is even more special since I have had the chance to visit Panauti and was in awe of its architectural and rich cultural heritage. I walked the ancient streets alongside Prasant

Shrestha who guided me. I was able to witness the wonderful memories left by Gérard Toffin with the inhabitants of Panauti, many of whom spoke to me with fond memories from the past.

This book of photographs illustrates the images of the



changes in Governments or the officers in charge. Well, in our case, the book I am presenting to you today is the culmination of a project that was initiated by my predecessor, François-Xavier Léger.

François-Xavier Léger, unfortunately had to leave Nepal before this project could be finalized. We naturally wanted to respect his commitment to Gérard Toffin, the French social anthropologist, and Prasant Shrestha, the photographer from Panauti, and to the city of Panauti where the French researchers, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French development agencies supported an ambitious renovation project aimed at preserving Panauti's ar

town of Panauti in the 1970s and today, almost fifty years later. Everyone will find something that they may relate to while comparing the photographs: Nostalgia, for some, who will recollect their youth; the testimony of the development of Nepal such as the arrival of electricity, cars. For us French, we are particularly pleased to see the restoration works on the temples of Panauti have made it possible to preserve a very beautiful cultural, religious and historical heritage for the generations to come.

We hope that you will enjoy this photobook as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

## NEWSNOTES

### Enterprise India Exhibition Inaugurated In Kathman-

**du** Chargés d’Affaires Ms. Namgya C. Khampa inaugurated the Exhibition and interacted with the Indian and Nepali companies participating in it. She also encouraged the organizers to explore B2B partnerships with Nepali entrepreneurs in order to strengthen commercial linkages between the two countries.



Enterprise India 2022 is being organized by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) with the support of Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India. The exhibition is aimed at promoting Brand India and enhancing bilateral trade and investment by creating awareness on business opportunities available on both sides.

The Exhibition therefore particularly aims at facilitating joint ventures, technology transfer, marketing arrangements as well as people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

More than 50 Indian companies representing multiple sectors and coming from various parts of India are exhibiting their products and services at Enterprise India Exhibition, which is also witnessing enthusiastic participation from Nepali businesses and traders.

Embassy of India attended the opening ceremony of the Enterprise India Exhibition being held at Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall, Kathmandu from 21-23 December 2021

### British Army Provides 25-Bed COVID Control Facility

Col. Paul Smith, Commander of British Gurkhas Nepal, handed over to the Nepalese Army a 25-bed COVID control facility and PCR testing facility to support its fight against COVID19.



“The bond between the Nepal and United Kingdom as strong as always,

with military partnership a cornerstone,” tweets British Army.

### Germany Support For 4.1M Vaccine Doses To Nepal

Germany has donated vaccines to Nepal as part of the COVID-19 response. About 1,965,600 doses of the Moderna vaccine as well as 2,176,650 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine were provided by Germany to Nepal through the multilateral vaccine platform COVAX this week. These vaccines add to the in-kind donations of life-saving medi-

cal supplies and technical support during this pandemic. In addition, Germany had also supported the procurement of ultra-low temperature freezers, procured through UNICEF.

“We can only get over this worldwide pandemic together. Therefore, from the very beginning, Germany has been supporting the multilateral platform ACT-A/COVAX and is today the second biggest donor. We are proud that we can now share more than 4.1 Million doses of COVID vaccines with the people of Nepal. With these vaccines more than 10 % of the population can get fully vaccinated”, said Dr Stephan Russek, Chargé d’Affaires at the German Embassy.

Dr Russek presented the vaccines earlier to Minister for Health and Population, Birodh Khatiwada, in the presence of EU representative Stéphane Maicon, UNICEF representative Elke Wisch and WHO representative Dr. Vinod Bura.

Ms Nona Deprez, EU-Ambassador to Nepal, congratulated on this consignment: “The European Union is so far the biggest donor of COVID-19 vaccines in the world. EU Member States have shared more than 350 million doses for donation to countries around the world. In total, we will secure 700 million doses for sharing by Team Europe by the middle of 2022. I am glad, that Germany as part of Team Europe shows Nepal that the best partnerships are when we support each other”



“Thanks to the generous contribution from the Government of Germany and other COVAX partners, the Government of Nepal vaccination programme has been making good progress. The vaccines and the cold chain equipment procured with support from Germany will enable the expansion of current vaccination efforts to previously unreachable populations,” Ms Wisch added.

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) is planning to distribute the vaccines from 19 December in 57 districts, mainly targeting children aged 12-18. Despite that, ongoing public health measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 will continue to be critical alongside vaccination. This includes adhering to testing and quarantine measures, mask wearing, hand hygiene, and physical distancing of at least two meters.

Worldwide, Germany will provide at least 175 million doses in total to emerging economies and developing countries, with most of these vaccines being made available through COVAX. The pandemic can only be overcome if it is brought under control all over the world. Germany thus opted early on to focus on finding joint responses in a spirit of solidarity to the pandemic that continues to rage worldwide.



## Nepal And Korea Govts Sign MoU For Polytechnic Institute



Nepal and Korean Government sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) worth USD 8.6 million for Establishment of Polytechnic Institute for Construction Workforce Development in Province 2, Nepal

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project “Establishment of Polytechnic Institute for Construction Workforce Development in Province 2, Nepal”.

The MoU was signed by Madhu Kumar Marasini, Secretary of MoF and the Korean Ambassador to Nepal Park Chong-Suk on December 15, 2021 at the Ministry of Finance, Singhadurbar, Kathmandu.

The Korean Government through KOICA will spend US\$ 8.6 million for this project for 7 years. The project will be implemented by KOICA and the CTEVT - at its Model polytechnic institute in Bardibas, Mohattrai District.

Through this project, KOICA aims to produce competent workforces ready to meet the domestic and global needs of the 21st century by aligning with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy and 15th National Plan. The project also aims to contribute to economic growth of Nepal through the development of skilled workforce to meet the need of construction industry and increasing their employability.

The project has been developed as an integrated approach with the establishment of technical hub conducting Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) as well as Training Institute for Technical Instructors (TITI) training such as training of trainers (ToTs), Instructional Skills (IS), Occupational Skills Upgrading (OSU) and National Skill Testing Board (NSTB) skill testing, Design/Develop NVQ-based TVRT curricula for construction sector, Enhance capacity of teachers and students

KOICA established Polytechnic Institute in Bardibas will be the first model polytechnic after the federalized government system in Nepal. Currently unemployment is one of the major challenges faced by youths of Nepal. On the contrary, the infrastructure building activities such as roads, railways, airport, and hydroelectric power has increased significantly. To provide skilled human resources in nation building infrastructure activities this model institute will function as a technical hub conducting TVET in the sector of construction and produce skilled manpower. In addition, the project shall strengthen industry-TVET linkages and supports to gain rel-

evant skills required for the workplace in partnership with Nepali employers and creates employment services.

Under this project, KOICA will construct a Polytechnic Institute building with the approximate floor area of 4,600 m<sup>2</sup>. The basic component of the buildings will be a lecture building and a workshop building for practical learning. KOICA will also provide equipment, furniture and learning facilities for the main building and indoor and outdoor workshops. KOICA will provide technical guidance and support for the development of Master Plan of the Polytechnic Institute identifying short-term training reflecting local needs, operational plan of the institute, career service package, partnership with industry, and school management system. KOICA has been continuously supporting Nepal government in the TVET sector since long time.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Madhu Kumar Marasini, Secretary of MoF highly appreciated bilateral cooperation between Nepal and South Korea, especially on TVET sector. He further added that the national unemployment problems would be solved only through the development of technical education.

Similarly, Korean Ambassador to Nepal Park Chong-Suk expressed his belief that the project will significantly contribute in producing skilled human resources and he also hoped that the technical school that will be established under this project will be the benchmark for upcoming model poly-techniques in Nepal.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been supporting the Government of Nepal through KOICA in various areas of health, TVET, IT and rural development since 1991.

## Ambassador Kwatra Inaugurates ‘Flavors Of Kashmir’ Festival

Vinay Mohan Kwatra, the Ambassador of India to Nepal, inaugurated the ‘Flavors of Kashmir’ festival.

Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Kathmandu in collaboration with Hotel Aloft Kathmandu organized



## NEWSNOTES

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Indian Food Festival named 'Flavors of Kashmir'.

The festival showcased authentic Kashmiri cuisine from India, with dishes being curated by Indian Celebrity Chef, Sanjay Raina.

The food festival will be held from December 10-19, 2021 at Hotel Aloft in Thamel, Kathmandu. Known throughout India and the world as 'Paradise on Earth', Kashmir is blessed not only with natural beauty, but also a heritage of divine cuisine.

A wide variety of delightful delicacies include- KASHMIRI PULAO, RISTA, GUSHTABA, TABAKMOZ, LAL CHICKEN, KEBAB, and FIRNI among others.

The event was organized as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of India's independence

It was also a curtain-raiser for a series of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Indian Food Festival in Nepal. At the inauguration ceremony cultural performances showcasing Kashmir's rich heritage were held by the artists of Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre.

### Chinese Foreign Minister Assures Support To Nepal



State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi has put forward a three-pronged proposal to further bolster age old Nepal-China cooperation and relationship.

In his virtual address to the International

Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction, the Chinese foreign minister stressed that China will always be Nepal's friendly neighbor and development partner that support each other and share weal and woe.

"China is ready to join hands with Nepal to fight the pandemic, promote economic recovery, and carry out mutually beneficial cooperation to build a closer China-Nepal community with a shared future," said foreign minister Yi in his video speech entitled 'Supporting Each Other and Sharing Weal and Woe to Create a Better Future.'

The three-pronged proposal to enhance Nepal-China cooperation include giving continuity to advance cooperation against the pandemic, support post-earthquake recovery, and deepen Belt and Road cooperation.

"China will continue to help Nepal fight the pandemic and safeguard people's livelihood through vaccine assistance, material procurement, port connectivity and expert exchanges. In the near future, China will focus on providing vaccine assistance to Nepal. China is ready to expand cooperation with Ne-

pal on vaccine research and development and public health to consolidate the achievements of bilateral, regional and international cooperation against the pandemic," said Yi, according to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He said that China will implement its commitments to assisting Nepal one by one, advance post-disaster reconstruction projects, give full play to the role of the China-aid Earthquake Monitoring Network in Nepal, and enhance experience sharing and personnel training, to help Nepal enhance its capacity for disaster prevention and reduction. China supports Nepal's leading position in rebuilding international cooperation. All parties should respect Nepal's sovereignty, security and development needs and should not attach any political strings to assistance to Nepal.

On deepening Belt and Road cooperation, Foreign Minister Yi said China is ready to conclude implementation plans with Nepal at an early date and deepen cooperation on trade and investment, industrial parks, energy and power, infrastructure and climate change to create new engines for Nepal's economic recovery and medium- and long-term development. China will make solid progress in the feasibility study of a cross-border railway project, improve the Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, and help Nepal realize its dream of changing from a "land-locked country" to a "land-linked country".

The Chinese Foreign Minister expressed his belief that with the solidarity and cooperation of the Chinese and the Nepalese, Nepal will surely make new miracles in fighting the disaster and the pandemic, and make new achievements on the path of national reconstruction and rejuvenation.

He referred to the way, six years ago, Nepal was hit by a rare earthquake, which brought heavy losses to the local people and the way the Chinese government and people empathized with them and urgently delivered batches of supplies to Nepal, setting up "a lifeline across the Himalayas".

### India Supports Construction Of School Buildings In Sarlahi

Namgya Khampa, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India in Kathmandu inaugurated two new school buildings-, Shree Bal Govind Janta Higher Secondary School at Pipariya, Kabilasi-2 and Shree Janta Secondary School at Netragunj, Lalbandi-1, in Sarlahi District.



Built with the grant assistance from Government of India at the cost of NRs. 6.94 million and NRs. 15.94 million respectively, the schools saw local representatives, DCC officials, School



Management Committee and villagers witnessing the inauguration ceremony.

Shree Bal Govind Janta Higher Secondary School and Shree Janta Secondary School were initially established in 1960 and 1962 respectively. The existing schools in the region had facility of primary education only. The Shree Janta Higher Secondary School at Netraganj is being utilized for teaching management and technical education as well. Also, as the area is densely populated, it is difficult for the existing infrastructure to cater to the educational needs of children in the area.

The new school buildings would create an improved environment for learning in the rural region and contribute to the development of education in the district.

The construction of school building was a High Impact Community Development Project (HICDPs) under agreement between Government of India and Government of Nepal and District Coordination Committee, Sarlahi.

