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**OPINION**  
Prof. Dr. Akal Bahadur Singh



**VIEWPOINT**  
Shanker Man Singh

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

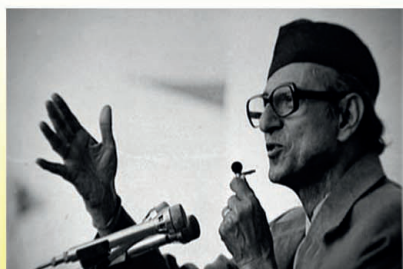
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Jan.- 07, 2022

FORTNIGHTLY

## RISE OF OMICRON Health Under Strain

### INSIDE



**NATIONAL RECONCILIATION**  
Relevant Forever



**KUL MAN GHISING**  
Focus For Quality Supply



**MAOIST CONVENTION**  
Prachanda's Command



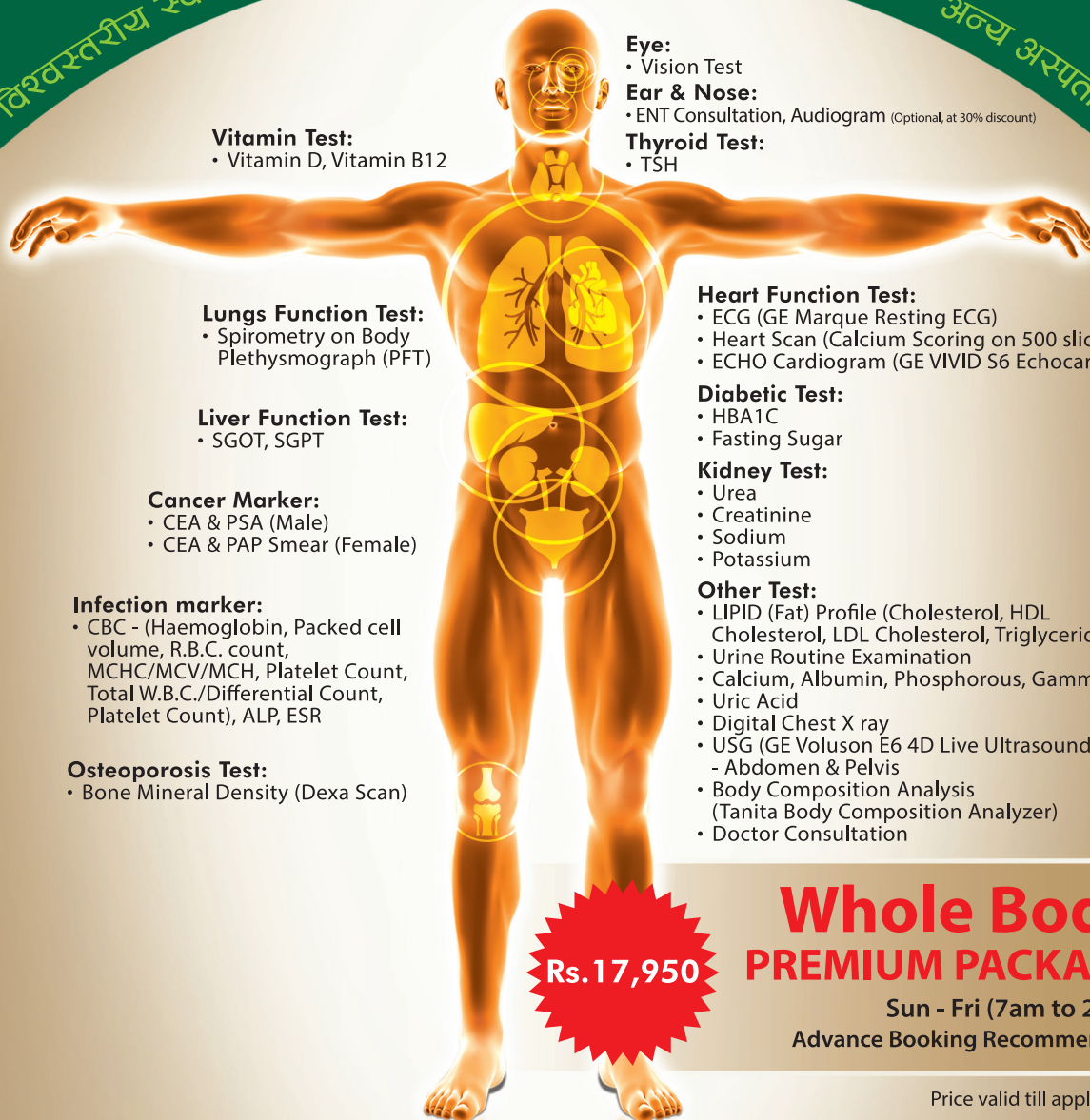
सर्वोत्कृष्ट स्वास्थ्य परीक्षणको लागि

जम्मा रु. १७,९५०/- मा होल बडी प्रिमियम प्याकेज

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- Creatinine
- Sodium
- Potassium

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After spending almost eight years in exile in India, BP Koirala returned to Nepal in 1976 with a slogan of national reconciliation. One of the core values of reconciliation was to bring monarchy and democracy together to uphold nationalism. In the name of democracy, his followers joined hand with extreme communists to uproot monarchy and declared Nepal as republic. With the end of monarchy, relevancy of the national reconciliation has gone. Died almost four decades ago, Nepali Congress leader late B.P. Koirala remains as a most popular leader of the country. Although Nepali Congress has already deviated from the ideological path propounded by Koirala, the leaders of the party don't have other option than to harp BP's ideology to pursue the party cadars

With the rise of COVID-19 cases in the country recent days, Nepal looks to be heading towards the third wave of coronavirus. However, Nepal is yet to make any strong preparation to cope with coming scenario. In a recent high level meeting, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has directed concerned officials to effectively work out a strategy to cope with the third wave. Despite his direction, Ministry of Health and Population, which is unable to administered large quantity of vaccines, is in confusing stage. We have decided to cover rise of omicron virus and its threat to national health system as story for this week.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

# CONTENT

## UNICEF

Rights Advocates 3

## NEWSNOTES

4

## BUSINESS BRIEF

8

## KUL MAN GHISING

Focus For Quality Supply 16

## FORUM

Rachana Upadhyaya, Stephanie Leder  
and Yubika Adhikari 20

## PROFILE

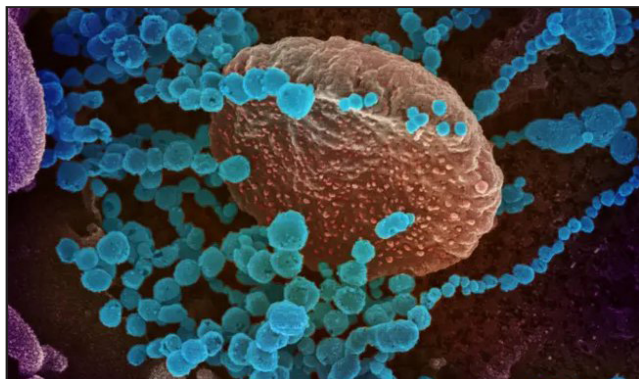
Booker Talliaferro Washington 27

## VIEWPOINT

Shanker Man Singh 31

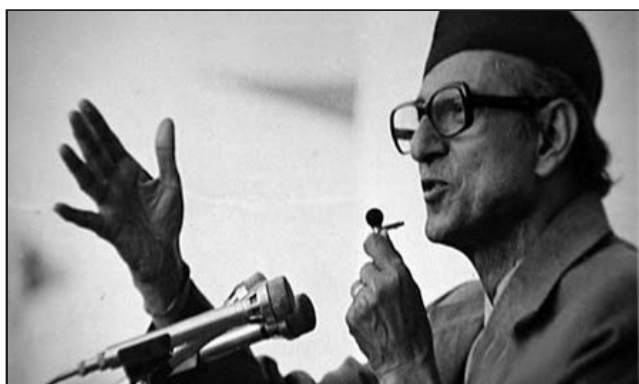
## OPINION

Prof. Dr. Akal Bahadur Singh 33



COVERSTORY: RISE OF OMICRON: Health Under Strain

22



NATIONAL RECONCILIATION: Relevant Forever

10



MAOIST CONVENTION: Prachanda's Command

14



UNICEF

# Rights Advocates

*UNICEF appoints seven youth advocates for child rights*

By A CORRESPONDENT

UNICEF has appointed seven advocates of child rights. Those include Nir Shrestha, 22, Pallavi Karki, 21, Prakriti Bhattarai, 21, Shitanshu Dhakal, 20, and Sonika Poudel, 23.

As UNICEF calls on the world to imagine a better future for every child at a time of pandemic and climate change challenges, seven young people take on the role of youth advocates to help raise awareness about issues and key solutions involving children and youth in Nepal.

Today, as UNICEF marks its 75th anniversary, seven young inspiring people from Nepal join UNICEF's global advocacy call to reimagine a better future for every child. As newly appointed youth advocates, they will work with UNICEF Nepal to raise the voices of children and young people on issues affecting their lives including climate change, disability inclusion, gender-based violence, mental health, nutrition and education.

"Across the world, UNICEF works with young activists, advocates, and community organizers who are engaged in transforming their societies. We believe that young people are the most effective champions for the issues that impact them, and they have a unique power to galvanize others around issues they are passionate about," said MsElke Wisch, UNICEF Representative to Nepal. "Through our Youth Advocate Programme, UNICEF provides a platform for the authentic and solution-oriented voices of these young dedicated advo-

cates to help us reimagine a better future for children."

The UNICEF Nepal Youth Advocates come with an extensive background in advocating on the related issues.

Nir Shrestha, 22, an inclusive development enthusiast and a youth and disability rights campaigner has been appointed as a youth advocate for disability inclusion.



Pallavi Karn, 21, advocates amongst her peers on the importance of eating healthy. She has volunteered as a dietary advisor for COVID-19 patients and nutritional awareness programmes. Pallavi has been appointed as youth advocate for nutrition.

Prakriti Bhattarai, 21, Prashansha K.C., 20, and Shree Krishna Thapa, 23, are youth advocates for gender equality and are raising their voices against gender-based violence. Together they bring their unique skills and passion to raise awareness on gender-based violence through political literacy for women, men's engagement in gender discussions and highlighting issues of

child marriage through film.

Shitanshu Dhakal, 20, youth advocate for mental health, is a medical student and has been actively engaged in conducting mental health awareness among children and young people and advocating to include mental health education in school curriculum.

Sonika Poudel, 23, is a climate change advocate and has been actively engaged in community activities since the age of 12.

Through orientation and mentoring from UNICEF, the youth advocates will further expand their expertise about children's issues and UNICEF's work to help reinforce their talents.

The youth advocates will join UNICEF in leading advocacy activities, co-creating communication materials, participating in UNICEF events and helping amplify young people's voices across various platforms including U-Report Nepal.

A chatbot on Viber and Whatsapp, U-Report Nepal enables young people to receive information related to COVID-19, mental health issues, and other youth related issues. The chatbot users can also share their opinions and voices through the bot's built-in surveys.

Together, in partnership with these youth advocates, UNICEF aims to amplify voices of young people, raise awareness and advocate on climate change, disability inclusion, gender-based violence, mental health and nutrition in Nepal.

## NEWSNOTES

### Israeli Embassy In Kathmandu Supported To Establish R&D Hub and Israeli-Styled High-Tech Classroom

The Embassy of Israel has established Research & Development Hub and High-Tech classroom model at National Innovation Center Nepal (<https://nicnepal.org>) in



Kathmandu.