Since 2003, India has taken up over 523 HICDPs in Nepal and has completed 461 projects. Amongst these, 58 projects are in Province 2, including 20 in Sarlahi District. In addition to these, Government of India has gifted 38 ambulances to various health posts and 1 school bus in Sarlahi District.

### Japan Registers Support To Build Nepal Back Better



Honda Taro, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan commented that the Government of Japan, together with the entire international community of both public and private, has been supporting the post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction in Nepal

ever since the devastation occurred in April 2015.

He said that Japan's continuous support is based on the "Build Back Better" concept which was one of the outcomes of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction Conference held in Sendai, Japan, in 2015.

He is honored that Japan could contribute to Nepal's reconstruction through Japan's experiences and lessons-learned from natural disasters in Japan.

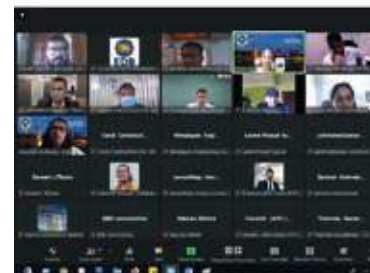
According to Embassy of Japan Kathmandu Facebook he mentioned that Japan, as a true friend of Nepal, will continue to extend its utmost support in various aspects.

Addressing the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction 2021 on December 8th via video message, he congratulated all involved at the opening

of the ICNR 2021, which was conducted to disseminate the achievements made and the lessons-learned from Nepal's continuous efforts on reconstruction and resilience after the earthquake in 2015.

### Virtual B2B Meetings held Between Sri Lankan And Nepali Construction Companies

Twenty construction companies from Sri Lanka and Nepal connected via zoom for an interactive B2B session, jointly organized by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Nepal and the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka (EDB) on 21st December 2021.



The participating companies represented sectors ranging from building construction, road development, bridges and irrigation to renewable energy projects including hydropower and solar. Accordingly, Master Hellie's Engineering Consultants, Darington Construction Pvt. Ltd, Sanmal International Pvt. Ltd, Venora Lanka Power Panels (Pvt) Ltd, APS Lanka Pvt Ltd, Sanken Overseas Pvt Ltd, Sierra Construction Ltd, Landmark Properties Pvt Ltd, St. Theresa Industries, Eco Power Group and Laugfs Power participated from Sri Lanka. Joining from Nepal were: Amar Construction Pvt Ltd, Gorkha Construction, Jambudip Construction, Tundi Construction, Rabina Construction Pvt Ltd, Baibhab Power Nepal Pvt Ltd, BBD Construction & Suppliers Pvt Ltd, Himalayan Engineering Associates Pvt Ltd and New Technical Infra Pvt Ltd. Giving the opening remarks, Director Export Services of the EDB, Indumini Kodikara stated that Sri Lanka has already entered into the global market in the fields of mini hydropower, hydraulic engineering services, roads and highways, green technology and soil & geotechnology. Such a diverse range of expertise provides numerous opportunities for the two industries to partner in joint collaborations.

According to a press release issued by Embassy of Sri Lanka Kathmandu, the B2B session was conducted for over two hours allowing the companies to engage with up to seven counterparts in separate break-out meeting rooms. The participating companies expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to meet and build new partnerships, and explore business opportunities. Some Sri Lankan companies expressed keen interest to undertake physical visits to meet with business partners and government stakeholders in Nepal for more productive engagements in the near future.

Thanking all participants in her closing remarks, Sri Lankan Ambassador to Nepal Himala Arunatilaka underlined that construction has been identified as a key sector for development in both Sri Lanka and Nepal. She highlighted that the objective of the B2B session was not only to enable collaborations and partnerships in construction projects, but also to encourage trade in construction materials as well as sharing of expertise. She encouraged the participants to continue their engagement in the future as well assuring the Embassy' fullest support and facilitation together with the EDB.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Indo-Nepal Business Expo & Summit In Chitwan

A 3-day India-Nepal Business Expo & Summit 2021 was held in Chitwan, Nepal, from December 17. Policymakers called for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation.



In order to further enhance the business ties as well as promote an overall collective sense of unity, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) held the India-Nepal Business Expo & Summit 2021 at Chitwan International Expo Centre, Bharatpur, on December 17-19. Under the aegis of its dedicated South Asia Committee (International Affairs & Trade Fairs Division) and India-Nepal Centre (INC), PHDCCI as India's leading Industry Chamber is particularly working for creating a very positive and forward looking business ecosystem in India's immediate neighbourhood with focus on Nepal.

The summit was formally inaugurated on December 17, when the policymakers voiced for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation between the two friendly countries with a history of complementarity. Speaking on the occasion, Sushil Bhatta, CEO, Investment Board Nepal, emphasized the merit of timely project completion and realization of investment commitment as the major factors for deepening the economic cooperation. Citing the Indian hydroelectricity project Arun-3 as a success story, he reassured the Indian investors for smooth investment facilitation in Nepal. He added that the business entities interested to do business in Nepal should concentrate on Project Development & Management, Coordination, Collaboration and Partnership. Nepal Investment Summit 2021 is imminent; he announced on the occasion and called for participation of the prospective and existing Indian investors.

Abhishek Upadhyay, First Secretary & Commercial Representative, Embassy of India in Nepal presented a comprehensive account of India's commitment and proactive action for further deepening the economic engagements with Nepal. Dwelling on Nepal's trade deficit, he pointed to governmental interventions as the most important determinant for further positive momentum. He suggested the Indian businesses of all sizes to do business in Nepal with advantages like cost, access, familiarity and improved ease of doing business.

Moderated by Atul K Thakur, Nodal Coordina-

tor, India-Nepal Centre, PHDCCI, the Summit witnessed the presence of speakers Dipak Kumar De, MD & CEO, Nepal SBI Bank Ltd; Pranav Poddar, Co-Chair, International Affairs Committee for South Asia, PHDCCI; Trilochan Kandel, President, Association of Chitwan Industries; Major General Binoj Basnyat, Strategic Analyst & Columnist; Sunil K.C., Vice President, Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Chairman, Asia Corporation. Rakesh Sangrai, Senior Secretary, PHDCCI summed up the proceedings of this well-attended session.

Remarkably, India is the largest trading partner of Nepal. Total bilateral trade in 2020-21 reached US\$ 7511.62 Million. In 2019-20, while Nepal's exports to India stood at US\$ 711.61 Million, India's exports to Nepal were US\$ 7,160.35 Million. The figures reflect well on the unique and strong economic ties between two friendly countries, India and Nepal. As the economic rebounding is critically important for both India and Nepal in the post-pandemic times, PHDCCI's Nepal initiatives are in tandem with that for streamlining the businesses and further tracing the growth path for industries.

With the support of the Government of India, Embassy of India in Nepal, Investment Board Nepal, Confederation of Nepalese Industries, Association of Chitwan Industries and the other prominent institutional stakeholders, the deliberations through the Expo and Summit were expected to significantly support the businesses in both India and Nepal. The said initiative is also important from the point of view of growing investment and business interests of Indian businesses in Nepal.

### KOICA KOV's Green School Project and COVID Response Program

The Korea Overseas Volunteer Program of KOICA has organized an event for its Green School Project Final Presentation and COVID Response Program on December 21, 2021 at Hotel Kutumba, Lalitpur. With the technical support from Doko Recyclers Pvt. Ltd. Green School Project has been implementing in total seven schools of Kageshwori Municipality and Lalitpur Sub Metropolitan City. During the program Doko Recyclers have presented completed activities and plans of the project. Also, handover of total 10,000 units of hand sanitizer and 7700 units hemp masks to the beneficiaries of the



Project has been done as a part of COVID Response Program.

The main objective of the project is to educate students about solid waste management and empower them to take action to manage the waste at source, and also help them to build the knowledge and values they will need for a sustainable future. The project will broaden the mind set of students towards recyclable, non-recyclable and organic waste to minimize the waste from their community. Students and their teachers are the force that holds immense potential for bringing about this transformation. The total budget of the project is approximately NPR 30,00,000.

Green Schools Project has supported schools to set up and run a student-led environmental program by equipping them with infrastructures for waste management and formation of Eco Club. Team members of Eco Club will be facilitated to lead campaigns starting from their own classrooms such as segregating waste at source efficiently and disposing responsibly, eliminating plastic bag with cotton bags or their own school bag, helping them to inspire their school and community to go green. It builds their leadership, communication and teamwork skills as well as their confidence, resilience and wellbeing.

During the program Ms. Bindu Pudasaini Simkhada, Deputy Mayor of Kageshwori Municipality appreciated the initiative of KOICA Nepal Office by fostering a concern for environment and its conservation in young minds who will be responsible and enthusiastic to save the world they live in. She hopes that the continuous awareness training will change the mind set of students to develop valuable skills such as recycling and composting to minimize the waste from their community which will eventually lead to decrease the volume of waste which goes to the landfill.

Eco Club Members of Shramik Shanti Schools shared their experience about the awareness training program and how they taught importance of waste segregation and composting to other students. Econ Club Member of Ananda Bhairab Secondary School recited poem about the role of students in preserving environment.

### **Uddha Prasad Neupane Wins 2<sup>nd</sup> Krishi Tara Award**

Mahindra Raya Yadav, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, provided Krishi Tara Award to Uddha Prasad Neupane who was declared the 2nd Krishi Tara winner and awarded with a cheque of 500,000 Nepali Rupees along with the winner's certificate. He was in Israel in 2012-2013.

Ten best agriculture farms were shortlisted from among the total applications received for the award. The winner was selected by the jury of three judges after a tough decision.

The award is distributed to honor deserving Nepali farmers/agri-entrepreneurs who have been purposefully contributing in agriculture with technologies, innovations and skills learnt in Israel, upon returning from a yearlong advanced agricultural training under "Learn and Earn Program."

The 1st Krishi Tara Awards was held in 2019. More than three thousand students from marginalized farmer families have been trained in Israel in modern agriculture since

2012. After returning to Nepal, these students have been involved in high-tech agriculture using green house, drip irrigation, etc.

The Embassy of Israel together with Avsar Foundation hosted the 2nd annual Krishi Tara Award. Minister Yadav graced the event as the Chief Guest.

Addressing the event Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel said, "It's lovely to celebrate Agriculture, Krishi ra Khusi. We see today an amazing collection of good and happy farmers. Nepal can become a net exporter of food and Israel is willing to share our experiences in this field."

"I really appreciate and would like to thank the State of Israel for the contribution in the field of agriculture by taking our Nepali farmers to Israel and providing them with skills, modern technologies so that they can become self-reliant. We have to further promote the Israeli agri-technology in Nepal. If it happens, it would have greater impact on Nepali agriculture. This program actually motivates and boosts the morale of young farmers," said minister Yadav.

Sharing the experience, the winning farmer Uddha Prasad Neupane from Dhading said, "After returning from Israel, I realized that agriculture is a profession and has to be done by young and educated people. I started with 16 ropanis of land and now, I have extended it to 70 ropanis of land. Upon receiving the award, I felt that more responsibilities and challenges have been bestowed upon me. I will be utilizing this money in the field of agriculture and start a nursery."

The Embassy has collaborated with Avsar Foun-



dation for the annual Krishi Tara Award to thank and reward those farmers who were in Israel under 'Learn and Earn Program' and are now doing exemplary work in Nepal, inspiring the youths and disseminating their learnt knowledge in their community.

Avsar Foundation is the initiative of Khetan family. It is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in Nepal with the objective of empowering economically and socially deprived individuals and communities across the country through various programs.

Nepali folk fusion band Kutumba's special performance after the event added stars to the program.



# What Next For The Nation?



BY: DR. K. UPRETY

In politics, if you tell the truth, you are finished before even starting your journey to power. Nepal's political history of the past few decades confirms the veracity of the above view. It would certainly not be wrong to flag that many of the entries to the apex of power have been possible thanks to intense pitches for utopian dreams, unfulfilled promises, unclear deliverables, and continual rhetoric about people's power and sovereignty. People's sovereignty, indeed, has been a term frequently referenced but grossly misunderstood by many of us, even those self-declared experts-in-politics, whose tonality, verbose, and intensity also have changed based on the direction of the ideological wind.

Literature iterates constitutionalism, legal reform, rights-based development, equality, equity, all as elements indispensable to ensure the people's exercise sovereignty, sometimes directly and sometimes through proxy. Literature also iterates that, for people's sovereign power to be meaningful, the national governance system with a clear political, institutional, social, and economic accountability mechanism detailing the terms, conditions, and criteria for the enjoyment of sovereign rights should be in place. In that vein, the elections to choose representatives, procedures to recall the non-performing elected leaders, good governance, and rule of law to protect citizens, adequate food, health, and shelter for their survival, equal social and economic opportunity for their growth, all come under the broad ideal of people's sovereignty. Certainly, because of the opportunity costs involved, its comprehensive materialization only remains possible in theory, even in the most affluent of countries, although most such countries do not hesitate to boast about the equality they provide and empowerment they implement in a broad context of equity.

With such a broad philosophical coverage, the understanding about sovereignty is bound to be differ-

entiated, almost by necessity, leading to tussles amongst sovereign entities (an anachronism in itself). Such tussles amongst the various segments of sovereign entities that actively dominate the country's political life, have led to much of its problems.

The blame cannot be put on the citizens-at-large that have been mostly silent and patient. Their patience has been unmeasurable and impressive. The continual changing of plots, the forming and reforming of alliances, the whimsically practiced blame-game and praise-culture, all resulting in unclear political equation and national landscape have frustrated people's aspirations. Completely disappointed, most of the people have now reached the conclusion that parties clearly took them for a ride; that ideological difference was ingen-

iously displayed only but to attract voters; that promises made have been aplenty and deliverables have been scarce; those diagrams of development-plans were rich, and implementation was misplaced; and that, simply put, copper was sold as gold.

Citizens expected to get more rights but obtained more obligations. They expected their standards-of-living improved,

but saw their taxes increased. They wanted more jobs to work in their homeland but were informed about closure of factories and granted visa for work-abroad. They wanted law and order and safety but saw peace breakers morph into legislators.

The multifaceted and multilateral negotiations of social contract amongst the leaders and the larger citizenry, expected to have been hermetically sealed two decades ago, seem to protract. Leaders' big lies and the intermediaries' tiny secrets have confused people. People stopped dreaming. They mechanically welcome

**Under the first scenario, if everything goes as expected a change through a peaceful reclamation and delimitation of sovereignty, well-shared between the governed and the governor (without over-empowering anyone) may be possible. Such a change will help mitigate the current day ills and firm-up national reconciliation.**

events that unfold. They have no strength to protest, only a duty to concur. Whilst their lives continue to be expensive with resource scarcity, their deaths are becoming cheaper due to delays in dealing with diseases. The political leaders, on the other hand, continue their unhinged march, not for the benefit of the nation, but for their personal financial, political, or social successes, in parallel chastising, as traitors, other political leaders.

It is ironic to see so many political leaders referring to fellow leaders as traitors. Is not a traitor, by definition, an old friend? Otherwise, the term traitor would not make sense. They were the best of friends, not long ago, united to ensure a bright political, social, and economic future for the nation. Now, beyond their own comprehension, they are apart. And all that happened without them even knowing it, and most importantly, without their constituents' involvement. *Vox Populi*, so revered in democratic politics, was royally ignored. The overingenious leaders with the conspiratorial assistance of their overconfident advisors, were successful in duping the overly trusting and naïve followers.

In a private interview, a devout citizen mentioned: "Actually, I expected nothing in 2006, but now I expect absolutely nothing." Such a nuance has been aired individually by many patriotic and devoted souls. For such souls, the scribe would only but remind what Tagore said: "*if nobody responds to your call, then you move forward alone*".

As time went by, the leaders and the system, praised as assets a decade-and-a-half ago, and identified as irrelevant a few years back, have now become a clear liability because of their inability to keep institutions intact, leadership credible and management clean. No institution is spared from a deliberate destruction, whether executive, legislative or judiciary. The destiny of the proliferated and once all-powerful civil society has not been different. It has been completely decimated to remain in theory only, without teeth and agenda but with ample time to go to streets to populate the uncoordinated protesting human cloud as a daily recurring chore.

Amid those silent but resourceful individuals wanting to abscond from citizens' duty and those unimaginative entities willing to be involved in everything,

a balance seems to be needed for a practical overture to be crafted. If the source of the current ills - the original sin - is identified, then boldness is required for its rectification. A careful course correction, in substance, needs to be carried out by securing consensus amongst all the major stakeholders. A change befitting the need.

But, as everything lies on thin ice, the change issuing from the course-rectification risks to tilt in favor of the unknown. Multiple outcome-scenarios are possible.

Under the first scenario, if everything goes as expected a change through a peaceful reclamation and delimitation of sovereignty, well-shared between the governed and the governor (without over-empowering anyone) may be possible. Such a change will help mitigate the current day ills and firm-up national reconciliation.

But erring due to misreading of the *vox populi* could trigger a full shift of sovereignty to an unknown, otherwise unexpected, force of influence on the reign of power. This change, depriving the larger citizenry from becoming people-sovereign, would completely halt the nation-building efforts.

The change may also be engineered to ensure a partial relinquishing of selected segments of sovereignty to such unknown force. Although recognizable, any action against that force, however, will not be feasible, and the sovereign peoples' powerlessness will only but increase. Moreover, such a change, although not necessarily sustainable on a long-term basis, will hugely damage the country on a short-term basis, the recovery of which will be extremely difficult and onerous.

There is another final risk of complete crumbling of the sovereignty into several unmanageable entities. As scary as it sounds, this would be a recipe for a complete political disaster, the fate of many countries in the world.

Therefore, managing the sovereignty issue in a careful, pragmatic, matured and logical manner and based on consensus and due process, no doubt, is the need of the day!

**It is ironic to see so many political leaders referring to fellow leaders as traitors. Is not a traitor, by definition, an old friend? Otherwise, the term traitor would not make sense. They were the best of friends, not long ago, united to ensure a bright political, social, and economic future for the nation. Now, beyond their own comprehension, they are apart.**

NEPALI CONGRESS

# Demise Of Koirala Legacy

*With the reelection of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur as the president of Nepali Congress, the era of Koirala clan dominance, and legacy of BP Koirala, has come to an end for the first time in the history since the establishment of the party. To push Koiralas out of the central stage, all opponents stood together backing Deuba. The decline of Nepali Congress and its ideological path propounded by founder BP Koirala had started during the tenure of his own brother former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who gave up party's ideology for power. Newly reelected president Deuba, who was groomed under BP Koirala, is now leading the party with anti-Koirala support, although BP's son Dr. Shashanka Koirala has won the election by securing the highest number of votes as a central committee member.*

BY KESHAB POUDEL

As the final results of the elections have come out, overwhelming majority of the central committee members represent anti-Koiralas and anti-BP thesis. Never before in its history has NC seen such a drastic shift of

power in its party as after the conclusion of the 14<sup>th</sup> General Convention.

To wash out Koirala's influences, all anti-Koiralas formed a strong alliance backing Deuba, who was groomed under B.P. Koirala, as

a sole leader. Dr. Shekhar Koirala, the weakest member of the family, was used to play an end game in a convention aimed to whitewash Koirala's legacy from the foundation of the party.

The 14<sup>th</sup> convention also





showed the red card to most influential second generation leaders like Dr. Minendra Rijal and Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat who fought from the group of two strong contenders. However, both of them were defeated by two young generation leaders in the elections of General Secretary.

Dr. Rijal, who quickly tendered his resignation as defense minister, and Dr. Mahat, a close aid of PM Deuba, were badly defeated by younger generation leaders Gagan Thapa and Bishwo Prakash Sharma.

Although Deuba was groomed in the politics under a shadow of BP Koirala, opponents and detractors chose him a unanimous leader to bid farewell to Koirala.

Of course, Dr. Shashanka Koirala, a son of BP Koirala, won the election of central committee member with overwhelming votes. But, he looks too weak to restore the legacy again.

#### **Dr. Shekhar's Defeat**

As soon as NC leader Ram

Chandra Poudel, who might have a good chance to defeat Deuba this time, decided to withdraw from the party elections and no other claim came for the position, Dr. Koirala did not face any opposition from anti-Deuba group.

With a weak personality and unclear ideological stand, Dr. Koirala's announcement as a candidate to challenge Deuba had not generated any jubilation in the party. Back tracking of Poudel was a major political success for PM Deuba. Having worked with PM Deuba for quite a long time, representing anti-Koirala group, Prakash Man Singh and Bimlendra Nidhi backed him in the second round as a natural process.

Despite claiming as a self-made politician, with no claim to representing family legacy, Dr. Shekhar Koirala had not influenced Nidhi and Singh to support him in the second round. Naturally, they lent their support to Prime Minister

Deuba.

After the completion of 14<sup>th</sup> convention, Nepali Congress has started the process of transition in changing the leadership. However, the wiping out of almost all second ranked leaders by third generation will have a long term impact in the party.

At a time when Nepali Congress is contesting the politics diluting its old ideology as a centrist party, newly reelected president Sher Bahadur Deuba, an old guard, has no easy time to counter the radical communist ideology.

As he has been leading communist dominated front in the government, no one can say for sure about the life of Deuba government. Divided due to marginal individual differences, one cannot rule out the possibility of unity of the communist parties again as in the last elections.

As the party under heavy influence of new generation radicals like Gagan Thapa, Kalyan Gurung,

## COVERSTORY



Bishwo Prakash and so many others, it will be a hard for PM Deuba to bring back Nepali Congress in its old position as the largest party in the coming election.

“Of course, many new colleagues are elected in the party and it will put a lot of pressure to move to radicalization path. However, there is no option for Nepali Congress other than to continue its centrist approach propounded by BP Koirala,” said NP Saud, who secured the second highest vote as the central member of Nepali Congress.

Saud, who is close to PM Deuba, holds the view that elections of Deuba is a continuity of the party legacy laid down by BP, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Ganeshman Singh and Girija Prasad Koirala.

“Dr. Shashanka Koirala, Prakash Man Singh, Bimalendra Nidhi and Sujata Koirala’s support

to Deuba is an indication that Nepali Congress current leadership is



a continuation to the ideology propounded by its leaders,” said Saud, former president of Nepal Students Union. “Even recently elected new

colleagues will transform to the party’s centrist stand.”

### Whither Ram Chandra?

Leading anti-Deuba camp for almost four years following his defeat with Deuba last time, the pull-out from the party elections allowing Deuba to contest with Dr. Shekhar Koirala, announced by senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel impacted the election.

He has lost his credibility as a leader following the sudden decision to withdraw from the race. Some of his close backers Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat and Arjun Narshing

KC, who are elected in the central committee, are now in awkward positions. Taking the anti-Deuba stand for long, it is very difficult for them to toe with Deuba. They can neither join the camp of younger generations.

Given the political understanding and traditions, Deuba will nominate Poudel, Dr. Shekhar Koirala, Krishna Prasad Sitaula, Prakash Man Singh, Bimalendra Nidhi and Sujata Koirala as central committee members. This will give some space to the anti-Deuba group to reunite and reorganize again.

By paving the victory of all their own men including Purna Bahadur Khadka as vice president,





Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Bal Krishna Khad, Gopal Man Shrestha, Ramesh Lekhak, Dr. Arju Rana Deuba, Udaya Sumsher Rana, Sunil Bahadur Thapa as members, Deuba's strategists also pull newly elected general secretary in their front.

With the current structure of the party, Ram Chandra Poudel's position will now depend on Prime

position once it gave its stand on nationalism and democracy or its stand as centrist party.

He added that the party will become irrelevant in case NC gives up its centrist stand. For the sake of political power, late Girija Prasad Koirala pushed back party to extreme end, giving up its ideology.

Looking at all the activ-

ities, not for its ideological cause. For Prime Minister Deuba, this is a good time to bring back Nepali Congress into the center of the politics and make a big progress.

At a time when overwhelming members are new comers or juniors, Prime Minister Deuba has enormous opportunity to drive the party into its rightful place.



Minister Deuba. After losing battle in the district and province, Poudel has a very little left to choose. Prime Minister Deuba's wish will decide his future role in the party.

#### NC's Legacy

As founder and legendary leader of Nepali Congress BP Koirala said Nepali Congress will lose its

ities of GP Koirala, late Krishna Prasad Bhattarai issued a statement announcing that he was no longer attached with Nepali Congress. Frustrated by GP Koirala's behavior, Ganesh Man Singh died as a non-congress.

In this context, Nepali Congress has now existed for power pol-

#### PM Deuba Elected Nepali Congress President

Prime Minister and NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba got reelected for the post of party president. He defeated leader Dr. Shekhar Koirala, who was vying for the presidency in the second phase of the





## COVERSTORY



election, with a huge margin.

Deuba got elected to the post of party president with 2724 votes while his rival Dr. Shekhar Koirala got 1817 votes. Some 33 votes were invalidated.