Recognizing the vital importance of R & D hub for the holistic development of a nation, the Government of Israel has opened a full-fledged Israeli-styled high tech classroom consisting of laptops, webcams, Digital Display Screen, in-built Sound System, air-conditioning, glass boards, furniture and other necessary equipment.

Aiming at developing and exchanging innovative ideas among the researchers, the hub will be the first of its kind R&D cum high-tech class in Nepal. Besides, the R&D center in Nepal will also serve as a contact point for collaboration with R&D-like international organizations and share ideas among the researchers to come up with innovative ideas. The hub is open to everyone and facilitates their creativity and collaboration in physical backed up with digital space.

The inaugural ceremony of center was held at National Innovation Center, Kirtipur today amidst the presence of Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, Deputy Chief of Mission Tal Shvartsman and Dr. Mahabir Pun, Chairperson of NIC.

There was a presentation on how the classes will be run and used as R&D hub in Nepal. The virtual meeting was organized with the parallel organization of Israel named Yazamut 360 Entrepreneurship Center, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Addressing the event, Ambassador Goder said, “Improving our lifestyle can only be done through research on changes in science. This is what led Israel to progress and I am proud to be associated with this center that will make the progress in Nepal.”

Expressing satisfaction to be able to build this hub,

DCM Shvartsman said, “This hub is a seed for flourishing ideas in the near future as Nepali researchers and citizens can now invent great ideas for the benefit of the nation. I do hope that in the days to come, with the hubs like this, Nepal will be able to export ideas on a high-tech scale to the globe.”

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr. Mahabir Pun said, “Israel is desert but fertile in innovation. This is a great initiative on technology. We try to bring new technologies, test it and put it to use in the best and effective way. We will use this center to be connected with innovative centers in Israel and other nations. In this hub, we will nurture homegrown inventors, innovators, scientists to promote development of the country. We are trying to support innovators who come here and we hope to have long-term collaboration and support from Israel.”

### Nepal And Japan Agree To Continue Fighting Against the COVID-19 Together

Ambassador Kikuta confirmed with Minister Khatriwada to continue fighting against the COVID-19 together

Ambassador of Japan to Nepal Kikuta Yutaka paid a courtesy call on Minister for Health and Population Birodh Khatriwada at the Ministry of Health and Population in Ramshahpath. On this occasion, Ambassador Kikuta congratulated Minister Khatriwada for his appointment and stated that Japan would continue to cooperate with Nepal to fight against COVID-19 and to achieve Nepal's socio-economic development and recovery of Nepal from the pandemic.

Ambassador Kikuta and Minister Khatriwada shared the view to further continue to cooperate for the socio-economic development of Nepal and enhancement of the relationship between the two countries.

During the meeting, Minister Khatriwada mentioned the long history of cooperation between Japan and Nepal and importance of bilateral relationship as well as multilateral cooperation, such as COVAX. Minister expressed gratitude for the contributions by Japan to Nepal, including the last year's donation of 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine and other various assistance projects in the health sector to reduce poverty and to improve the quality of life.

Ambassador Kikuta pointed out that, with regard to the emergence of the new Omicron variant, the





smooth implementation of vaccination campaign in Nepal was imminent and one of the most important matters in question of Nepal, and informed the Minister of Japan's multiple approaches to help Nepal in her fight against COVID-19, which includes the contribution to the UNICEF for the cold-chain facility.

Through the UNICEF, Japan will soon donate nine walk-in refrigerators for the storage of vaccine, which are easy to move and install without complicated constructions and in lower cost, compared with the roll-in refrigerators. They will facilitate that the vaccine will reach down even to the remote areas, and will be beneficial for all Nepali people.

### Israeli Embassy To Nepal Supported Schools To Collect Used Batteries For Recycling

Embassy of Israel to Nepal in collaboration with



Pragya Kunja School, Shanti Sikshya School, KMC School, Kavya School collected the used batteries to reduce the pollution. Ambassador to Israel to Nepal Hanan

Goder and principle of the school handed over the collected used batteries for recycling.

Organized in presence of Ramsahay Prasad Yadav, Minister of Forests and Environment, the students from various schools handed over the used batteries collected from various parts of Kathmandu Valley.

The Embassy of Israel initiated an Environment Conservation Activity under a slogan, "Stop Pollution: Used Batteries Collection" in cooperation with schools in Kathmandu.

The goal of the project is to contribute to environmental pollution mitigation measures. As we know that batteries contain a number of heavy metals and toxic chemicals and disposing them in a same manner as we dispose regular household waste creates serious concerns over soil contamination, water pollution, air pollution and hence, affecting the human lives and our planet.

The Embassy of Israel cooperated with schools of the valley including Kathmandu Pragya Kunja School, Shanti Sikshya School, KMC School, Kavya School in reducing pollution with individual steps of their students; the students collected used batteries (alkaline batteries, coin cell batteries and other non-rechargeable batteries), brought it to the school, which later were taken for recycling

at DOKO Recyclers.

An event was held at Kathmandu Pragya Kunja School to hand over collected used batteries with an important message of responsibility of an individual step towards cleaner environment. The jars of batteries were collected and handed over to DOKO Recyclers.

Ramsahay Prasad Yadav, Minister of Forests and Environment, graced the ceremony. Appreciating the initiative of collecting old batteries and sending for recycling, the Minister said, "This activity is very much important in today's time. Human activities are hampering themselves, flora, fauna and the nature, as a whole. This initiative will definitely contribute to the environmental protection, as batteries are something that are used in everything, ranging from mobile phones, computers to other electronic devices hence, it's crucial to recycle them." He further said that the socio-economic development should not happen at the expense of environmental degradation and we should preserve our nature.

Thanking the Ministry for joining the Embassy in this deed Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal said, "Our planet is one. Natural treasures of Nepal is too important for us to neglect. Israel is proud to be a part of this environmental initiative."

Welcoming the guests to the program, Kapil Dev Regmi, Director of the school highlighted the bilateral works between Israel and Nepal in education and agriculture mentioning the trainings to Nepali educationists in Israel.

Leading the joint actions for the environment conservation, the Embassy is hopeful to spread a message that we need to dispose waste in a proper manner and it is a responsibility of each individual to take care of our natural world for the better today and tomorrow.

### BIMSTEC Secretary General Calls On PM Deuba

Secretary-General of Bay of Bengal Initiative for

Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Tenzin Lekphell called on Prime Minister. Sher Bahadur Deuba today.



During the meeting, they discuss ways to build on the progress made thus far and further consolidate the BIMSTEC process were discussed in the meeting.

He also called on Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr.

## NEWSNOTES

Narayan Khadka at the latter's office.

Stating that the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu was an important milestone in streamlining the areas of cooperation and institutional strengthening of the organization, the Secretary-General appreciated Nepal's contributions in advancing the BIMSTEC process.

Minister for Foreign Affairs commended the Secretary-General for his leadership and expressed Nepal's commitment to contribute constructively to help BIMSTEC make further advances. He underlined the need to ensure that the Fifth Summit to be held in 2022 builds on the progress made thus far and provides important breakthroughs towards realizing the regional aspirations.

Both sides assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and societies in the region and underlined the imperative to work in closer cooperation through BIMSTEC framework.

Earlier Lekphell paid courtesy calls on Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Ms. Pampha Bhusal and Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Prem Bahadur Ale. He also called on Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and Secretary of Commerce and Supplies Dinesh Bhattarai.

Matters such as trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people contact as well as broader issues of Nepal-BIMSTEC cooperation were discussed in these meetings.

Lekphell is on a four-day introductory visit to Ne-



pal from 3-6 January 2022.

### Nepal And France Signed An Agreement

Nepal And France signed an agreement facilitating the services of Alliance Française de Kathmandu (French Cultural Centre).

Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and French Ambassador to Nepal Gilles Bourbao signed agreement facilitating the services of Alliance Française de Kathmandu (French Cultural Centre). According to Foreign Ministry of

Nepal, it is an important step in further promoting cultural and educational linkages between

### U.S. Donates Additional 664,560 Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccines To Nepal



Kathmandu, Nepal — The United States government is donating an additional 664,560 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to Nepal to fight COVID-19. These highly effective, life-saving vaccines for ages 12 and older, provided through the generosity of the American people, add to the 100,620 doses of Pfizer vaccines and 1.535 million single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines the United States donated to Nepal earlier this year.

This support augments the more than \$122 million in assistance provided (not including vaccine costs) to Nepal to-date in the form of life-saving medical supplies, training, and technical support. The United States is donating vaccines free of cost and without preconditions, as part of the United States' ongoing support to Nepal during the pandemic.

In addition, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNICEF are partnering with Nepal to distribute these vaccines, including safely and equitably to regions where they are urgently needed and encouraging people to get vaccinated. USAID has worked closely with Nepal to provide ultra-low temperature freezers, walk-in freezers, walk-in cold rooms, freezer vans, cryogenic gloves, and goggles, as well as technical assistance for maintaining a cold chain to keep vaccines viable as they are transported across the country. This will enhance Nepal's options and capabilities to receive more vaccines.

"The United States is pleased to donate these additional 664,560 doses of the life-saving Pfizer vac-



cine to Nepal, continuing our support to Nepal during the COVID pandemic. We are pleased that these vaccines, now authorized for children 12 to 17, will be primarily used to keep children safe and healthy,” said USAID Mission Director Sepideh Keyvanshad.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United States government has worked directly with the Government of Nepal to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, ensure the continuity of critical health services, and support the country in mitigating the pandemic’s secondary social and economic impacts – particularly on education and livelihoods.

Worldwide, the United States has pledged to donate more than 1.1 billion vaccines to nearly 100 developing countries and has already delivered more than 330 million vaccine doses. With its contribution of \$4 billion, the United States is the largest bilateral donor to the global vaccine initiative, COVAX.

U.S. President Joe Biden has committed the U.S. government to donate a billion Pfizer vaccines to low- and lower middle-income countries and the African Union, to help vaccinate the world and supercharge the fight against the pandemic. Working through COVAX for equitable distribution, two hundred million doses will be delivered by the end of this year and the remaining 800 million will be delivered in 2022.

### **The Nepali Christian Community Celebrated Christmas Day**



The Nepali Christian community is celebrating Christmas Day today commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. Jesus Christ was

born on December 25 in Bethlehem in Israel 2021 years ago.

Born of Virgin Merriam, Jesus Christ has given three main happinesses – liberation, love and peace, said CB Gahatraj, president of Federation of National Christian Nepal.

Therefore, the Christians celebrate December 25 as the Day of all these three major happiness.

The Federation started marking the Christmas Day as a major celebration in Nepal only after 2063 BS.

The government had declared Christmas Day as a national holiday from 2063 BS to 2074 BS. However, from 2075 BS public holiday is given only to Christians on Christmas Day.

The Federation claims that there are three million Christians in Nepal.

The Federation’s Christmas Day Main Celebration Committee is organizing Christmas Day celebration programme at Classic Venue at Satdobato, Lalitpur this afternoon.

Nepal is celebrating Christmas, the greatest festival of Christians, with much fanfare, throughout the country today. It is celebrated to mark the birth of Jesus Christ, on December 25.

The festival has been recognized as a national festival since 2007, and even non-Christians celebrate it with a lot of zeal.

Colorfully decorated Christmas trees and well-decorated shops and malls are seen in Thamel, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, and Pokhara among other places, on the occasion.

The government has announced a Official holiday to celebrate the festival today.

On occasion, Christians visit churches and exchange gifts with family and friends. The King of Rome Constantine started the celebration of the festival in 350 AD.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and main opposition party leader Sher Bahadur Deuba have extended their heartfelt Christmas greetings to all Nepali Christians living at home and abroad, wishing them for peace, happiness, prosperity, good health, unity, brotherhood and progress.

“May this festival strengthen the feelings of love and unity among Nepali people and inspire all to implement the Constitution of Nepal for peaceful and prosperous Nepal,” President Bhandari said in a message.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Global IME organizes nation-wide digital banking literacy initiative



Global IME Bank Limited (GBIME) in line with its initiative to conduct digital banking literacy program--under its nation-wide financial literacy campaign--to encourage the usage of the same has successfully concluded at least 175 events. It has been learnt that the commercial bank under its initiative has conducted more than 175 digital banking literacy programs across villages and cities in all the seven provinces.

The bank stated that the initiative was launched with the aim of encouraging the usage of digital banking nation-wide for transactions which would provide more convenience and ease.

GBIME aimed at providing awareness and accessibility of digital financial literacy throughout the country to do which it mobilized 287 of its branches along with central and provincial offices spread across 76 districts.

### Nepal SBI Merchant Banking Ltd Held AGM

Nepal SBI Merchant Banking Ltd (NSBIMBL) successfully conducted its sixth annual general meeting here recently. The AGM approved the directors report, annual financial statements (statement of financial position, statement of profit or loss, statement of cash flow and all the related statements, schedules and notes to the annual report) for fiscal year 2020-21, as per a press statement.

The meeting has appointed statutory auditor SMC Associates, chartered accountants for the fiscal year 2021-22 and ratified the audit fee. The AGM was chaired by Yadvender Kant, chairman of the board of the company.

### Mega Bank joins hands with MOCO Digital wallet

The Mega Bank Nepal Limited has joined hands with MOCO, a digital wallet launched by FOCUSEONE Payment Solutions, a licensed Payment Service Provider with Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB).

The Bank's account holders can now directly add

their debit/credit cards on MOCO Digital wallet without the need to load funds. The process is simple and doesn't require any additional costs.

"Through MOCO digital wallet, users have the freedom to select any card added into their wallet. In short, MOCO digital wallet acts as a shared hub for multiple bank cards and users can simply scan to make a payment. It eradicates the requirement of loading balance every time while performing a transaction," CEO of Mega Bank Nepal Limited, Anupama Khunjeli said.

Besides that, MOCO Digital wallet users can also enjoy the benefit of unified QR payment. With this feature MOCO Digital Wallet users and Mega Bank Card users can just scan and pay from multiple digital platforms including but not limited to Alipay, Nepal Pay, UnionPay, and VISA, the statement issued by the bank states. MOCO users will also receive reward points for every transaction. Accumulated reward points can later be used to redeem attractive gift hampers and vouchers through MOCO's collaborators and partners.



According to Bishwa Singh, Head Digital & eBanking, Mega Bank account holders can now rejoice the benefits of MOCO Digital Wallet. "For new users, MOCO is a completely different kind of wallet designed by keeping convenience and security in mind. The app is equipped with a secure back-end system, which is one of the most sophisticated and it complies with the latest Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)" MOCO app is available for download on Google play and app store.

### Energy Minister Bhusal urges everyone to use clean energy

Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal has said that she has adopted a policy of replacing gas stoves with electric stoves to give priority to the use of clean energy.

Addressing the 21st Annual General Assembly of the Solar Electric Manufacturers Association Nepal (SEMAN), Minister Bhusal said that she has put forward a policy of encouraging the establishment of large scale industries consuming electricity and using electric equipment in every sector, and also the promotion of electric vehicles. She said, "Traditional energy consumption should be dis-





couraged and the use of clean energy should be increased.”

Minister Bhupal argued that solar energy will be helpful in solving the energy crisis as the cost of producing solar

energy is comparatively low due to technology and can be produced in a short time. Noting that solar energy production is only available during the day, the concepts developed in recent times have made it easier, she said, “Lately, the concept of ‘One Sun, One World, One Grid’ has been developed. This will make the use of solar energy easier.”

Stating that the world is involved in the promotion of renewable energy, she said that Nepal also needs to adopt the policy of using renewable energy. Minister Bhupal also mentioned that it is necessary to promote renewable energy to fulfill the commitment made by Nepal in the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Minister Bhupal stressed that the government has adopted the policy of mixed energy system from the point of view of energy security. She said that the target is to include 10 percent alternative energy. “Alternative energy is mainly solar and wind energy,” she said. At present, the power system has an installed capacity of about 2100 MW.

### **Tanahu Hydropower Makes Progress**

The 140 MW Tanahu Hydropower Project, one of the biggest reservoir-type projects in the country, has paid Rs 1.30 billion in land compensation.

The project has acquired more than 1,400 ropanies of land for the construction of its power plant to be built in Jhaputar of Rishing Rural Municipality-1 of Tanahu district. According to the project chief Achyut Ghimire, they have completed 25 percent of the physical work so far.



According to Ghimire, they have provided Rs 1.30 billion as land compensation to construct an access road, camp and reservoir area. The project has paid Rs 400 million to acquire 150 ropanies of land necessary for camp and access road to the power house.

A total of Rs 80 million has been paid to acquire 50 ropanies of land for the access road to the dam site and Rs 820 million for 1,230 ropanies of land for the water storage reservoir. The project has already constructed a camp, a substation, access roads and a bridge across the Seti River at the project site.

Tanahu Hydropower Project is expected to generate 587.7 GWh in the first 10 years of operation. The project can generate energy for six hours daily during the dry season.

The US \$ 550-million project is being built with credit extended by the Asian Development Bank (\$ 150 million), Japan International Cooperation Agency (\$ 184 million), European Investment Bank (\$ 85 million) and investment amounting to \$ 87 million from Nepal Electricity Authority and the government.

### **Huawei Startup ICT Award 2021 concludes; Huawei Cloud awarded to finalists**

The Huawei Startup ICT Award 2021 concluded at The Soaltee in Kathmandu, with the top five finalists receiving Huawei Cloud during the grand finale held recently.



Kheti Venture Pvt. Ltd., the category winner, received a Huawei Cloud worth \$3000, while other finalists in the same category received Huawei Cloud worth \$500 each. Ivan Mo, Head of Huawei Cloud, said during the award ceremony, “I want to congratulate all winners and finalists for their contribution in the ICT sector. We are very pleased to see the growth of startups in Nepal.” He further added that a local team is working vigorously to promote Nepali startups, and that the company believes Huawei cloud service is now fully capable of supporting Nepali startups of all sizes.

During the event, Minister for Communications and Information Technology Gyanendra Bahadur Karki handed over a token of appreciation to William Zhang, CEO of Huawei Nepal, for continuing its support for ICT Award, and altogether ICT sector of Nepal. Huawei expressed its commitment to continue its support such events to promote the development of the ICT industry in Nepal, staying true to its vision to promote the development of the ICT industry in Nepal.



## NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

# Relevant Forever

*Four decades have already been passed since his death; National Reconciliation Policy propounded by late BP Koirala is relevant forever*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although his own party Nepali Congress has completely deviated from his national reconciliation policy dancing with the extreme communist forces, the national reconciliation policy propounded by B.P. Koirala is still very much relevant to Nepal.

Although his own party

Nepali Congress has now been ruling the country as a co-partner of extremist community, the party's leadership is not in a position to denounce it.

Giving up all core essences and values of BP Koirala's National Recollections pushing party towards extremism, Nepali Congress leaders

observed the 46th national unity and reconciliation day paying lip service to the leaders.

Nationalism and democracy are the two most important components of national reconciliation. BP Koirala pursues reconciliation to bring monarchy and democratic forces represented by Nepali Con-



gress.

Backed by Nepali Congress, extremists on the disguise of Maoists and CPN-UML have been taking center stage in Nepali politics. Although prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who himself was close associate B.P Koirala, reelected the party's president, he is not in a position to guide the Nepali Congress in its centrist position.

As he is sharing the power with extremist communist, Prime Minister Deuba was compelled to visit the statue of BP Koirala and remembering him for his contribution to Nepali Congress.

While addressing a function organized on the occasion of National Unity and Reconciliation Day at the BP Museum in Sundarijal on Friday, Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (NC) President Deuba said the NC would forward the country maintaining national unity on the basis of the reconciliation policy propounded by BP Koirala.

He said that the country's national unity will be stronger from reconciliation among all castes and religious communities.

Recalling that the Federal Constitution was promulgated under

the leadership of the Nepali Congress, he said that he was committed to making Nepal a prosperous country by strengthening republican system and federalism.

He also underlined the need for making the national unity stronger and stressed unity and co-operation among all seven provinces.

Prime Minister Deuba added, "In federalism, reconciliation and unity should be maintained among seven provinces to make our national unity stronger."

He also said the reconciliation policy introduced by late BP Koirala was still equally relevant and it should be forwarded ahead.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Deuba expressed his belief that the National Reconciliation Day would give inspiration to all political parties for safeguarding nationalism and democracy. Issuing a message on the occasion of the Day, PM Deuba said consensus and collaboration were necessary for the protection of nationality and democracy.

Deuba stressed that reconciliation, dialogue, consensus and collaboration were essential among all the national forces committed to nationality and democracy.

Stating that the policy propounded by BP Koirala in course of the democratic movement in the country has a high significance, PM Deuba said, "BP Koirala had returned to Nepal from political exile in India with the goal of protecting nationalism and establishing democracy despite facing life sentence from the then political regime. This day has been motivating us for our commitment towards patriotism and democracy."

Betrayed by his own brother GP Koirala for the sake of the power, national reconciliation has different hat now. At a time when his own nephew Dr. Shekhar Koirala did not recall his great uncle BP Koirala's contribution declining to champion it, Prime Minister Deuba has shown political courage to pay respect to his principle, even in word.

The founder leader of the Nepali Congress, BP Koirala, had returned to Nepal from political exile in India on Poush 16, 2033 BS (December 30, 1976) espousing the 'national unity and reconciliation' policy. The Nepali Congress has been commemorating this day as the National Unity and Reconciliation Day.





Died four decades ago, BP Koirala has left a big legacy among the party workers. Realizing this, Nepali Congress general secretary Bishwa Prakash Sharma has said that the national reconciliation policy of BP would help maintain national unity.

Speaking at a program organized on the occasion in Pokhara, Sharma said that the national recon-

ciliation policy introduced in 1976 was equally relevant and that must be pushed forward as BP thought.

#### BP Legacy

At a time when many strong followers of late BP Koirala have either died or are now out of politics, Nepali Congress is heading towards extremism losing its own centrist ideology.

A former minister like Govinda Raj Joshi was expelled from the party and the remaining few younger generation leaders like Dr. Minendra Rijal, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat have lost the elections of the party. Khum Bahadur Khadka, who returned with BP, died and KB Gurung, who also returned in the pretext of BP's return to Nepal, has openly backed ethnic politics.

The day is marked every year on Poush 16 in the Nepali calendar in memory of the Nepali Congress founding president BP Koirala, who along with some other leaders came back to Nepal after a long exile in neighboring India.

On December 30, 1976, leader Koirala along with some other leaders, Ganesh Man Singh, Shai-

laja Acharya, Khum Bahadur Khadka, Ram Babu Prasain and Nilambar Panthi returned home after around eight years of exile in India with a message of national unity and reconciliation.