A total of 4,563 votes were cast in the second round of election held to elect party president in the NC's 14th general convention. There were five candidates in the first round of election and none of them garnered a 50% plus vote to get elected to the post.

As no candidate secured 51 per cent of the total votes in the voting, the reelection for the party presidency started in the second round.

In the first round of the voting, Deuba finished the race with 2,258 votes while his nearest competitor Dr Koirala obtained 1,702 votes.

Gagan Thapa and Bishwa Prakash Sharma have been elected to the post of general secretaries of the Nepali Congress.

Thapa got 3,023 votes while Sharma secured 1,954 in the voting held in the 14th general convention of the NC, according to Gopal Krishna Ghimire, coordinator of the NC central election committee.

The Nepali Congress Central Election Committee concluded the vote counting of its Central Working Committee members of the open category following the elec-

tion.

The NC-CEC informed that 35 candidates secured the victory in the elections held under the open category. Altogether 99 leaders were in fray for the 35 seats.

Of the 99 candidates vying for the post of central members, Dr.

Shashank Koirala is elected securing the highest votes at 3,836 followed by NP Saud, who garnered 2,937 votes.

Likewise, Home Minister Bal Krishna Khand is elected by obtaining the third largest votes at 2,879.

Other leaders who got elected include Udaya Shumsher Rana (with 2,843 votes), Ram Hari Khatiwada (2,832), Communication and Information Technology Minister Gynendra Bahadur Karki (2,820), Ramesh Lekhak (2,780), Shankar



Bhandari (2,768), Jip Tshering Lama (2,702) and Arjun Narasingh KC (2,650).

Likewise, Jeet Jung Basnet, Gopal Man Shrestha, Mohan Bahadur Basnet, Sunil Bahadur

Thapa, Nain Singh Mahar, Dileendra Prasad Badu, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Bal Bahadur KC, Govinda Bhattarai, Kundan Raj Kaffle, Dipak Giri, Surendra Raj Pandey, Padma Narayan Chaudhari, Rajib Dhungana, Guru Baral, Sanjay Kumar Gautam, Dr. Govinda Raj Pokharel, Madan Bahadur Amatya, Ajaya Babu Shiwakoti, Ganesh Lama, Dinesh Koirala, Umesh Jung Rayamajhi, Mohan Acharya, Gopal Dahit and Krishna Kishor Ghimire were elected.

Krishna Kishor Ghimire garnered 1,707 votes, the lowest among those elected. Of the 35 members, 16 are new faces in the central committee.

Of those who lost the election, Manoj Mani Acharya had secured the highest votes at 1,654 and Purushottam Lamichhane got the lowest, only 160 votes. No woman candidate contested for the central committee members under open category.

In the elections, 4,662 votes were cast. The NCCEC was counting votes of women central members.

Leaders Purna Bahadur Khadka and Dhanraj Gurung have been elected Vice Presidents of the Nepali Congress (NC) in its 14th general convention.

RSS report said Khadka

secured 2,121 votes and Gurung received 1,908 votes to emerge victorious to the post, according to NC central election committee. NC statute has arranged two vice-presidents in the central working committee.

According to RSS, Khadka was the general secretary and Gurung the central member in the incumbent working committee.

Another candidate for Vice-President, Bijaya Kumar Gachchadar has been defeated by two votes. He obtained 1,906 votes.

As informed by the committee, candidates for the same post, Dr Chandra Bhandari received 1,580 votes, Sujata Koirala 644, Mahesh Acharya 589 and Divyaswori Shah 132 votes.

NC elected the Vice Presidents as per its statute for the first time. Earlier, the party President used to nominate a vice president in the party.

As many as 4,689 delegates had cast their votes in the election as part of the 14th general convention of the historical Democratic Party.

#### Women Winner

Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, spouse of party president and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba won the elections securing the third-highest votes of 2,536 under the woman open category. She is among nine women leaders elected as a member of the Central Working Committee of the ruling Nepali Congress.

Dr. Dila Sangraula (Panta) secured the highest number 2,885 votes followed by Pushpa Bhusal who secured 2,715 votes.

According to Nepali Congress Central Election Committee secretary Keshab Rijal, other women elected to the CWC from the same category include Ambika Basnet (2,339 votes), Ishwari Neupane (2,259), Sarita Prasai (2,096), Rama Koirala Paudel (1,858), Shushila Dhakal Acharya (1,814) and Rangamati Shahi (1,789).

Altogether 30 candidates were in the fray for the nine seats of the central members in the woman open category. Meanwhile, Pradip Kumar Sunuwar of Okhaldhunga has been elected as a central committee member from the minority group by obtaining 2,171 votes, according to the election results announced by the Nepali Congress Central Election Committee Monday evening. Of the five candidates vying for



the single-seat under the minority group, Tikaram Lepcha of Ilam was his closest rival who got only 1,026 votes.

#### 488 Candidates

488 candidates were contesting for the 134 various post of office bearers and central working committee member positions in election in the 14th general convention of the Nepali Congress Party.

According to the central election committee of the Nepali

Congress, five candidates had registered nominations for the post of the party President, seven for the post of two vice-presidents, six for the two general secretaries, and 19 nominations have been registered for eight assistant general secretaries.

As many as 548 nominations were registered for the 134 posts of office bearers and members of the new central committee of the NC.

Two of those who registered nominations for the bearers and 58 of those who vied for central committee members withdrew their candidacy. Two were elected central committee members from Province 2 unopposed.

With none of the candidate securing 51 percent of total votes, the voting for the election of President of Nepali Congress (NC) took place for the second round. Prime Minister Deuba was short of 82 votes from securing 51 percent in the first round.

Of the total 4,681 votes, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba received 2,258 votes. Similarly, Shekhar Koirala received 1,729 votes, Prakash Man Singh secured 371 votes and Bimalendra Nidhi and Kalyan Gurung got 249 and 20 votes respectively. A total of 2,341 votes were required to win the election.



# Electricity Transmission Project Under MCA-Nepal Development Board



An article published in Spotlight Nepal on 5 December 2021 entitled “Economic and Financial Assessment of MCC” had some serious factual inaccuracies with regards to certain aspects of

the transmission line being built by Millennium Challenge Account Nepal (MCA-Nepal) Development Board with Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) grant and Government of Nepal investment. The views that the MCA-Nepal transmission line has a very high cost and the transmission line is being built only for export discounting internal consumption are misleading statements. While there is no denying that Nepal’s electricity should ideally be used for internal consumption to meet the unmet demand in the industrial, commercial and domestic sectors, there are other factors at play to inform how Nepal’s power system should be planned and developed. Below is an effort to dispel misconceptions, among others, on transmission cost and the need for interconnection of the Integrated Nepal Power System with the Indian power system.

## Cost of transmission Line

MCA-Nepal, a Government of Nepal (GoN) agency, will manage a USD 630 million program co-funded by the MCC Compact fund of USD 500 million and the GoN’s additional fund of USD 130 million. The total funds will be utilized for implementing two projects namely the Electricity Transmission Project and the Road Maintenance Project. The Electricity Transmission Project consists of the design, supply, construction, installation, testing and commissioning of a 400 kV double circuit Quad Moose overhead electricity transmission line spanning approximately 315 km, and three new substations at Ratmate, New Damauli and New Butwal. The 400 kV transmission line will also connect with two other substations under construction by NEA at Lapsipedi and New Hetauda. In addition to the transmission line and substations, the project also has components of power sector technical assistance, and a partnership program to share project benefits with local communities. The total program budget will also be utilized for the Road Maintenance Project which also includes technical assistance to the Department of Road and the Roads Board Nepal.

An analysis that MCC-funded project cost being significantly higher than that of similar projects implemented by

NEA is wrong. Nepal Electricity Authority’s (NEA) New Khimti-Barhabise 400 kV double circuit Quad Moose type conductor transmission line of 45 km length currently under construction as procured

through international competitive bidding in 2019. The project was funded under an ADB loan and the total contract price was approximately USD 24.5 million which translates to about USD 540,000 per kilometer.

The cost of a similar specification transmission line as that of NEA for 315km to be built by MCA-Nepal, is estimated at USD 203 million which comes to around USD 647,000 per kilometer. The estimated allocation figure of the MCA-Nepal transmission line is marginally (approx. 20%) higher than the corresponding figure of the NEA. Furthermore, the fact that NEA’s project per km cost figure is based on the contract amount while that of MCA-Nepal’s project is just an estimated amount should be noted. The actual price of the transmission line to be funded by MCC will be known only when the bids are awarded after international competitive bidding (ICB). The differentiation between the budgeted amount and contract amount should be done when the contract award is completed. At present, the total compact budget of USD 630 million that includes two projects and many components besides the transmission line is being directly compared with an awarded contract for a construction transmission line which is a major flaw in the cost analysis.

The need for transmission lines and export of electricity

The proposed transmission line is a part of Nepal’s 400 kV transmission backbone; the initial section between Inaruwato Hetauda is now under construction with the World Bank funding, and NEA is planning another line going west from New-Butwal substation. The MCC-funded ETP project will connect the Inaruwa-Hetauda section of the line at the New-Hetauda substation with the New Butwal substation via Ratmate and New Damauli substations, which are the major collection hubs for power generated in the nearby river basins. Ratmate substation will be further connected to Lapsipedi substation North-East of Kathmandu valley to collect power from Upper Tamakoshi and Bhotekoshi river basins. Thus, the project is mainly intended to collect electricity generated from the Upper Tamakoshi hydropower project and others nearby,





projects in Trishuli, Marsyangdi and other river corridors, and deliver electricity to load centers within Nepal through various substations planned or under construction. The construction of the transmission line, in addition to enhancing the evacuation capacity of Nepal's power system, will also improve the reliability and the quality of the supply, and at the same time facilitate the export of excess power.

Export of excess power, once the domestic demand is fulfilled, is our country's long-standing policy. To achieve this, the Transmission Development Plan of the government of Nepal envisages cross-border connection at several locations with both of our neighboring countries—China and India. NEA's preferred market will always be Nepal as long as there is a demand within the country. A predominantly hydropower-based power system is not optimal from operational/reliability point of view unless a significant reservoir capacity with the seasonal regulation capability is available in the system. Nepal's power system is far from this and is dominated by the run-of-the-river plants. This has resulted in a seasonal imbalance in supply and demand. In the wet season, an excess generation capacity is available, while in the dry season when the demand is high, there is a deficit in supply capacity. Such seasonal imbalances can be addressed in three ways: (i) construction of necessary reservoir-based hydropower power plants with seasonal regulation capacity (and daily peaking capacity), (ii) installation of diesel/gas-based generation plants to meet the wet season deficit, or (iii) exchange of electricity with the neighboring system so as to be able to import during dry season and export during the wet season. Of these three options, an interconnected power system with the neighboring country is the most important and now globally, there are several regional power pools in operation. GoN's policy envisages the export of power to the neighboring South Asian countries. To achieve this, either Nepal has to build a dedicated transmission line through India connecting Nepal's power system with that of the consuming country/entity, attaining which, looks uncertain in the near future or use the Indian power system's grid network for the purpose. In the second case, the electricity would first be evacuat-

ed into the Indian system before it is exported to a third country, and the nature of the transaction is largely governed by the type of contracts the three parties (exporter, importer and grid owner/operation) would enter into. Since the flow of electricity is very complex and will depend on the interaction between multiple power sources and sinks, in the case of power flow between any exporting and importing nodes it is very unlikely that the Nepali electrons per se will flow to the importer, for example, Bangladeshi system. Rather, Nepal will be sending its electricity to the Indian system, and then they will, in turn, export the contracted quantum of electricity from their nearest evacuation points to the third country, and charge Nepal for the transmission services and losses in the transmission system based on agreed principles. Therefore, in the current situation, entering into a trading arrangement with India is indispensable even to export power to a third country in the South Asia region.

The Butwal-Gorakhpur Transmission line, also termed as the second cross-border line, is in the plan since the 1995 transmission master plan. MCA-Nepal is building this transmission line as identified in the master plan. To increase internal consumption, the Fifteenth Plan foresees replacing imported fossil fuel with domestic hydroelectricity by promoting electric cooking, electric vehicles, among others. Therefore, Nepal will benefit from a two-pronged approach of promoting domestic consumption through substitution of imported fossil fuel and export excess electricity during wet season whereas import when there is a shortage during the dry season. Such a comprehensive approach will lead Nepal's electricity sector to a sustainable development path in the long term. Given the above facts, the monopsony trap as elucidated in the article could not be any further from the truth.