Despite the attempt to push the party an extreme end, Nepali Congress leaders in power have no option other than to harp this slogan to woo voters. We have also decided to reproduce his statement issued (See Box).





# Nationalism And Democracy



The statement B.P. Koirala gave on return from foreign exile on December 30, 1976

After a pretty long period of exile, we are returning to our country. On this occasion, I would like to say a few words to the countrymen.

Today, our country is in a national crisis. All have realized that this crisis is getting heightened since the last few years. As a result, the very national identity has been endangered. Others have also admitted this. All including the King have from time to time referred to the danger posed to national identity. We are returning to home after realizing this grave reality. We think that the lack of national unity is a major factor for such a national crisis as a result of which foreign elements have started to become successful in playing their dirty games and making Nepal a center of an international conspiracy. National unity can be achieved only through a collective campaign and efforts of all Nepali people. Such a collective campaign does also lay the grounds for the institutional base for the emotional unity of the Nepali people. If the sloganeering alone could do this, the national unity would not have suffered so much nor our country would have landed in such a miserable condition in the last sixteen years. Today, there is selfishness, communalism, individualistic practices and the tendency to have external-tilt is rampant in the country. In such circumstances, nationalism becomes the first casualty.

Till yesterday, our struggle was confined to the attainment of the people's democratic rights. That's why; we emphasized more on the democratic side. Today, there is a new dimension added to it. A dual responsibility has befallen the Nepali Congress. This second responsibility is, safeguarding the national identity. We have visualized two-fold faces of today's Nepal: Nationalism and Democracy.

It means the Nepali people should take the responsibility of restoring democracy as well as safeguarding the nation. If we talk of only one responsibility we will be following the wrong track by being one-sided. And, if we emphasized only the restoration of democracy, we will not be contributing to addressing this national crisis. Moreover, we may even fall into the trap of foreigners by such one-sided action. Similarly, if we talk of nationalism only, we will be repeating the same 16-years-old hollow slogans of nationalism and will be siding with authoritarianism. Such a hollow slogan of nationalism cannot generate internal willpower in the countrymen to safeguard the nation. Therefore, we need now to understand that national unity can be built on the foundation of democracy only. And the foundation of democracy can be cemented by economic development and

the just economic system. Therefore we feel that nationalism, democracy and economic development are interdependent on each other.

BY: B.P. KOIRALA

has taken historical and serious decisions from time to time in the national interest. The decision to wage the 1951 revolution and its executions are some examples. After finding that there was a conspiracy to put off the elections forever, it took the leadership of the national campaign for the holding of the elections. We received cooperation from various parties in that campaign. Nepali Congress launched the resistance movement for democracy after the cruel and fatal blow dealt to democracy in 1960. And today, we have taken this historical decision seeing the crisis the nation is facing. This is in accordance with the tradition of the Nepali Congress.

In the history of every nation, there comes such moment when its people have to risk their lives to safeguard the national identity. We think, such a moment has come in Nepal today. Our well-wishers had advised us not to return Nepal seeing the dangers involved in it. We would like to tell them that we have taken this historical decision because the likely danger to our lives is nothing as compared to the danger to the nation. The workers of the Nepali Congress have also shown the example of unprecedented courage and love towards nation by returning to the motherland following the party directives.

In this hour of national crisis, all of us should get united by forgetting and ending the past unhealthy debates, experiences and differences. Our program should be directed by the feeling that we will no more exist in the absence of our nation. I do not know what fate awaits me after I return to the country. Through this statement, as the Chairman of Nepali Congress, I would like to appeal to the entire countrymen that let us all unanimously unite in the pious task of defending the nation, its progress, happiness and prosperity of the people. If I get an opportunity, I will put forth my feelings before His Majesty also. The responsibility to save the nation is the common responsibility of all.

Jai Nepal!

Bishweswor Prasad Koirala

Dec.30, 1976

(This excerpt has been reproduced in order to re-emphasize the importance of national reconciliation)

## MAOIST CONVENTION

# Prachanda's Command

*Nepal Communist Party Maoist-Center Eighth General Convention concluded unanimously choosing Pushpa Kamal Dahal leader of the party*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**lthough Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) leaders have been claiming that their party is most inclusive and democrat-

Meanwhile, members of the newly-elected Central Committee of the party have taken oath. The newly-elected central members took

ing is expected to elect the party's central office bearers.

The Maoist Center has 15 members including a chairman, a senior vice chairman, six vice chairmen, a general secretary, two deputy general secretaries, three secretaries and a treasurer in the office bearers' body

From opening to conclusion, the Eighth General Convention of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) confined at the Nepal Academy hall. CPN (Maoist Center) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' presided over the inaugural session of the General Convention which also coincides with the 129th birthday of Mao Zedong.

CPN (Maoist Center) leader Pampha Bhusal, also Minister for Energy, welcomed the guests. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, also Nepali Congress President, has attended the inaugural session.

Chairman of CPN (Unified Socialist) Madhav Kumar Nepal was the special guest of the ceremony while Rastriya Janamorchha leader, Durga Paudel and Janata Samajwadi Party Chair, Upendra Yadav, participated in the ceremony as guests. CPN (Revolutionary Maoist) leader CP Gajurel and CPN (UML) General Secretary Shankar Pokhrel are also attending the program as guests.

Narayan Kaji Shrestha, vice-chairman of CPN (Maoist Center) has viewed that the eighth General Convention of the CPN (Maoist Center) is not a ritual for formality. Leader Shrestha said so while addressing the inaugural session of the general convention. He said the general convention will lay the basis for the



ic, their recent secretive and low profile convention shows otherwise.

Not giving any opposing voices in the party, Maoist Center leaders had conducted all the party procedures in most secretive manner. Setting new precedents, Maoist Center leader converted the General Assembly to the general conventions.

Like all secretive communist parties of the world, Maoist Center leaders choose to conduct all important meeting in secretive ways not allowing lower rank party cadres in the meeting.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been unanimously reelected as the chairman of the CPN (Maoist Center). A meeting of the newly-elected Central Committee of the party unanimously elected Dahal as the chairman of the party.

oath before the meeting of the Central Committee that was held at the Heritage Garden in Sanepa, Lalitpur.

The newly-elected central members were sworn in by the party's Central Election Commission Chairman Bishnu Pukar Shrestha. The 8th National General Convention of the Maoist Center, which started on December 26, elected 236 central members on Sunday. The number includes 111 from the open category and 125 from the inclusive category.

The Maoist Center amended the statute with a provision to have a 299-member Central Committee. A total of 15 percent CC members will be nominated by the Central Committee.

The first meeting of the Central Committee has started after the oath taking ceremony on Monday afternoon. The Central Committee meet-



formation of a new revolutionary party.

“General Convention is not a formal ritual. We are here for building a new base of a new revolutionary party,” he said, “Our convention will come up with ways to address the problems of our country.”

He pointed at the need for a retrospection among leaders and parties and necessary changes so as to bring about a great change in the country. Social-economic achievements can be made only when the leaders change themselves and work for it, he said.

CPN (Maoist Center) leader Matrika Yadav has observed that CPN (Maoist Center) is a part of the world communist movement. He said so while addressing the eighth General Convention of the CPN (Maoist Center) here today.

“Our Maoist movement is not only limited to our country, it is a part of world communist movement and also a part of overall revolution across the globe.”

Leader Yadav lauded the role played by Maoist Center Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ in the Madhes movement by being liberal to it.

“If comrade Prachanda had not been liberal to Madesh movement and if he had not taken a clear stand that the Maoist Party would not accept constitution without federalism, there would not have been Madhesh movement.”

He objected to the way Prachanda path was abandoned in the middle when it was necessary to develop further. “The Prachanda Path was developed by the People’s War, but we



abandoned it in the middle. Revolution got confused. What did comrade Prachanda do? People started to question and so did I. This led to many leaders leaving the party. I also did, but returned. And now what has become our status today?”

Leaders of different political parties have stressed that the policy to be taken from the ongoing general convention of the CPN (Maoist Centre) should become a milestone in safeguarding nationality.

Expressing their messages of the best wishes to the general convention of the CPN (Maoist Centre) in the federal capital on Sunday, the speakers said that the parties should be united in the agendas of nationality despite their differences in ideology and principles.

The leaders said that the right decision to be taken by the general convention would be vital in safeguarding the nationality in the future.

General Secretary of the CPN (ML) CP Mainali said that serious questions were raised on Maoists, and the confusions would prevail if the general convention failed to draw a conclusion.

Likewise, leader of CPN (Revolutionary Maoist) CP Gajurel termed the expressions of CPN (Mao-

ist Centre) Chairman Prachanda for the unity of Maoist forces as positive gestures but called for a concrete foundation to materialise this.

If the unity of the former Maoist forces was required, some crucial bases should be prepared, Gajurel added while hoping that the general convention would prepare that foundation. He called for the Maoist Centre leaders to come up with the commitment to abide by the decisions taken by the first meeting of the central committee during the commencement of the People’s War.

Vice-Chairperson of Rastriya Janamorcha Durga Poudel said that the policy to be taken by the Maoist Centre’s general convention would be of national importance, adding that the attacks on republic, democracy, secularism and nationality were rife from different angles.

Also speaking at the inaugural session, General Secretary of Rastriya Prajatantra Party Kunti Shahi said that her party and Maoist Centre share common views on making a prosperous nation through sovereign economy, defence of nationality and preventing foreign intervention.



KUL MAN GHISING

## Focus For Quality Supply

*With the frequent localized electricity supply disruptions and increasing complains, Kul Man Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, announces a strategy to end such irritations*

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the winter storm caused by the Westerly Disturbance dipped the mercury of Kathmandu Valley, everyone starts to switch the heater on. The result was that the three decades old distribution systems collapsed in different parts of the cities.

Although the problems occurred at several localized areas, interruption of power supply had created nationwide havoc. As the surplus energy electricity in the

transmission line and other distribution lines were non-used with a loss of revenue to Nepal Electricity Authority, few hundred consumers faced severe power cuts of power resulting in angry reactions in social media and other media channel.

Given the nature of public response to expansions and extension of power system, the recent problem is natural. Protesting and opposing projects aimed to expand and upgrade the electricity systems

in Kathmandu Valley, overwhelming numbers of residents are also part of the present crisis.

Due to local level protests, most of the power system improvements and expansion projects in Kathmandu valley are under

Managing Director (MD) of NEA Kul Man Ghising has said they have received some complaints in the disruption of power supply in some areas of Kathmandu Valley. He stated that this is due to the old dis-



tribution systems which is unable to supply increasing demands of electricity.

“For the last few days, there have been complaints of some problems in the power supply. This problem is not a problem all over the country and it is only in Kathmandu. This is not a problem caused by supply. This problem is not everywhere in Kathmandu. The problem is only in some places,” said Ghising.

Kathmandu Valley’s distribution system is built to supply around 300 MW electricity to around 2 million populations. However, there is a demand of over 500 MW in same system.

“Demand for electricity has increased due to the recent cold. People have been using heaters, air conditioners and other consumables

in their homes. Our transformers have not been able to support this and there has been a problem with electricity coming and going.”

MD Ghising said that there was a problem of a power outage while changing the transformers due to an increase in power consumption.

“Our evening peak load of electricity is about 1,700 MW and in the morning it is about 1500 to 1600 MW. In that, we are able to supply.”

He said that the demand for power has increased to 500 MW inside the Kathmandu Valley in peak morning and night.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has clarified that the problems now seen in the supply of power was due to some technical reasons and such problem would not repeat.

Organizing the press conference on Friday, Managing Director (MD) of NEA Kul Man Ghising has said that there will be no problem of power-tripping anywhere from Friday as changing of transformers in high demand areas has almost been completed.

He clarified that there was no problem of a power outage due to insufficient power supply.

The NEA is working for the construction of nine substations in the Kathmandu Valley focusing on the increasing power consumption, he said, adding that it will be possible to supply 2,000 MW of electricity to the Kathmandu Valley in the long run after the completion of these substations.

Ghising said that there was a problem of power outages in some



## ENERGY

places due to a sudden increase in load in the power distribution system.

“There are 3,800 transformers in the Kathmandu Valley. In the last few days, there have been problems in 50-60 transformers and lights have tripped in some places,” said Ghising.

According to him, the NEA has replaced 150 transformers in the last four months and all the transformers in the valley will be replaced by Friday evening.

“Demand for electricity has also increased in the Kathmandu Valley along with the cold.” If there was no problem with the rain, we could have repaired the transformer in no time,” he said. However, all day and night rain caused problems.”

Stating that the improvement of the power transmission lines was the priority of NEA, Ghising said that work was underway to add transformers in the places where problems were seen.

The increment of power is positive; he said and added that the NEA would upgrade the transformers and feeders gradually to cater to

the growing demand for power.

After the arrival of Upper Tamakoshi, it has become easier to manage power demand during the peak in the morning and evening this year than it was last year, he said.

He added that there was a problem in some places as the residents did not allow the construction of substations and transformers.

MD Ghising said that NEA has been working to end power supply disruption in the valley and it will improve soon.

Inspecting the projects under construction on site and taking information about the construction progress, ongoing problems and the work to be completed within a year, MD Ghising urged the project management, contractors and consultants to complete the construction of the projects before the winter season next year.

MD Ghising has requested to expedite the construction of 220/132/33 kV substation under construction in Matatirtha of Kathmandu and 132/33/11 kV substation under construction in Phutung, Teku, Chobhar, Thimi and Changunarayan.

“If the substations under construction are not completed and brought into operation before next winter, load shedding may occur due to lack of infrastructure to meet the demand for electricity, so let’s complete the construction of such sensitive projects seriously,” Ghising said..

The work has been hampered by the Department of Roads refusing to allow putting electrical wires underground on the main road, obstruction by locals demanding route change and in some places locals not allowing placing transformers near their homes. We are coordinating with the concerned authorities to address the problems for completing works in time,” he said.

A substation of 220/132/33 kV and 320 MVA capacity is under construction at Matatirtha to bring electricity from the Marshyangdi and Trishuli projects to the Kathmandu Valley for distribution.

Matatirtha substation, which is targeted to be completed by next September, is becoming a big hub for power supply in Kathmandu Valley.

A preliminary work has started to supply five 11 KV feeders underground to the main road to supply electricity to Thankot, Satungal, Gurjadhara and other areas from the substation.

After the operation of the feeder, the power supply of the area will be reliable and qualitative and the load work of Syuchatar and Teku substations will be reduced.

The construction of 132/11 kV substation at Chobhar in Kathmandu has been started after obstruction in construction of Khokna, Bungmati, Harisiddhi and Lamatar areas of Lalitpur under Thankot-Chapa-





gaun-Bhaktapur 132 KV transmission line, which is considered important to improve power supply in Kathmandu Valley, the NEA said. The substation will have two power transformers with a capacity of 45 MVA.

The process of acquiring 12 ropanis of land required for construction of substation on the land of Himal Cement near the Dry Port is moving ahead. A 132 kV transmission line has been constructed from Matatirtha to Chobhar.

“If the Thankot-Chapagaun-Bhaktapur line had been completed, a ring of 132 kV transmission line would have been constructed in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. This would have increased the reliability of power supply and improved the voltage capacity. We have made a plan to take it to Lagankhel substation in Lalitpur,” said MD Ghising. “It has been designed. We are strengthening the existing Lagankhel substation to 132 kV. Then in the coming days we will take the line from there to Chapagaun and Harisiddhi underground.”

At present, electricity is being supplied from Lalitpur area from Suchatar-Patan-Baneshwor 66 kV line. This line is already ‘overloaded’.

The NEA is constructing new substations of 132/11 kV and 132/11 kV in Phutung by strengthening the 66/11 kV substation in Kathmandu.

Two substations of 45/45 MVA capacity will be installed in



both the substations. The electricity will be supplied to the area by tapping the Balaju-Chapali 132 kV double circuit transmission line at Phutung substation.

The main civil structures of Phutung substation are being constructed and the equipment has already arrived. After the operation of the substation, the power supply of Balaju area will be improved and the load of Balaju substation will be reduced.

Similarly, a 132/11 kV substation is under construction in Changunarayan of Bhaktapur while construction of Lapsipedi 220/132/11 kV substation has not started due to local obstruction.

The Lapsipedi substation is being constructed in the Kathmandu Valley to distribute the electricity of the hydropower projects constructed in the Tamakoshi and Sunkoshi river reservoir areas.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has taken initiative to complete the under construction projects as soon as possible for the improvement of power transmission and distribution system in the Kathmandu Valley.

The NEA has moved ahead with the aim of completing the projects under construction within a year to meet the growing demand of electricity in the Kathmandu Valley and to make the supply reliable and qualitative.

Projects such as construction of new substations, automation of existing substations, putting electric wires underground, addition and strengthening of new feeders and transformers are underway to make the power supply of Kathmandu Valley more reliable, qualitative and modern, according to the NEA.

The NEA has started construction of transmission and distribution system infrastructure in the Kathmandu Valley with short-term, medium-term and long-term plans to supply 2,000 MW of electricity.

A comprehensive plan to improve the transmission and distribution system has been forwarded by the government of Nepal, NEA, concessional loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

# Agriculture Or Migration: A National Priority Conundrum

BY: RACHANA UPADHYAYA, STEPHANIE LEDER AND YUBIKA ADHIKARI

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed fragility of, not only Nepal's health sector, but also of the agriculture sector and Nepal government's aspirations to be an agriculture driven economy. As pandemic affected the economies around the world and experienced temporary shutdown, Nepali migrants working overseas and in India were forced to return to Nepal. This phenomenon resurfaced the discourse on rural out migration and agriculture, and its linkages.

In Nepal, much research and popular opinion assumes that rural male out migration is the main culprit for declining agricultural production and performance in rural areas. After the pandemic, when these previously migrated men started coming back to Nepal, it was optimistically assumed that they would go back to tilling the land that was left fallow in their absence. However, the causal relationship between agriculture and migration is not that straightforward. To understand how rural out migration affects agricultural practices, and other community management systems, we carried out a research project on 'Revitalizing community management irrigation systems in the context of rural out-migration in Nepal', funded by FORMAS, the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development. As a part of the ongoing research project by the Swedish University of Agriculture and the SouthAsia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS), a household survey was carried out in 376 returnee migrant/migrant households in Doti and Dadelhura in Sudurpashchim province (Far West) to understand motives and motivation of migration and its linkages to agriculture and irrigation. The survey was carried out in early 2021 before the second lock down in Nepal. The findings underscore many complex missing linkages between agriculture and irrigation schemes and rural out migration in Nepal. Most surprisingly, villages with greater male out-migration had more functioning irrigation systems, rather than the expected opposite. According to our extensive field studies, this seems to be linked to the greater involvement in irrigation management of more marginalized groups such as women, youth, and Dalits.

## Remittance Necessity and Dependency

Last year a casual remark by Dr. Yubraj Khatiwada, the then Finance Minister made some headlines. While speaking about the dangers of depleting foreign currency reserves due to COVID associated effects, he said that the government will promote foreign migration so that the remittances do not decrease. Remittances from foreign Nepali labour replenish the foreign currency reserve in the national treasury. COVID-19 and its induced effects in the international trade and job market was believed to pose a threat to the amount of remittances Nepal received every year, which is 23.5 percent of the national GDP. Khatiwada's remarks were contrary to what he (and the government) was saying at the same time- 'integration of returnee migrants in the agriculture sector for national pros-

perity'. Khatiwada's self-contradicting remarks are a small reflection of the national conundrum- what to promote- agriculture or migration?

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (March 2021), in the first quarter of the fiscal year (2020/21) the remittances from Nepali workers abroad increased by 16.5% compared to the same period last year. In the context of present-day Nepal, migration and remittance thus generated is an important part of not only macroeconomics of the country, but it is the only secure source of livelihood for people living in poverty. Most migrants in our research sites migrate to India as migration does not require a visa or work permit, for a monthly income of as minimum as NPR10,000. Despite a meagre income, the respondents of the survey considered remittance/foreign employment as the most secure source of livelihood due to unavailability of jobs and unpredictability of agriculture production in their villages. In such a situation, remittance has played an important role in boosting the economic resilience of not only the remittance recipient households but that of the country. Despite a need for retaining the young population in the country, the Nepal government is working along governments of new destination countries to facilitate safe migration for Nepali migrant workers.

## Migration and Agriculture

Male rural out-migration has considerably reduced the availability of agricultural labour in Nepali villages. However, unavailability of men does not have to automatically lead to a reduced agriculture production and incomes. The absence of a family member can be compensated through increased household financial capital which can be leveraged to hire paid help. Our research findings show that the effects of migration in a household, or a community do not strictly depend only on migration histories alone. The broader agriculture policies and the agricultural sector infrastructure (such as the availability of time saving machinery, and government funds to help sustain farmer-managed irrigation facilities) available for support equally determine social and economic outcomes. In our research sites, broken or limited water infrastructure was one of the main constraining factors for the households to carry out agriculture. This suggests that government investments in farmer-managed irrigation systems are needed.

With the implementation of the Irrigation Master Plan (IMP-2019), there are some villages like Titali in Doti that were provided with irrigation facilities leading to improvement in farming conditions and agricultural production. However, in most of the other villages such as Selinge and Mudrad in Dadelhura, the communities scramble for water flowing through a single stream leading to conflict between communities living upstream and downstream. Even when there is water supply, the competing demand within the house-



hold for drinking and household usages, makes subsistence farming a challenge. Large scale commercial farming is out of the question for such communities in the rugged terrain of the Himalayas, but the selling of surplus farming products at local markets would considerably help to sustain livelihoods. To add to the woe, with the Nepali state restructuring in 2017, the previous district agriculture development offices have been transformed into Agriculture Knowledge Centres, which lack both technical human resource and financial resources to provide support to the farmers.

The agricultural sector engages 69% of Nepal's labor force (CIA Worldfact Book 2017). Despite the continuous decline of the contribution of the agriculture sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of currently around 27%, the agriculture sector has been a priority for the government in the current fiscal year (2021/22) as well with NRP 45.09 billion allocated for the sector. A huge part of the budget (roughly one fourth) is used up importing chemical fertilizers. The use of the remainder of the budget gravitates around plans and programs focusing on commercialization of agriculture. The focus lies in land consolidation and pooling to promote block farming (which is also the working approach of the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project), and agriculture modernization. Such plans, although aimed at improving the domestic agriculture production, do not adequately address the new situation created by rural male out migration, as well as the improvement of farmer-managed irrigation systems for subsistence farming and small-scale commercial selling. More than half of Nepal's land is irrigated, and 70% of the irrigated land is managed by self-organized farmers (in total: 17,000 irrigation systems), accounting for 40% of the national food production (Pradhan 2000). These require attention to ensure food security and sustainable rural development.