In conclusion, MCA-Nepal has already hired the required project managers and other specialists/engineers necessary to manage the Electricity Transmission Project. The hired personnel will have the opportunity to work with leading experts from resulting in the transfer of skills in engineering/design, project and contract management areas, and cutting-edge techniques of project and contract management. Hence, after the completion of the project, a pool of trained project managers and design experts will be available in the local market for Nepal in general and the power sector in particular. MCA-Nepal is in regular discussion and communication with NEA on all aspects including transmission line design, line interconnection, and substation equipment, etc. so NEA and Nepali engineers will benefit from the project rather than compete with each other. In the Electricity Transmission Project in question, contractors under the supervision of international consultants will handle the construction works. As a result, barring a few positions, the existing personnel of MCA-Nepal will be sufficient to manage this project.

*KhadgaBahadur Bisht is an Electrical Engineer and Energy Economist by profession and has many years of experience in the power sector. He is currently the Executive Director of MCA-Nepal Development Board.*

## BOP

# Dwindling Reserve

*Nepal's Foreign Currency Reserves are down by 11% percent threatening the economic stability of the country*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal's economic journalist Gajendra Budhathoki in his recent tweet congratulated Nepalese foreign workers for sending annually Rs. 100 billion equivalent in foreign currency to Nepal. He warned that once they stop sending the money, Nepalese economy will face dire consequences.

What economic journalist Budhathoki said may be coming true. With the demands of Nepalese workers in Gulf countries dwindling following COVID-19, it is putting pressure on Nepal's foreign currency reserve.

Since last year, Nepal's foreign currency reserves have gradually come under a pressure. This year it is reaching its climax. At a time when the foreign tourists visiting Nepal is also declining, Nepal's sources of foreign currency are further shrinking.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, foreign currency reserve of Nepal is further dwindling due to decline of the inflow of the remittance in the last four months.

NRB reports that Nepal received Rs. 312.42 billion in the review period against an increase of 11.2 per cent in the same period of

the previous year.

As the remittance inflow is down, it is putting pressure on foreign currency reserve. The gross foreign exchange reserves have decreased by 11 per cent to Rs. 1244.85 billion by mid-November 2021 from Rs. 1399.03 billion in mid-July 2021, reports The Rising Nepal.

In the US dollar terms, the gross foreign exchange reserves decreased by 10.9 per cent to 10.47 billion in mid-November 2021 from 11.75 billion in mid-July 2021, according to macroeconomic and financial report of NRB.

Of the total foreign exchange reserves, reserves held by NRB decreased by 11 per cent to Rs. 1107.47 billion in mid-November 2021 from Rs. 1244.63 billion in mid-July 2021.

Reserves held by banks and financial institutions (except NRB) decreased by 11 per cent to Rs. 137.38 billion in mid-November 2021 from Rs. 154.39 billion in mid-July 2021.

The share of Indian currency in total reserves stood at 26.1 per cent in mid-November 2021.

Based on the imports of four months of 2021/22, the foreign

exchange reserves of the banking sector is sufficient to cover the prospective merchandise imports of 7.9 months and merchandise and services imports of 7.2 months reports the daily.

## Imports Vs Reserve

The ratio of reserves-to-GDP (previous fiscal year), reserves-to-imports and reserves-to-M2 stood at 29.2 per cent, 60.0 per cent and 23.8 per cent respectively in mid-November 2021.

Such ratios were 32.8 per cent, 84.7 per cent and 27.1 per cent respectively in mid-July 2021.

During the four months of 2021/22, merchandise exports increased by 104.3 per cent to Rs.82.12 billion and import by 61.6 per cent to Rs. 650.29 billion.

The trade deficit has increased by 56.8 per cent to Rs. 568.17 billion during the four months of 2021/22.

Such a deficit had contracted by 12.5 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year.

During the four months of 2021/22, merchandise imports from India by paying US dollar amounted to Rs. 71.40 billion. Such imports

stood at Rs. 44.26 billion in the same period of the previous year.

In the US dollar terms, remittance inflows decreased by 7.8 per cent to 2.63 billion in the review period against an increase of 6.4 per cent in the same period of the previous year, said NRB. Number of Nepali workers (institutional and individual - new and legalized) taking approval for foreign employment increased significantly to 96,382 in the review period.

It had decreased by 95.7 per cent in the same period of the previous year. The number of Nepali workers (renew entry) taking approval for foreign employment increased by 249.1 per cent to 59,723 in the review period.

Consumable loans sharply went up in the first four months of the current fiscal year (FY) exerting pressure on liquidity management.

In the “Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation”, the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) reported that the consumable loan went up sharply by 379.57 per cent in the duration of mid-July and mid-November.

The loan accumulated to Rs. 578.3 billion which is comparatively a larger amount than that of the rest of the other sectors. The con-

sumable loan specifically spurred up in personal consumption loan, education loan, residential personal home loan, and professional loan creating the pressure on liquidity.

Similarly, import loans also went up by 8.4 per cent. It has surpassed Rs. 17.2 billion during these four months caused leakage in money circulation which subsequently affected credit creation and widened the balance of payment (BOP).

According to the Executive

December 18 is Rs. 18 billion down from Rs. 53.47 billion as recorded on August 3.

Meanwhile the outstanding credit in the agriculture; mines; production; metal production, machinery, and electrical tools and fitting; transportation equipment production and fitting; transportation, communication and public service; wholesaler and retailers; finance, insurance and fixed assets; service industries rose mildly.



Director of NRB Prakash Kumar Shrestha, imports lending affects credit creation. He said that low credit creation could consequently affect deposit creation.

Outstanding credit in consumable and import lending exerts stress on liquidity management. According to the spokesperson of NRB, Gunakar Bhatta, the excess liquidity indicator of liquidity position- on

In contrast, the outstanding credit in the construction sector contracted by 43 per cent. It shrank by Rs. 176.7 billion during these four months.

At a time when Nepal's foreign currency is shrinking and imports continue to increase, it seems that a major economic crisis is looming over Nepal.



## ELECTRICITY DEMAND

# Managing Gap

*Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority Kul Man Ghising has saved millions of rupees in power expenses by supplying internally generated electricity to meet the increasing peaking demand*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when the generation capacity of all the hydropower plants have declined drastically due to dry rivers, the increase in the overall demand of electricity, including peaking time, by 26.5 percent over the last year was not easy to manage. NEA, which faced challenges to manage surplus of electricity in five months of the wet season, is now facing a deficit of electricity to meet the growing demand.

With no option other than to import electricity from India to meet the demand, NEA has started to increase the import. Importing electricity for off-peak time when the price of import is relatively cheap, NEA has been able to supply electricity from its own and subsidiary companies and plants for the peaking time, meeting the gap of power generation and supply.

Prepared by MD Ghising, the new power plan implementation has saved millions of rupees. Importing electricity from India for off-peak time, NEA has been able to meet the peak demands on its own and starting even small volume of surplus export to India.

## Import To Decline

Despite the growing demand, Nepal's import of electricity will drop in the ongoing fiscal year. NEA's import of electricity will likely drop by Rs.12 billion. NEA estimates that it will import electricity worth of about 10 billion rupees only in ongoing



fiscal year. NEA imported electricity worth of Rs. 22.48 billion in fiscal year 2077-78. When MD Ghising left NEA in the fiscal years 2076-77, NEA's import of electricity worth was Rs.13.43 billion.

To make Nepal completely rely on internal generation during the peaking, recently completed 456 MW Upper Tamakosi has been playing a key role. It has been generating 456 MW of electricity four hours in peaking time.

As off-peak import price is cheaper, NEA is encouraging off-peak

import to Nepal. By doing so, NEA's power plants are allowed to store the water to generate the electricity in peaking hours only.

With 456 MW Upper Tamakosi, 144 MW Kali Gandaki A, Middle Marsyangdi 70 and Marsyangdi 79 and Kulekhani I,II and III storage at hand, NEA has enough electricity to meet the current peaking demand.

With the onset of dry season, Nepal's power generation capacity declines drastically. Most of the IPP operated power plants generate nominal electricity. However, advantage

for NEA is that almost all its power plants have been built to operate during peaking.

“In order to meet the peak demand for electricity, we had managed 540 megawatts of electricity from its powerhouses, 529 megawatts from the powerhouses of its subsidiary companies, and 425 megawatts from the private sector powerhouses. Four megawatts of electricity were exported to India even during peak time on December 13,” said MD Ghising.

Although Nepal’s electricity supply is heavily depending upon the import from India, the reduction of import during the peaking will save up to Rs.12 billion this year.

MD Ghising said that the peak demand for electricity has increased by 26.5 per cent this year compared to the demand on the same period last year.

#### Surplus in Summer

With the implementation of action plans other incentives to the consumers; the demand for electricity has gone up in the domestic market. At a time when Nepal has huge surplus of electricity for five wet months, NEA has no option other than to expand the distribution. Given the wastes of spill over energy worth of Rs. 5 billion in the last three months, NEA is expanding distribution not to waste electricity in coming years.

Managing Director Ghising said that electricity demand capacity both in terms of megawatts and energy units has increased in the recent days. He added that the peak demand in the system on December 13 was 1,539 megawatts whereas the peak demand on the same day last year was 1,217 megawatts – an increase of 322 megawatts.

awatts.

According to NEA projections, the demand is increasing by 20 per cent every year on average. Likewise, electricity demand has also increased suddenly in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding regions where there is high electricity consumption.

The highest demand in Kathmandu Valley has increased by around



90 megawatts. The peak demand in the Valley last year was 293 megawatts and it has gone up and reached 382 megawatts. This shows that the demand for electricity has risen notably in the Kathmandu Valley as well. The use of electric cooking tops has increased in the Valley.

On the basis of the energy demand, the electricity consumption was 27.2 million units on December 13, 28.65 per cent more compared to the 21.1 million units on the same day last year.

MD Ghising also said that the internal demand for electricity has suddenly increased due to the steps taken to increase the electricity demand and the increase in the cold.

The peak demand for electricity this year has increased compared to the previous year and it is in the range of 300 megawatts. “NEA

has adopted the policy of promoting the use of electric appliances and providing power to the industries in the quantity required by them with the aim of increasing the domestic consumption following the surplus of electricity,” said Ghising.

NEA said that the use of electric home appliances as induction cooking tops, air condition, etc. has increased. Similarly, although the process of construction of charging stations has not moved forward at the government level, such stations are being constructed through private sector initiatives.

This has also helped in the growth of electric vehicles. The big industries have been supplied with electricity as per their demand and this has helped enhance their production capacity.

tion capacity.

In recent months, NEA MD Ghising has been taking initiative to increase the domestic supply so that NEA does not have waste the surplus energy in monsoon season.

In its drive of expansion, NEA has provided 30 megawatts of electricity to Hongshi Cement Industry, the largest cement factory in the country, since the second week of November. Another cement factory with Chinese investment, Huashin Cement Industry, has also taken 20 megawatts of electricity.

Led by MD Ghising, NEA’s management is now focusing on use of most of its generated power in peaking hour and importing power during the off-peak time in cheaper price. This is how NEA is expected to save over Rs.12 billion in the coming year.



# Launching Of The Urban EbA Project



BY: BATU UPRETY

Inaugurating the launch event of the Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for Climate-Resilient Development in the Kathmandu Valley (urban EbA project), Hon'ble Minister for Urban Development Ms. Ram Kumari Jhakri urged to implement activities with conceptual clarity, ex ante consideration of implications, knowledge, learning, and confidence. She informed that some policies and strategies are not implemented as they contain several 'words' as heard with no or low understanding on implications. Hon'ble Minister urged to implement policies, standards, and norms to know 'what works and what does not'. She gave a clear message that EbA is sufficiently linked to urban development planning and implementation, and it is necessary to prove that 'city can be made better' in our lifetime; what we need to do to make 'new Kathmandu' a lively, environmentally clean, safe and climate-resilient in the next 30 years.

Hon'ble Minister clearly put forward to make the city a 'centre for providing services and producing products' rather than to continue as 'product consumer'. She urged to change the concept and make every effort to link development with people, and clearly understand the national circumstances, develop skills, utilise knowledge, experiences, and learnings, and translate our national and international commitments, including CoP26 to UNFCCC, into actions. In a nutshell, Nepal's policies are considered 'best' but difficult to implement and revisions are proposed along with the change in the political or administrative leadership before their implementation.

Dr. Sunil Babu Shrestha,

Vice-Chancellor, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology expected for successful implementation of the project to greatly contribute to integrate climate change adaptation into urban planning and promote development of climate-resilient cities. Mr. Subarna Shrestha, Mayor, Shankharapur Municipality highlighted the adverse impacts of climate change and urged to effectively implement the project activities.