The agriculture sector in Nepal employs 82% of the female workforce. The 'Feminization of Agriculture', or, as some academicians working on gender and agriculture in Nepal put it, the 'Feminization of Agricultural Burden' is a reality where it is women who do most of the activities between pre-cropping and post-harvesting period. Despite their increased role and decision making in cropping choices in the absence of male family members, it is still male members of the family who predominantly make decisions regarding land and the use of technology in agriculture. By focusing on the later, the plans and policies hence fail to target and encourage the population group (women) that is available in the country to increase agriculture production. It is important to acknowledge the Nepali reality that rural male out migration does not necessarily lead to a decrease in agriculture production. Agricultural production is often steered by women who fill in the gaps of their missing male family members who have decided to discontinue farming. And hence, agriculture plans, programs and subsidies should focus on the needs of women. The land focused approach of the present programs may be disadvan-

tageous to women as previous research shows that they have limited access to land ownership papers and hence land related decision-making. Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) has set out an ambitious goal of increasing the land ownership of women from 10% (in 2010) to 50% by 2035, however, there is no action plan to reach the goal.

The other way in which the present agriculture plans, and practices miss out on the migration dividend is the missing linkages between remittance and agriculture productivity. Our research shows that the bulk of remittance money goes to everyday consumption and loan repayment rather than investments in agriculture, although there are exceptions. The national plans and policies have yet to think of strategies to encourage remittance investment in the agriculture sector. The recent pandemic and influx of returnee migrants underscored the pitfalls of the agriculture policies which have high aims in increasing production but no action plans on how to systematically accommodate and sustain agriculture sector labour/entrepreneurs within the sector. Various research focused on the situation and

future aspirations of the returnee migrants (e.g. by International Organization of Migration, Dan Church Aid) highlighted their skills and interest in the agriculture sector. Patch work of support offered by various tiers of the government (like agriculture subsidy by Sudurpashchim Province government, PM Employment Program) to encourage returnee migrants into the agriculture sector was, firstly,

inadequate. Secondly, such ad-hoc programs do not address the systemic problems in agriculture such as insufficient irrigation infrastructure, particularly now with the effects of climate change. The returnee migrant phenomena during COVID-19 lockdown underscored that lack of labour due to migration was not the main issue of agricultural sector underperformance in Nepal. The migrants who had returned back to Nepal, by early 2021 when the global market gradually started to open-up, were already making plans to re-emigrate, as our research shows.

### What lies ahead?

In present day Nepal, it is no denying that migration and remittance thus generated is equally important to the lives and livelihoods of the migrant families, and the national economy. On the other hand, while agriculture alone may not be the panacea for the country's economic challenges, with the right policies to support the people it can be the answer for chronic food insecurity problems. Both migration (remittance) and the agriculture sector are hence equally important in the national context. Therefore, it is important to go beyond the dominant discourse that puts blame on the agriculture sector's underperformance to rural male out-migration. Agriculture policies and programs should be able to visualize the women population as the key actors in the agriculture sector, and design action plans and targeted programs with an intent to maximize their capacities. Equally important is to identify strategies to effectively amplify the impacts of remittance within the agriculture sector.

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*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of New Spotlight.*

## RISE OF OMICRON

# Health Under Strain

*With the increase number of coronavirus cases in Sudurpaschim Province in the recent few days, it looks that Nepal is entering into the third wave*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Health Officials in Gaddachauki, border post in Sudurpaschim province, have started to test intensively to those Nepalese entering from the point. With a directive of Ministry of Health and Population, health workers at the border point carefully monitoring the movement of the people.

According to the Sudurpaschim Province Health Directorate, Dipayal, Rajpur, the number of new active coronavirus cases have reached 162 in the Province in a week. The number of coronavirus cases has started going up following

the increasing number of people returning from India.

There are 92 active cases of coronavirus in Kailali, 53 in Kanchanpur, 12 in Baitadi, two in Darchula and one each in Bajhang, Bajura and Dadeldhura.

Sudurpaschim province folks are worried about the increasing number of active coronavirus cases at a time when there is the threat of a new variant of coronavirus, the Omicron.

As the number of infections of COVID-19 start to increase, Nepal's health officials are preparing health services to cope with the

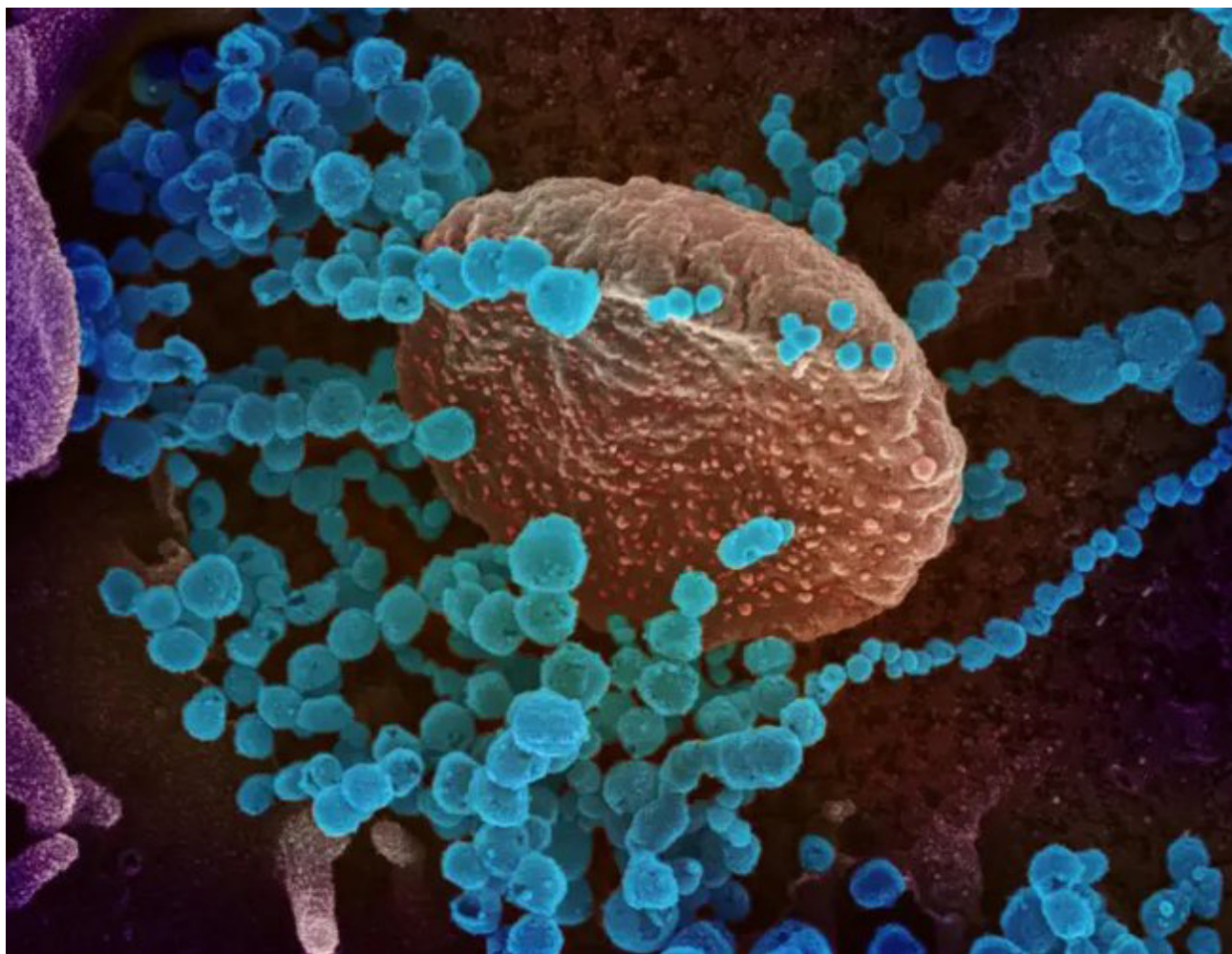
possible third wave coming through Omnicron variant of the virus.

### Nepal Reports New Omicron Cases

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) informed that in the gene sequencing of 250 swab samples, the Omicron variant was confirmed in 24 samples.

"During the S-gene screening of 1,146 COVID-19 positive swab samples, 22%, i.e., 250 samples tested S-gene Negative and during the gene sequencing of those 250 suspected samples, the new variant was detected in 24 samples,"





said Dr. Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra, spokesperson at the MoHP.

Similarly, considering the probable spike in active cases of COVID-19 due to the spread of the Omicron variant, the Health Ministry has directed all the hospitals and health workers across the nation to begin preparations to fight the possible outbreak by making necessary arrangements of oxygen and other healthcare materials.

Dr. Mishra said that the government has managed to place people entering Nepal from various border points who test COVID-19 positive in isolation.

“Also, the facility of gene screening has been made available in various hospitals including Bir Hospital, Civil Hospital, Birendra Sainik

Hospital, TU Teaching Hospital, Province 2 Public Health Laboratory and Bheri Hospital,” she said.

She further requested everyone to abide by the public health standards to check the spread of Omicron in Nepal.

### **Mutated Omicron Variant Is Mild Yet Dangerous**

Omicron is less likely to infect the lungs and, therefore, causes less severe disease in most people. But it is much more contagious than Delta, and its great threat lies in the huge numbers it infects.

The heavily mutated Omicron variant is smashing daily case records, but hospitalizations and deaths are fewer compared to the peaks driven by Delta last year.

The US and the world reported a record 5.85 lakh and 18.95 lakh new infections on January 5 (7-day rolling average), a 14-day change of almost 250% and 165% respectively. But the respective numbers of deaths that day were around 1,300 and 6,100 — down by about 3% and 9% from 14 days ago.

Omicron, first isolated in South Africa on November 24, has 32 mutations on the spike protein. With several of these associated with higher transmissibility and immune evasion, Omicron was swiftly declared a Variant of Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). As South Africa braced for a tsunami of sick patients, however, hospitalizations dropped — even as Omicron



cases picked up.

Is Omicron really mild?

A study from South Africa published in JAMA Network reported that only 41.3% of Covid-positive people visiting hospital emergency required admission during the Omicron wave as compared to 68-69% during the Delta wave. The proportion requiring oxygen therapy was 17.6% in the Omicron wave, significantly lower than the 74% in the Delta wave.

An analysis of a large volume of data from the UK Health Security Agency published in the BMJ said persons infected with Omicron were 50-70% less likely to be admitted to hospital than those infected with Delta.

“The severity of disease with Omicron seems to be 66-80% less based on data from the UK and South Africa. South Africa’s experience also gives assurance that a country like India that has already seen high levels of infections and has vaccination comparable to countries in the west with very little vaccine hesitancy, is likely to fare better,” said Nepal’s medical expert..

“That, however,” he cautioned, “does not mean that Omicron is harmless; people are still landing up in ICUs”.

#### What has been Nepal’s experience so far?

Even though cases are rising sharply — Nepal reported almost 500 new cases on Thursday (previous 24 hours) compared to just 255 cases 10 days earlier — doctors across the country say almost all patients are coming in with mild symptoms: moderate fever, sore throat, headache, body ache, and fatigue. Some patients have diarrhea, nausea, and dizziness.

At Bir Hospital and Sukraraj Tropical Hospital — where, a very few sequenced samples were of Omicron — no patient has developed pneumonia due to Covid-19, and none has needed oxygen or ventilator support solely for the coronavirus infection. Doctors have also reported that symptoms are resolving in about four to five days at most — much sooner than the average infection with Delta.

#### Does this mean we need not worry about Omicron?

No, it does not. Omicron may cause less severe disease in most individuals, but because of its very high transmissibility, hospitals may get flooded with those who remain unimmunized, those living with comorbidities, or those with suppressed immune systems.

Omicron is at least 1.5-2 times more transmissible than Delta, which has resulted in the very large numbers of infections around the world in a very short time. It is also 2-3 times more capable than Delta of infecting those who have been fully vaccinated, or those who have had a previous infection.

“The risk of severe disease is less than Delta, but that is not saying much. I am not concerned about Delhi or Mumbai which have already seen huge Delta waves, and where health systems are fairly robust. The problem will be when Omicron spreads to places where the healthcare system is patchy, and there haven’t been Delta infections,” said Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, medical officer of Sukraraj Tropical Infec-



tious Hospital.

“Also, in the initial phase of a wave, younger people who are out and about are more likely to catch the infection, but the disease is also less severe in them. We will understand the problem only when it starts affecting the old and vulnerable,” he said.

Separate teams at the University of Cambridge and the University of Glasgow have concluded that TM-PRSS-2, a protein found in many lung cells, which is used by coronavirus for viral entry and spread, does not have much affinity with Omicron.

more stable, or is better able to infect new people in air.

More evidence is emerging that the Omicron coronavirus variant is affecting the upper respiratory tract, causing milder symptoms than previous variants and resulting in a “decoupling” in some places between soaring case numbers and low death rates, a World Health Organization official said.

ber, WHO data shows it has spread quickly and emerged in at least 128 countries, presenting dilemmas for many nations and people seeking to reboot their economies and lives after nearly two years of COVID-related disruptions.

However, while case numbers have surged to all-time records, the hospitalization and death rates are often lower than at other phases in the pandemic.

## HOW THE VARIANTS DIFFER

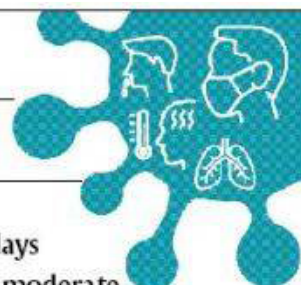
### DELTA

**SYMPTOMS** last about 10 days  
**HIGH FEVER**, 101-103F  
**LOSS** of smell (anosmia) and taste (ageusia)  
**LUNG ENTRY** within couple of days of infection  
**HYPER IMMUNE** response in the second week of infection in some  
**BREATHING** is difficult, pain in the chest  
**OXYGEN** saturation levels fall  
**LUNG DAMAGE** visible in CT scan  
**MOST PATIENTS** were unvaccinated, breakthrough infection occurred mostly in healthcare workers

### OMICRON

**SYMPTOMS** last about 4-5 days  
**FEVER**: Low to moderate, 99.5-100F **EXTREME** fatigue  
**DIZZINESS** and nausea  
**NO LUNG** pneumonia or apparent damage reported so far  
**MOST** patients were fully vaccinated, breakthrough infection rates very high

*Based on broad clinical observations; specific cases will differ. Older or immunocompromised patients and those with comorbidities are impacted more, and are at greater risk of more severe disease in all cases.*



“Indeed we showed that in lung cells expressing TM-PRSS2, live Omicron virus demonstrated significantly lower replication in comparison to Delta,” said the Cambridge study, led by Dr Ravindra Gupta.

But the higher replication rate of the virus in the upper respiratory tract also means that it is easier for it to be passed on to others when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Scientists are also studying factors such as whether the variant is

“We are seeing more and more studies pointing out that Omicron is infecting the upper part of the body. Unlike other ones, the lungs who would be causing severe pneumonia,” WHO Incident Manager Abdi Mahamud told Geneva-based journalists.

“It can be good news, but we really require more studies to prove that.”

Since the heavily mutated variant was first detected in Novem-

“What we are seeing now is....the decoupling between the cases and the deaths,” he said.

His remarks on the reduced risks of severe disease chime with other data, including a study from South Africa, which was one of the first countries where Omicron was detected.

However, Mahamud also sounded a note of caution, calling South Africa an “outlier” since it has a young population, among other



factors.

And he warned that Omicron's high transmissibility meant it would become dominant within weeks in many places, posing a threat to medical systems in countries where a high proportion of the population remains unvaccinated.

### VACCINATION, NOT VACCINES, ARE THE CHALLENGE

While Omicron seemed to be slipping past antibodies, evidence was emerging that COVID-19 vaccines still provided some protection, by eliciting a second pillar of the immune response from T-cells, Mahamud said.

"Our prediction is protection against severe hospitalization and death (from Omicron) will be maintained," he said, saying this also applied to vaccines developed by Sinopharm and Sinovac that are used in China, where Omicron cases remain very low.

"The challenge has not been the vaccine but the vaccination and reaching those vulnerable populations."

Asked about whether an Omicron-specific vaccine was needed, Mahamud said it was too early to say but voiced doubts and stressed

that the decision required global coordination and should not be left to manufacturers to decide alone.

"You may go ahead with Omicron and put all your eggs in that basket and a new variant that is more transmissible or more immune-evasive

may appear," he said, adding that a WHO technical group had held recent meetings on vaccine composition.

The best way to reduce the impact of the variant would be to

As case numbers due to Omicron have soared, some countries, including the United States, have cut down isolation or quarantine periods in a bid to allow asymptomatic people to return to work or school.

Mahamud said that leaders should decide based on the strength of the local epidemic, saying Western countries with very high case numbers might consider trimming isolation periods to keep basic services functioning.

However, places that have largely shut it out would do better to maintain the full 14-day quarantine period.

"If your numbers are very small, you better be invested in keeping that number very, very low."

At a time when the number of infection related to Omicron is



meet the WHO's goal of vaccinating 70% of the population in each country by July, rather than offering third and fourth doses in some countries, he said.

rising, Ministry of Health and Population needs to take all necessary steps to fully prepare our health system to cope coming challenges of third wave.

# Booker Talliaferro Washington

(Born: April 5, 1856, Died: November 14, 1915)



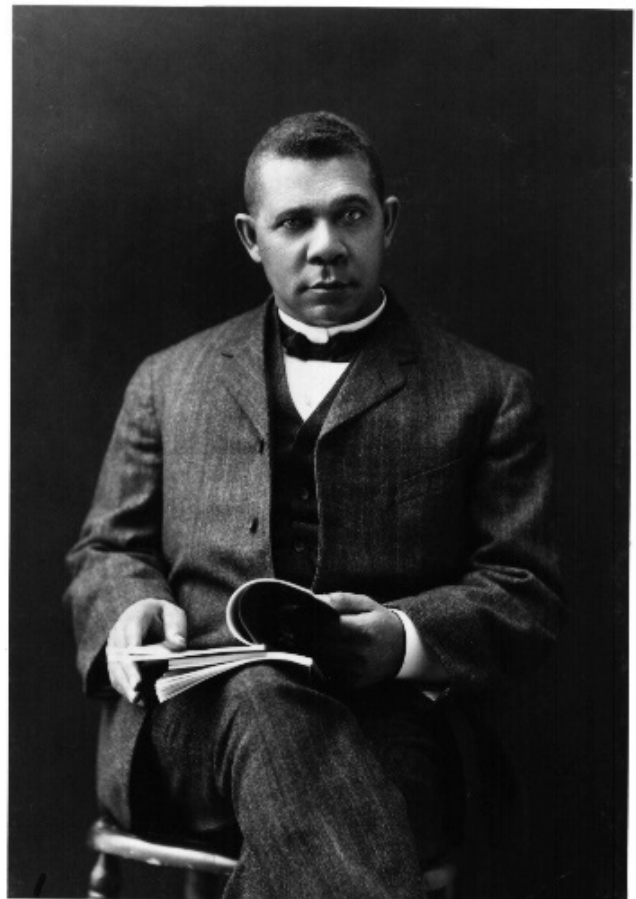
BY: SANTA BAHADUR PUN

**Writer's Note:** This is a follow-up to a good article by Dr. PB Nepali of Kathmandu University on Booker T Washington that was published by Spotlight on August 6, 2021. In an age raging with George Floyd, Black Lives Matter and in our own Nepal despite the abolishment of Kamalaris/Kamaiyas system the recent sad inter-caste clashes in the districts, the writer felt a short summary of Booker Washington's remarkable life will be of interest to Spotlight readers. The following is a summary of Booker's life from an excellent book *George Washington Carver – The Man Who Overcame* by Lawrence Elliott about Carver, another great Black American of that period.

*'Measure me not by the Heights to which I have climbed But the Depths from which I have come!'* – **Fredrick Douglass**, the first great spokesman of the Negro people, after the 1863 abolition of slavery in USA, who died in 1895 and the mantle of leadership fell on Booker T Washington.

Booker was born into slavery in 1856 on the Burroughs plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. His mother, Jane, was a cook in a 'big house' and of his father he only knew that he was a white man from some neighbouring plantation. Sometimes Booker was called up to the mansion to shoo away flies from the dining room. Even as a boy he was highly valued - assessed by a court at \$400! Each Sunday his mother was permitted to take home some molasses for her three children. Home was a fourteen by sixteen cabin in the slave quarter with earthen floor and no windows. For Booker, raised on corn bread and fat pork daily, that piece of molasses was heart-stopping treat. He was not yet ten when the Civil War ended in 1865 and the slaves were freed. He remembers an army officer, standing on the verandah of the colonnaded white house, reading to the assembled Negroes US President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation<sup>1</sup>. 'You are free' the officer said and Booker felt his mother's tears as she stooped to

kiss him. There were tumult, songs and great shouts of rejoicing long into the night. Only later were they to realize and ponder: *where to go, how to live, where would their food come from, and who would take care of their old folks?* Washington later wrote *'In a few hours, the*



Booker T. Washington, circa 1903 (Courtesy Library of Congress, American Memory Project)



## PROFILE

great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to be solved. **'Four million souls had been flung into a strange and alien liberty without money, homes, jobs or votes.** Free for what? Washington clearly saw, **'To vie with their one time white masters!'** To them Booker T Washington devoted his life, struggling to make meaningful this new-found freedom, to put into unskilled black hands the tools of learning and enterprise and opportunity. His incredible journey from slavery to the Hall of Fame began in 1865. In Malden, close to Charleston, his mother's husband, Washington Ferguson (*Booker's stepfather*), sent nine year old Booker and his brother to work in salt furnaces. For seven years Booker scooped and packed salt and hacked coal in the dark mine bottom. With hunger to read and write, he scrambled his way to a rudimentary education. Nearly everything he read and heard told him that the **Negro race was the lowest and most hopeless of God's creatures.**

In 1872 having heard about a School for Negroes in a place called Hampton Institute near Norfolk, Booker travelled 500 miles across the civil war-torn Virginia – begging for rides and walking. Working as a janitor to pay his way, he graduated in 1875 and returned to Malden to teach the School there. Four years later, Booker went back to Hampton to take a teaching post. In May 1881 his school principal, General Samuel C Armstrong received an urgent request from a group of people in Tuskegee, deep in the *'black belt'* of Alabama but home also of the staunch racist Confederates, for a white teacher for a School for Negroes that the Legislature had authorized. Tuskegee was a little town of 1,000 whites and 1,000 Negroes. WF Foster, a former Confederate officer, an aspirant to the State Legislature asked Lewis Adams, once a slave, what his people wanted for their support. Adams, a skilled metal worker, asked for a Negro training School. Colonel Foster was elected<sup>2</sup> to the State Senate and a bill authorized the establishment of a Normal School for coloured teachers. General Armstrong replied that he had no white teacher for that post but recommended an eminently suited coloured man. Three days later a telegram to General Armstrong said *'Booker T Washington will suit us. Send him at once.'*