From the chair, Ms. Januka Dhakal, Development Commissioner of the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA) informed her commitment to successfully implement the project activities in close coordination, and collaboration with the concerned agencies. Welcoming the guests and participants, Mr. Narayan P. Bhandari, Deputy Development Commissioner and National Project Director, KVDA-considered possible contributions of the project activities to advance climate-resilient infrastructure development in the Valley.

Sharing contributions of EbA in making cities climate-resilient, Ms. Jessica Troni, Adaptation Portfolio Manager, Ecosystem Division at UNEP, Nairobi reiterated the key aspects of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) requiring compliance and role of GEF Implementing Agency in implementing the defined Project activities. Ar. B.B. Khokhali, National Project Manager shared project outcomes and activities and informed delays in project implementation as launching event was possible after nearly two years of fund approval. Non-presence of the Mayor of the Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Secretary of



the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, and Dean of the Institute of Engineering, as they were scheduled to make statements in the launch



event, calls for making additional efforts for ensuring multi-stakeholders' participation during the project implementation.

This Urban EbA project was conceptualised in 2014 to access funding from the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) which is administered by GEF to integrate EbA options into urban planning and implementation. Nepal requested UNEP to function as the GEF Implementing Agency to develop this Project, and Project was cleared by the GEF Council in 2019. The Project is designed to 'build the resilience of local communities in the Kathmandu Valley to the increasing impacts of climate change such as flooding, landslides and drought'. The project is expected to: (i) mainstream EbA into urban development planning; (ii) raise and/or enhance knowledge and awareness on EbA, and (iii) implement EbA options to make climate vulnerable communities climate-resilient (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/08/09/advancing-eba-options-nepal/>).

Many countries have experienced the adverse effects of natural and human-induced and/or climate-induced disasters more pronouncedly in the recent years. The 2021 heavy rains at beginning of the monsoon season and unseasonal rains in October which brought floods and landslides have claimed lives, left number of people injured, and lost properties by washing away houses, productive lands and infrastructures, mainly hydropower projects and roads, including severe effects to Melamchi Drinking Water Project. The situation is likely to increase in the coming years due to increased climate crisis and 'implementation of unsustainable development path' in Nepal.

Importance of 'greens' has repeatedly been highlighted at different levels (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/08/27/communicating-eco->

system-based-adaptation/). Survival of the life-forms including human-beings depends upon forests and ecosystem services. Voices of the 'nature-based solutions' and/or EbA advocates are slowly heard. People showed unwillingness a decade ago for building adaptive capacity of the climate vulnerable communities, and forests & rangeland ecosystems through EbA. Benefits of low-cost vegetative options have been greatly realised in the



recent years and hence, EbA would play a significant role in making the engineering solutions long-lasting and climate-resilient by linking with biological treatments.

Presentation on the highlight of the project activities and outcomes in the project launching event, mostly attended by engineers and architects, has generated awareness and enhanced understanding of a group of community on the importance of EbA in making the target areas of the Kathmandu Valley green and climate-resilient and urgency of integrating EbA into urban planning process. Experience, knowledge generated, and learning of this project would help to expanding EbA programmes in other municipalities in Nepal. There are multiple approaches to capture this opportunity to make our cities and towns environment-friendly, green, and healthy by addressing

climate change impacts. However, it requires greater understanding on subject matter and coordination processes to achieve desired outcomes.

Some of the participants attending the event have provided thoughts in making the social and environmental safeguards project-specific to help implement location-specific project activities. Linking of the studies related to disaster, watershed, en-

vironment, forests, stakeholders, and gender with project sites and activities would value to make the project outcomes useful. As EbA is new to institutions working in infrastructures such as road,

building etc, it is high time to help understand and benefit to larger section of the urban dwellers from this type of climate change adaptation option.

Opportunities do not come repeatedly. Institutions engaged in advancing EbA in urban planning and implementation, including local governments should come towards for effective collaborations and partnerships. Climate change activities demand for transparency and valuing multi-stakeholder concerns for effective implementation of adaptation options at hand. As urban EbA is a new initiative, this project could respond the urgency of making the cities and towns climate-resilient, and liveable by building adaptive capacity of climate vulnerable communities and resources.

## MELAMCHI PROJECT

# Uncertain Again

*With the apathy of the government led by Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, the restoration work of Melamchi project is yet to start, which is why water supply in the valley is going to remain uncertain for now*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**D**amaged by a flood of Melamchi river in the middle of June, Melamchi Drinking Water Project, which was completed in almost two decades, is now facing uncertainty regarding its restoration work.

Unlike his predecessor K.P. Sharma Oli, the government led by Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba has shown a complete apathy towards the restoration of the project which, with will, can be done within a matter of months.

With his individual ambition to make impossible projects possible, former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and his team former minister Mani Thapa and highly qualified and technically sound secretary Madhav Balbase took all major decisions to make virtually impossible work of bringing water to Kathmandu from Melamchi.

Prime Minister Deuba, who landed in the policy custody over a decision on Melamchi in 2004, has shown no interest in the project. Given the current apathy of the government, it is unlikely for valley residents to see water coming to Kathmandu from Melamchi anytime soon.

The project supplied water for three months in the valley before it suffered significant damages from the June 15 devastating flood in the Melamchi River.

Although Melamchi Development Committee has set a plan to (re)open the approach road in coordination with the Department of Roads, Nepali Army and the local governments to repair damaged structures and restore the water supply by mid-April 2022, it is yet to mobilize contractors and others staffs.

For Nepali Congress, which secured 7 parliamentary seats from Kathmandu valley, the apathy shown by the co-

alition government led by its party leader Deuba will be costly in coming elections.

Despite the restoration plan by the Melamchi Drinking Water Development to restore damaged structures, the ministry is yet to take a decision on it.

As the winter is almost at the mid-stage and only four-to-five months are left to start the work in full swing, the dilly dally of the concerned ministry has made the project uncertain.

According to Committee information officer Rajendra Prasad Panta, the project headwork remains buried under 10-15 meters of the flood sediments.



He said that they were thinking of alternative water diversion, as it was not possible to divert water from the headwork immediately.

The details of losses in the project caused by the flood followed by subsequent floods have already been assessed and the committee has reportedly recommended the way out. However, no one is taking the decision on it.

Instead of starting the restoration work, the government is considering two new alternatives to Melamchi. Deuba government's approach has created confusion whether the project will be repaired

anytime soon.

At a time when everyone is questioning about the resumption of repair, the government's view about alternatives has put the project on an uncertain course.

All the officials are keeping mum over the damage caused to the Melamchi Drinking Water Project by the floods and the resumption of work to revive the project.

It is reported in media that government has started working on two alternatives to supply water in the valley. Government is planning to bring water from Melamchi only in winter with a proposal to dig new bore holes in 10 places of the valley.

At a time when the water levels in the valley have already gone down, boring more holes will be risky for the valley's landscape.

Executive Director of the Melamchi Water Supply Development Board, Basudev Paudyal, admitted that there is a long-term challenge to bring water to the Kathmandu Valley until the floods and landslides of the Melamchi River are controlled.

Paudyal said that preparations are underway to start work on the project headworks to bring water temporarily.

Showing the uncertainty of the project, Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited (KUKL) has already started boring drills in different places of Kathmandu Valley.

Given the nature of present coalition government and its apathy to the project, it is unlikely for residents to see the restoration of water supply from Melamchi any time soon. People of Kathmandu Valley have to rely more on private tankers to fetch low quality water for some more time.

# UNICEF's Work In The South Asia



BY: BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL

At the outset, I would like to congratulate UNICEF on the occasion of its 75th anniversary. I commend UNICEF for the tremendous contributions it has made in saving children's lives, helping them unleash their potentials, and defending their rights across the world. UNICEF's work in South Asia too has yielded some remarkable results.

Thanks to its collaboration with governments, non-government organizations and communities, important strides have been made in reducing neonatal deaths, improving nutrition, scaling up school enrollment and promoting sanitation and hygiene practices.

However, our aspirations to ensure rights, choices, and voices to children in South Asia need continuous efforts and robust action to fully realize them.

Poverty has been the most debilitating factor for the millions of children in South Asia. Discrimination and incidences of violence against them are yet to go away. We need to deploy further efforts to prevent the children from being exposed to malnutrition, child labor and child trafficking. And, we must ensure that millions of children from vulnerable communities are not deprived of basic education and health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the education, recreation, and healthy development of children. As the report 'Lives Upended' published by UNICEF last year suggests, the pandemic has had a disastrous and disproportionate impact on over 600 million children in South Asia.

The crisis appears to be risking the hard-earned progress made in the overall development of children and adolescents.

We must therefore endeavor to cushion the impact of the pandemic on their well-being, especially with a focus on the most vulnerable ones. Access to COVID-19 vaccines must be ensured for all children.

We must act now to prevent and mitigate the risks the children face. Their needs must come first in our plans to recover and rebuild better.

True, the pandemic has taken away 'the normal' from all of us and, more importantly, from our children. But we need to ask ourselves: was that 'normal' good enough?

Is COVID-19 the only danger to children's safety, security and well-being? Were all children living in safe, healthy, and peaceful environments before the pandemic? The answers to these questions are obvious.

So, we must reflect on the gaps, correct our course, and reignite opportunities for the future of our children.

We must bring an end to poverty, abuse, discrimination, violence, and neglect against children.

Reigniting opportunities for children must start with our endeavor towards creating a condition where they have equal opportunities, where their voices and rights are ensured, and where investments are made not just to help them survive but also thrive.

There is an urgent need to ex-



pand and transform education and learning systems. These systems have to be adjusted to lifelong learning for the children of today and adults of tomorrow to enable them to stay relevant to the changing techno-professional environment of the future.

Access to health, sanitation and hygiene must be ensured for every child. The digital divide needs to be addressed.

We all know climate change poses an existential threat to the planet and the people. And, we adults have been failing our children by our inaction. We must act now and reverse the trends of climate change.

We also need to recognize that children and young people are positive change agents. We must listen to them and have their voices reflected in our actions and policies.

We must act together to ensure

that 'no child is left behind.' Above all, a reimagined future must be a just and equitable future for children.

I am pleased to note that the five-decade-long partnership between Nepal and UNICEF has resulted in many advances in promoting children's development and welfare in Nepal.

UNICEF's support and cooperation have complemented the efforts of the Government of Nepal in addressing the children's needs - be it through the hardware support provided in the 1960s and 1970s, or the programs on early childhood development and child and maternal health in the 1980s; or the initiatives aimed at strengthening systems and services for children over the last decade, or through the current renewed focus on investing in children.

I am also pleased to note that UNICEF's Country Programme Action Plan (2018-22) aims at building on the progress achieved thus far and maximizing the potential of Nepal's young population in line with the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Plan's focus areas resonate very well with Nepal's priorities. It is not least in light of such consistent support from UNICEF, that Nepal has achieved some important progress especially in the field of education, and maternal and child health. This has also been acknowledged by various international organizations including the United Nations.

This has helped us further raise our ambition. And, our commitment today is even stronger. Therefore, to the children in Nepal: I can say, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, that we will spare no effort to promote your interests. We will strive to fulfill your needs. We will not let you down.

To conclude, the anniversary is not just an occasion to reflect on what has been achieved or could have been achieved. It is also an occasion to plan for a better future. As we mark this landmark 75th anniversary of UNICEF, let's reimagine a future where our children will have better opportunities and choices.

Let's commit to act together and act better. The Government of Nepal remains committed to working more closely with UNICEF in the days ahead.

*Bharat Raj Paudyal is the foreign secretary of Nepal. Excerpts of the keynote on 'Reigniting Opportunities for Children in South Asia' at the Event Organized to Mark the 75th Anniversary of UNICEF*



# A True Friend

*COAS General Prabhuram Sharma said General late Bipin Rawat was a true friend of the Nepal Army*

By A CORRESPONDENT

From his words and actions, Chief of Defence Staff of Indian Army late Bipin Rawat proved as a true friend of Nepal. His death in the helicopter crash was a great loss for Nepal as well.

Visiting Nepal twice in his tenure as the chief of Indian Army, General Late Rawat touched the hearts and minds of Nepalese army promising to provide all necessities of the army. However, the wishes of a fluent Nepali speaker General to visit Muktinath were unfulfilled. Due to bad weather, the visit to Muktinath was cancelled in 2018.

Describing General Bipin Rawat as a “true friend of the Nepal Army,” the Chief of the Army Staff in the Nepal Army, General Prabhu Ram Sharma said he was shocked by the tragic accident, and called up General Rawat’s family over phone to offer condolences, a statement issued by the Nepal Army said.

The Nepal Army expressed grief over the demise of Indian Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, who was killed a day earlier in a chopper crash along with 12 others in the state of Tamil Nadu.

In a statement, the Nepal Army expressed its condolences over the death of Rawat, who was also Nepal’s Honorary Chief of the Army Staff, his wife Madulika and 11 other military personnel.

General Rawat enjoyed close and cordial ties with Nepal. On March 29, 2017, he was conferred with the title of honorary general of the Nepal Army by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

General Sharma also offered his condolences to the Indian Army and General Rawat’s family by phone and a letter, said the statement.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has expressed anguish over the tragic demise of General Bipin Rawat, the first Chief of the Defence Staff, who died in a helicopter crash, and extended his heartfelt condolences to the Indian government and the bereaved families.

“Deeply saddened by the tragic demise of Gen. Bipin Rawat, his wife and several defence officials in a helicopter crash. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and the Indian Armed Forces,” Deuba said in a tweet.

General Rawat, who was conferred with the honorary title of Nepal Army in 2017, had visited Kathmandu as Chief Guest for Nepal Army Day.

Senior Nepal Army General Bal Krishna Karki attended Gen. Rawat’s funeral ceremony in New Delhi.

Hailing from Uttarakhand, General Rawat used to speak the Nepali language very fluently.

Gen. Rawat took charge as India’s first Chief of Defence Staff on December 31, 2019, after serving as the Army Chief for a full three-year term.

The Mi-17V5 helicopter

of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carrying the 63-year-old tri-services chief crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, killing 13 of the 14 people on board, including his wife and 11 other armed forces personnel.

Rawat started his career as an officer in the Gorkhas and rose to command 5/11 Gorkha Rifles, the battalion his father Lt Gen L S Rawat also commanded.

Bipin Rawat was nearly two years into his term as India’s first



Chief of Defence Staff and presiding over the most significant transformation of the defence architecture of the country.

General Rawat will be remembered in Nepal as a true friend.

## OMNICRON VARIANT

# Havoc All Over

*Barring the visitors from the new corona variant origin countries and alerting border, Nepal has already taken precautionary steps*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the new variant of the novel coronavirus, Omicron, has been detected in Nepal, health experts and officials have announced several steps to prevent the virus. The new variant, which the WHO has labelled as 'of concern' has been found in two persons in Nepal 12 days after it was first reported in South Africa on November 24.

With the revelation of two cases, new Omicron Variants of Coornaviurs have already entered to Nepal. The serious concern is that number of cases in India is also growing. Given the nature of Nepal's interactions with the south, Nepal can find it tough to prevent its entry in case the variant increases in India.

By barring the visitors and taking additional medical measures at TIA and border points, Nepal government has shown high concern on the virus. Nepal is yet to forget the crisis faced during the prevalence of Delta variant as Nepal faced a major health crisis in April 2021 with shortage of oxygen and medicines.

Joint-spokesperson of the Ministry of Health and Population, Dr Samir Kumar Adhikari confirmed that the new variant was found in samples taken from two suspected persons and carrying out tests on Sunday at the National Public Health Laboratory.

As he said, the new variant was confirmed in a 66-year-old foreign national and a 71-year-old who had come in his contact. They had ar-

rived in Nepal from South Africa via Tribhuvan International Airport.

The Omicron was found through a gene sequencing test in the laboratory. The first coronavirus infection case was detected in Nepal on January 23, 2020. It was found in a

ones showed a negative report.

He said that surveillance and contact tracing would be made more effective following the variant reported in the country.

As part of the government's efforts to curb the virus, it requires

negative PCR reports and COVID-19 vaccination reports for passengers at the Tribhuvan International Airport and at various transits with neighbouring India and China.



person who had come to Nepal from Wuhan of China.

The PCR test carried out on the foreigner showed negative results when he first came to Nepal. It was found that he had also taken full dose of vaccine against COVID-19. A test was conducted on them on November 23 when they showed symptoms resembling COVID-19.

Joint-spokesperson Adhikari said both of them are kept in isolation as per the standard set by the government and recuperating their health at present. They are not showing any symptoms now and are under the supervision of the health workers.

Meanwhile, a PCR test carried on 66 persons who were included in 'contact tracing' of the two infected

Similarly, COVID-19 antigen tests for people entering Nepal through the borders with the countries have been managed, said Dr Adhikari. People having antigen tested positive for the virus will be PCR tested, he said.

In a bid to curb the spread of the variant, a Cabinet meeting on November 29 had decided not to grant Nepal entry for people going through South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, Malawi and Hong Kong where the virus variant has been reported.

Research about the scientific fact regarding the transmission rate of the Omicron virus and medical complications due to infection is underway.

There are many variants

## HEALTH

of Omicron and some of them are of concern. The Ministry has requested all to follow all the health protocols (appropriate use of mask, maintain social distancing, washing hands) and to participate in vaccination campaign to be protected from Omicron as like other variants of COVID-19.

According to the Ministry, the Omicron variant has already spread in 35 countries of the world. A total of 574 people have been infected with the Omicron virus in these countries so far.

A preliminary assessment by the World Health Organisation has mentioned that South East Asia is at high risk of Omicron. Omicron has already been confirmed in some of the countries of South Asia. Omicron was confirmed in India on Friday.



as well, these facilities will bring a big change.

Similarly, the decision to keep travel history of the passengers and the samples of the positive ones will be collected through 'gene sequencing' method is another step. The government has urged Nepali citizens not to travel abroad unless they have urgent works. Government employees and various government and non-government dele-

mandatory crowd control, social distancing and the use of sanitizer.

As the new variant is showing alarm bell, two new oxygen generation plants came into operation in Lumbini Provincial Hospital in Lumbini Province and Janakpur Provincial Hospital in Province 2.

Financed by the World Bank, these plants are part of a long-term solution for augmenting Nepal's capacities for a stronger response to the COVID-19 pandemic and boost self-reliance of provincial hospitals to meet the needs of therapeutic oxygen.

The energy efficient, Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants were inaugurated by Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhyaya, Division Chief of the Ministry of Health and Population, and Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Similar plants will be operational in the remaining five provinces – Damak Municipality Hospital of Province 1, Hetauda Hospital of Bagmati Province, Western Regional Hospital of Gandaki Province, Karnali Provincial Hospital of Karnali Province, and Mahakali Provincial Hospital of Sudurpaschim Province – by December 20, 2021.

"The government is making concerted efforts to strengthen the capacities of the public hospitals and ensure that they are self-suffi-



### Increased Capacity

At a time when the government has decided to increase the existing capacity for gene sequencing testing

gations are also required to obtain prior approval before traveling abroad.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has urged the public to pay special attention to the regular use of face masks,

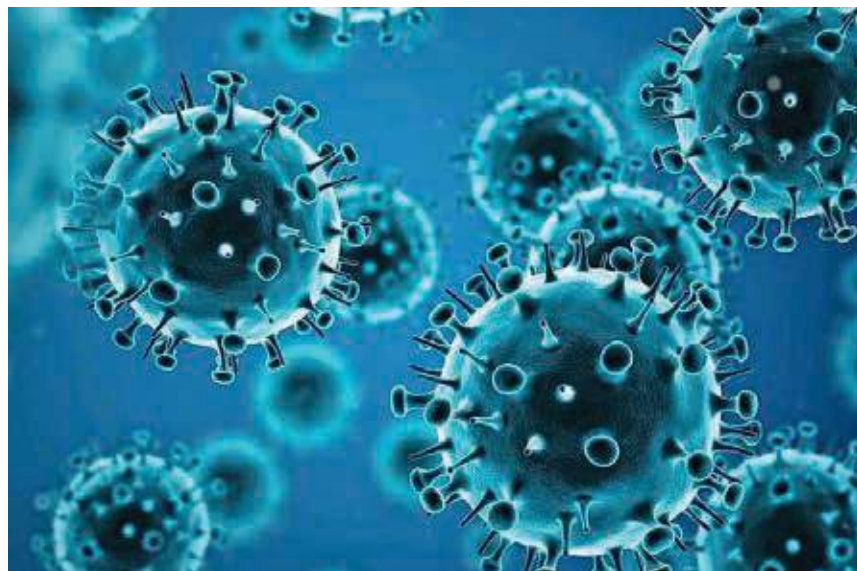


cient and have adequate supply of medical oxygen to meet increased demand in the event of future waves of COVID-19,” said Birodh Khatiwada, Minister of Health and Population. *“We appreciate the continued support that the World Bank and other development partners are providing to our efforts to respond to the pandemic effectively.”*

The oxygen plants were procured, installed, and will be operated and maintained fully for a period of three years by UNOPS under the World Bank-financed COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project, which also financed 1,000 units of 10-liter oxygen concentrators distributed to peripheral health facilities across the country in June 2021. The plants will ensure uninterrupted supply of high-quality medical oxygen through the central medical gas pipeline system to hospital facilities, where installed. Additionally, the oxygen can also be used to fill at least 24 46.7-liter cylinders for emergency back-up and supply to peripheral hospitals or ambulance use.

“Having essential infrastructure, equipment, and supplies in the right places – such as these oxygen plants in strategically located, front-line hospitals in each province – is

health crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic,” stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.



“We reaffirm our continued support to Nepal and Nepalese, to help build stronger and more resilient systems to tackle pandemics and other health shocks.”

#### **Omicron Variant: Does It Bring Milder Illness?**

Among 70 cases reported in Europe, half of the patients had no symptoms and half had mild symptoms. The Omicron variant, spreading

over 30 other countries, has prompted fears it could significantly undermine the effectiveness of vaccines against COVID-19.

Yet as scientists race to understand the full consequences of Omicron, some are also asking whether this new version of coronavirus might cause milder illness than its predecessors. While they caution that it is far too early to draw conclusions, here is what is known so far:

#### **WHAT DO THE DATA SHOW?**

Evidence from initial cases of the new variant is limited. Among 70 cases reported in Europe that included information on disease severity, half of the patients had no symptoms and half had mild symptoms, according to a report by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

There were no cases of severe disease, hospitalization, or death. However, the European agency said it would require data on hundreds of cases to accurately assess disease complications, estimating that could take several weeks. In addition, most cases detected in Europe so far have been in younger people who were fully vaccinated, making them less likely to suffer severe illness.

In South Africa, where the



important to be able to respond to now in southern Africa and detected in

## HEALTH

daily number of reported COVID-19 cases doubled on, symptoms for reinvested patients and those infected after vaccination appear to be mild.

“Some evidence from South Africa suggests that it may actually cause more mild illness but ... I caution you that a lot of the patients South Africa initially were among young university students,” Dr. Carlos Del Rio, an infectious diseases expert at Emory University in Atlanta, said during an online briefing from the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

### IS OMICRON A ‘LESS FIT’ VERSION OF CORONAVIRUS?

While data on real world infections continues to emerge, scientists are conducting laboratory studies to decipher Omicron. The variant has about 50 mutations not seen in combination before; including more than 30 mutations on the spike protein the corona virus uses to attach to human cells. Vaccines in current use target that spike protein.

“Typically when viruses accumulate a lot of mutations they lose some fitness,” said Dr. John Wherry, director of the Penn Institute for Immunology in Philadelphia. Certain Omicron mutations may impair the ability of the virus to cleave, changing the behavior of the spike protein, he said.

Some scientists have theorized Omicron may have developed over a period of months in an immunocompromised individual, such as an HIV patient in southern Africa. If so, “the virus adapted not to kill that host,” Wherry said.

There are competing theories that the latest variant evolved from an animal host.

### WILL OMICRON BECOME THE DOMINANT VARIANT?

The other central question surrounding Omicron is whether it will overtake the Delta variant, which still accounts for the overwhelming majority of known infections worldwide. If Omicron does become dominant, but causes milder illness, it could mark a turning point toward the virus eventually becoming a seasonal threat, like influenza, said Sumit Chanda, an infectious disease researcher at the Scripps Research Department of Immunology and Microbiology in San Diego.

The European Union’s public health agency said the Omicron variant could be responsible for more

low. There are indications that individuals fully vaccinated against corona within six months or with the booster are also protected against the Omicron variant, Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz said, after another two cases were identified, bringing the total to four.

“In the coming days we will have more accurate information about the efficacy of the vaccine against Omicron, but there is already room for optimism, and there are initial indications that those who are vaccinated with a vaccine still valid or with a booster will also be protected from this variant,” Horowitz said while visiting the Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba with Finance Minister Av-



than half of all COVID-19 infections in Europe within a few months.

While the research into Omicron is underway, disease experts say people must remain vigilant against the coronavirus by getting either initial vaccinations or booster shots, as well as wearing masks in indoor or crowded settings, ventilating rooms and washing hands.

### Vaccine Protects Against Omicron

So far, Israel has registered four cases infected with the new variant, while general morbidity remains

igdor Liberman.

Later in the evening, a report by Channel 12 said the Pfizer vaccine is just slightly less effective in preventing infection with Omicron than with Delta – 90% as opposed to 95% – while it is as effective – around 93% – in preventing serious symptoms at least for those vaccinated with a booster.

The greatest concern for Nepal is the very rapid spread of this variant in South Africa, describing how the daily cases there rose from 200 cases to 2,000 cases in 10 days.



# Investment In Children

## *UNICEF Calls For Urgent Investment In South Asia's Children To Prevent Devastating Impact of COVID-19*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when the children across South Asia have been facing devastating consequences due to COVID-19, UNICEF said that the urgent investment in South Asia's children is vital to prevent impacts of COVID-19 on their sufferings felt for decades.

Governments across South Asia need to urgently expand investments in basic health, education, and protection services for the millions of children and their families whose lives have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters, says a new UNICEF report released on the agency's 75th anniversary.

The report, "Reigniting Opportunities for Children in South Asia," highlights the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on the most marginalized of the region's 600 million children. The report says that unless rollbacks in critical health, immunization, nutrition, protection and education services are reversed, the worst consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will persist for decades. The report notes that humanitarian disasters and climate-related hazards such as droughts, floods and air pollution have further exacerbated the situation for children.

Prior to the pandemic, South Asia was one of the fastest-growing regions in the world, with a large youth population poised to further accelerate growth and significant progress being made for children. Child mortality rates more than halved in the past quarter century, while the number of children suffering from stunting fell by more than a third since 2000. Secondary school enrolment rose steadily, and the number of girls getting married before age 18 fell. Over 90 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water.

"The remarkable achievements our region has made in advancing child rights over recent decades are now at risk," said George Laryea-Adjei, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia. "If we fail to act, the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for decades to come. But by acting now, we can reignite opportunities and ensure every child in South Asia not only survives but thrives."

The report identifies immediate priorities, such as fully restoring basic health and immunization services and helping students catch up on the learning they have missed. But it also outlines the lessons learned and the opportunities that have been opened up by the pandemic which can now be leveraged into gains for all children.

They include public health systems that have been strengthened through infrastructure introduced to better respond to COVID-19 – such as improved cold chain and oxygen infrastructure. Other opportunities include increased public conversations around mental

health which are helping to spotlight needs and drive demand for more services, and increased recognition of the region's deep digital divide and opportunities to bridge it.



While making urgent investments to reverse rollbacks in progress for children, the region also needs to be prepared for future waves of the pandemic, UNICEF said.

"Just 30 per cent of South Asia is fully vaccinated, leaving families dangerously unprotected as new variants continue to emerge," George Laryea-Adjei said. "Governments around the world must ensure fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. The pandemic will not be over for anyone until it is over for everyone."

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on children was reiterated in a youth statement entitled "Our Future, Our Rights, Our Voices," the outcome of extensive virtual consultations involving nearly 500 young people from the 8 South Asian countries.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has made our situation much worse. Our schools have been closed, often for months at a time. Many of us may never return to school," said the statement, which was shared with UNICEF, the South Asia Association for Regional Coop-

eration (SAARC) and senior government officials. "With your action, we can transform the lives of young people in South Asia."

The report outlines the key actions needed to reverse the rollbacks in progress for children, and begin building a better future for every child in South Asia, among them are:

- Expanding investment in child-sensitive social protection programmes, especially for the most vulnerable children and their families.
- Resuming in-person learning in schools while addressing learning losses, bridging the region's digital divide and improving the quality of education for every child.
- Stronger integrated national health and nutrition systems that protect children from deadly but treatable diseases and reverse the region's child nutrition crisis.
- Protecting children from neglect and abuse and the promotion of the mental health of all children and young people.
- Urgent action to protect children from climate change through increased investment in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children.

In 2020, disruptions linked to COVID-19 led to an estimated 228,000 additional child deaths, while an estimated 5.3 million children missed out on vital vaccinations, nearly 1.9 million more than the previous year. An additional 3.85 million children are thought to have suffered from wasting in 2020.

School closures lasted longer than in almost any other region. Over 400 million children and their teachers were forced to transition to remote learning in a region with low connectivity and device affordability, leading to alarming inequities in learning opportunities. Poorer children in remote areas, girls and students with disabilities were disproportionately affected.

"Today's crises present a unique opportunity to build strong and adaptable health, education and protection systems that meet the needs of all children," said George Laryea-Adjei. "UNICEF will continue to work closely with governments in South Asia, as well as businesses, civil society, and children themselves, to make sure that no child is left behind."



# Nepal's Stable Instability In The Changed Paradigm

*In a nutshell, the book tends to focus on Nepal's perpetual state of instability basically in the post-1950 political firmament with increased pressure on aspects of stability in the post-1996 period. It pinpoints major blame on perceived weakness of domestic elements including political leadership of all hues to correctly identify, project and protect the country's national interest.*



Maj Gen Purna Bahadur Silwal (retd.) has attempted a wonderful endeavour in studying Nepal's rather endemic instability with its underpinnings on political, military, economic and diplomatic fronts from a new perspective.

BY: MADAN KUMAR BHATTARAI

The book with a tell-tale title, NEPAL'S INSTABILITY CONUNDRUM: Navigating Political, Military, Economic & Diplomatic Landscape, promises to analyse Nepal's situation specially prevailing in the post-1950 era. The book with an attractive cover showing precarious state of instability that the country has been forced to undergo, is divided into seven compact chapters including concluding observations, apart from seven annexures and comprehensive bibliography, tables and figures.

With a PhD and intellectual bent of mind, Silwal is a serious and low-profile officer and has enviable academic and training credentials with wide exposures to both foreign academic and defence institutions, and the United Nations with rare services of both a practising diplomat and a peacekeeper. Besides, he has handled core assignments in the Nepal Army in various capacities.

The first chapter of the quite readable book is brief but prognostic in the sense that it gives a short background of Gorkha that had about 12,000 households with no visible resources to reckon with but emerged and metamorphosed into a viable state of Nepal thanks to the astute leadership provided by the architect of modern Nepal, King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great. The author has coined an interesting terminology, Prithvian Trinity, denoting success to marshal and mobilize Leadership, Peasants and the Military in unison and coherence under his dynamic leadership.

In a rather very short account, he has attempted to study a wider canvas involving survey of three ideologies that came into being after 1950, monarchy, democracy and communism. The chapter also depicts Maoist armed insurgency, comparatively swifter transition with

both chaotic and peaceful forms, from constitutional monarchy to a republican order, perceived status of Nepal-India special relationship, and external influence on domestic polity.

The second chapter deals with more technical aspect of national security and its concept and strategy. With a brief historical perspective, the author tends to focus on Nepal's national interest, culture and core values and various other elements impinging on national security threat. Chapter three dwells at length Nepal's domestic political culture and rather perpetual state of instability with emphasis among others, on sheer politicization of security agencies and counter-insurgency campaign with symptoms of incompetence in change-management, negative influences of royal massacres and royal takeover, India's excessive interference, and personal and political chemistry of Nepali leadership.

Third chapter of the book relates to Domestic Political Culture and Instability. Though primarily concentrated on perpetual state of instability, politicization of institutions including security apparatus and frequent changes of governments in the country, the writer lists the tenures of as many as fifteen governments during the period of almost the same period (sixteen years) from April 1990 to April 2006 during what is called Twin Pillar System involving constitutional monarchy and parliamentary system.

He has also given a list of eleven spells of short-term governments during what the author prefers to call transition era involving a period from April 2006 to February 2018 when K.P. Sharma Oli took over as Prime Minister for the second time, this time with almost two-thirds majority promising political stability, socio-economic progress and full term government. In line with the prognosis of the writer but well after the publication of the book, even this government was forced to relinquish office primarily because of divisions in the party and loss of

majority leading to the assumption of the office of Prime Minister by Sher Bahadur Deuba for the fifth time.

The Fourth Chapter deals with Civil-Military Relations, Stability and Security. The chapter traces the historical origin of civil-military ties dating back to unification days of King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great to recent days both during Twin Pillar System and political transition with the declaration of the country as a federal democratic republic. It also talks about the role of palace in pre-republican era and the context and aftermath of what is called Katawal Episode when the first Maoist government headed by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda took a decision to summarily dismiss the Chief of the Staff of the Nepal Army that sent a shock wave leading to the fall of the government.

Chapter Five devotes to State Response to Maoist Insurgency and its various dimensions. It is now almost an open book how Maoists mobilized their strength, its external dimension and their modus operandi. It is entirely a different matter altogether that three Maoist governments had short-lived existence and the Maoist party itself underwent splits with its internal fissures coming to the ground, not to speak of the denudation of its supposed support base.

The longest and most interesting part of the monumental book both from the viewpoint of foreign relations but also from the strategic perspective, is in Chapter Six. The chapter entitled External Influence: Interest and Strategy of India, China, US, UK and Nepal is 102 pages long giving comprehensive treatment of convergence and divergence of security and foreign policy interests of major powers that have a role to play in our context both from the historical considerations and recent status. It is quite under-

standable that on a comparative standpoint, the treatment given to India's foreign policy and security objectives overshadows such depictions of other countries.

The author concludes his observations with a rather pessimistic approach on various aspects including state of political leadership wedded to narrow parochial, partisan and even personal interests rather than broad national interest. He also poses questions if the republican order is strengthened or the special relationship with India is a matter of past.

In a nutshell, the book tends to focus on Nepal's perpetual state of instability basically in the post-1950 political firmament with increased pressure on aspects of stability in the post-1996 period. It pinpoints major blame on perceived weakness of domestic elements including political leadership of all hues to correctly identify, project and protect the country's national interest. It particularly laments abysmal failure of political leadership to rise

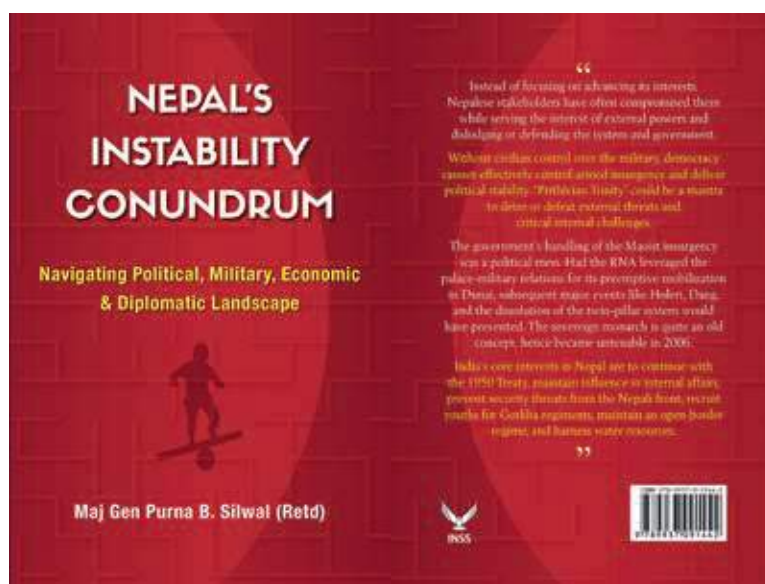
above and beyond partisan and short-term interests, not to speak of their chances of becoming mere pawns in the hands of external forces leading to increased foreign interference. The author has also depicted appalling state of politicization of Nepal's state institutions.

As a long-time friend who was in Bangladesh for staff course when I was posted in Dhaka as Deputy Chief of Mission, I congratulate Gen Silwal on the publication of such

a wonderfully comprehensive treatise that is a welcome addition to the fields of literature on political, military, security, economic and diplomatic aspects of Nepal that seem to have undergone more dissensions and hemorrhages than cohesion and

consolidation that should have been the norm.

*A former Foreign Secretary, Ambassador and Foreign Policy Adviser, Bhattarai is an author involved in the study of Nepal's foreign relations from a historical perspective. He is available on kuniti@gmail.com.*



### **NEPAL'S INSTABILITY CONUNDRUM: Navigating Political, Military, Economic & Diplomatic Landscape**

**Maj Gen Purna B. Silwal (Retd)**

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Nepal, Lalitpur, 2021**

**Pages 374**

**Price: Rs. 1295/- (Hardbound)**

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