Washington came to Tuskegee in June 1881. His School consisted of a leaky Methodist Church building about to collapse and a more worse nearby

**Washington came to Tuskegee in June 1881. His School consisted of a leaky Methodist Church building about to collapse and a more worse nearby shanty**

shanty. There were no books, no slates, no desks and no students. Though disillusioned, he was not baulked. Two days later he borrowed a mule and wagon and set out to learn what he could about the Tuskegee people and their needs. He met an old grizzled man who related him about being sold into slavery. To Washington's query *'How many of them were sold?'* *'Five'* was the reply. *'Myself, brother and three mules!'* The School started at the dilapidated church on July 4, 1881. There were

30 pupils most of them older than the 25 year old teacher himself. Late that year, Washington heard of a 100 acres of abandoned plantation about a mile north of town that could be purchased for \$500. The land was arid, bare with four ruined buildings. But Washington now had 50 students and he dreamt of 50 times that number. So he

wrote to General Armstrong begging for a loan which he promised to pay back. The money came by return mail. Only days later, the teacher and students were swarming through the plantation cabin, kitchen, stable and hen house hammering, scrubbing, whitewashing. A new teacher, Miss Olivia A Davidson, who was to become Washington's wife, undertook to raise money to pay back the awesome debt. She organized festivals, concerts and suppers among the community to raise money. People offered gifts according to their means. One day an old coloured lady hobbled up to Washington and **putting six eggs on his desk said 'I have no money. But I want you to take this toward the learning of the young 'uns.'** Within five months, the entire \$500 was repaid.

To most students, swinging an axe and ploughing the fields was not the education they had envisioned. They were all suffused<sup>3</sup> with the idea that learning would free them from toil and hard physical labour. That Schooling would make them escape from such toils. But when Washington, the principal, strode out among them with an axe on his shoulder and wielded it with vigour, the students' mutterings died away. It was **a graphic lesson in the Dignity of Labour– the basic tenet Tuskegee Institute would grow and flourish on.** Washington taught them to wash, plough and plant **aiming to turn out not Scholars but teachers and technicians and competent farmers.** In the next 15 years, 40 buildings were erected, all but four by student labour. Washington travelled widely for his School's funds and at the same time addressing for a better understanding between the white and coloured races. When Frederick Douglass, the first great spokesman of the Negro people died in

1895, the mantle of leadership fell on the shoulders of the slave boy who had fought his way up from the deepest darkness.

That same year in 1895, Washington was invited to speak at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition. This Exposition was to demonstrate to all that the onetime Confederacy had come back from Civil War devastation. King Cotton was back on the throne ready to do business with the Northern merchants and foreign mills. But there still were diehards who cried ***‘To permit a Negro on the same platform with Southern leaders was to confess to the world that the blacks and whites were equal after all.’*** At the International Exposition auditorium, Washington told them the parable of a ship lost at sea with its crew dying of thirst. Sighting another ship, the unfortunate crew hoisted a signal for water and the answer came back, *‘Cast down your bucket.’* Again and again they hoisted their pleas and the reply was the same, *‘Cast down your bucket where you are.’* The exasperated Captain finally ordered a bucket down over the side – and up came the sparkling fresh water! The distressed ship was at rest in the great mouth of the Amazon River. Washington continued *‘Cast down your bucket where you are, among the 8 million Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested. Cast down your bucket among these people who tilled your fields, cleared your forests, built your railroads and cities. In all things social we can be as separate<sup>4</sup> as the fingers’* – so saying he indicated the fingers of his raised open brown hand and then dramatically closing them into a fist, he roared ***‘Yet One as a Hand in all Things Essential – to Mutual Progress!’***

The audience roared its approval and Washington’s speech turned out to be the high point of the Exposition and his speech there was later also known as the Atlanta Compromise. Overnight Washington became one of the most famous men of the land. The problems and yearnings of his people were understood as never before. But many of his own race jeered him as *‘Uncle Tom’* charging Washington with betrayal of the Negro’s social and political claims.

Somewhere he had heard that there was a noted agriculturist, a coloured man, working at the Agricultural School at Ames in Iowa. George Washington Carver

had just received his master’s degree in agriculture and was working at that School. On April 1, 1896 Washington sat down to write him a letter:

*I cannot offer you money, position or fame. The first two you have. The last, from the place that you now occupy, you will no doubt achieve. These things I now ask you to give up. I offer you in their place work – hard, hard work – the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty and waste to full manhood.*

Four days later George W Carver read the letter. In addition to accepting Tuskegee’s offer of an annual salary of \$1500, Carver replied *‘To this end, I have been preparing myself for these many years ..... that this line of education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people.’* And in October 1896, the Tuskegee Institute paper reported that the new Agricultural Department would be headed by a Mr. George Washington Carver<sup>5</sup>, en route from Iowa.

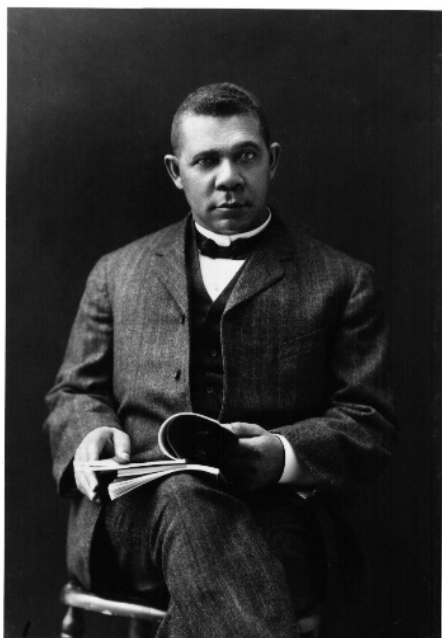
In October 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker Washington for dinner at the White House. This aroused intense anger and uproar in the South. While Democratic Party politician from Mississippi James K Vardaman described the White House as being *‘saturated with the odour of the nigger’*, South Carolina’s Senator Benjamin Tillman from the same Party made far harsher racist remarks *‘The action of*

*President Roosevelt in entertaining that nigger will necessitate our killing a thousand nigger in the South before they will learn their place again.’* Washington never responded directly to such racist remarks of his critics, whether white or black. He was a true

**On the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1915, Washington spoke in New Haven – his favourite subject, as usual, was race tolerance – and almost immediately, he fell ill. Still he insisted on going on to New York. But there were to be no more speeches for him.**

apostle of tolerance between the blacks and whites. For Washington, the burning question of the time, so well uttered by the two politicians of the South, was **whether the black man was actually a human being or not.**

Pressed and burdened with such environment, Washington, unable to find rest, would sometimes in the middle of night knock at George Carver’s door and apologetically say *‘I thought perhaps you would like to take a walk.’* Invariably Carver would quickly dress and hurry out to join the principal. Carver well knew the heavy weight that Washington alone was carrying. The



two, though highly diverse in personality and talent, had the same vision – *dedicated totally to the cause of uplifting their people.*

On the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1915, Washington spoke in

New Haven – his favourite subject, as usual, was race tolerance – and almost immediately, he fell ill. Still he insisted on going on to New York. But there were to be no more speeches for him. Days later, he collapsed and was rushed to a hospital where doctors told him he might live only a few hours. Gasping for voice, Washington told his friend, Robert Russa Moton, who succeeded him as President of Tuskegee: *'Take me home. I was born in the South. I have lived and laboured in the South and I wish to die and be buried in the South.'*<sup>6</sup> He was carried to the train and returned to his Tuskegee School in Alabama. On the morning of November 14<sup>th</sup> 1915, Washington breathed his last and his body was laid to rest on a little rise of ground at the School – now the Tuskegee University. When Booker Washington died in 1915, Tuskegee owned more than 100 well-equipped buildings with about 1,500 students learning 38 trades and professions and had an endowment of approximately \$2 million.

(Endnotes)

1 This Emancipation Proclamation was made on January 1, 1863. Three years earlier in 1860, Britain had already abolished slavery in India introducing the Indian Penal Code which not only abolished slavery but made enslavement of human beings a criminal offence. **Slavery in Jung Bahadur Rana's 1854 Mulki Ain** contain interestingly detailed separate chapters dealing with: *punishment of slaves for having sexual relationship, punishment to those who assist the slaves to run away, norms to be applied when selling off slaves, what to do when the mother slave is separated from her children during her owner's family partition and even on keeping the female slave as*

*wife by the owner.* As slavery had been abolished in India, it was but natural for many Nepalese slaves to run away to India for refuge. So in 1868 Jung conveniently clamped a bill that freed only those slaves, who ran away from their owners, to Naya Muluk (*Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke and Bardiya districts*) and Morang/Jhapa – vast birtas owned by Jung families and his ruling coterie who required cheap labour to till them! We should also remember that though slavery was abolished as early as 1860 in India, the ingenious ruler coining the term *'indented labour'* exported hundred of thousands of poverty-ridden Indians to the colonial sugar farms of Mauritius, British Guyana, West Indies, Fiji and South Africa. Similarly in Nepal, after kamara/slavery was abolished in 1925, the ingenious rulers introduced the **kamaiyas/kamalaris** system to tend to their comforts. It is very strange that the kamaras/kamaiyas/kamalaris, that has haunted Nepal to this day, has failed to attract the attention of Nepalese researchers. The kamaras, Malati/Mangale, appeared on the musical drama only in BS 2042 after Madhav Prasad Ghimire wrote it in BS 2039.

- 2 Colonel Foster's political career was brief. Goaded as a *'nigger-lover'*, he was swept away from office in the next election.
- 3 Unfortunately, such concepts, totally bereft of the **Dignity of Labour**, continue to still pervade our Schools and Colleges of Nepal!
- 4 Sadly, even the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nepalese leaders still fail to see this **Strength in Nepal's Diversity** – diversity in ethnic races. Prithwi Narayan Shah in his Dibya Upadesh called Nepal *'Char Jat, Chhattis Varna ko Fulbari'*! However, Jung's 1854 Mulki Ain forgot the *'chhattis varna'* and preferred to limit Nepal only to *'Char Jat'*!
- 5 Carver taught at the Tuskegee Institute for 47 years till his death in 1943. Like Booker Washington, Carver became internationally known for his work at Tuskegee. Presidents, princes and even Mahatma Gandhi were in touch with him. Thomas Edison invited Carver to come and work in his Edison laboratories at Menlo Park, New Jersey at a minimum salary of \$ 100,000/. Carver thanked Edison but did not accept the offer. He was still working at an annual salary of \$1,500. Later when someone, having heard of Edison's offer, queried *'But if you had all that money, you could help your people.'* Carver replied *'If I had all that money I might forget about my people!'*
- 6 Not unlike what the cancer-ridden terminally ill Dr Upendra Devkota did. When his treatment in Britain failed, Dr. Devkota returned to Kathmandu as he wanted to die in Nepal. His last wish was to do what he used to do in his boyhood: drink the sparkling water from the *'dhunge dhara'* of his native Boharagaon in Gorkha. Having fulfilled that wish, Dr. Devkota passed away on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018.



# Nepal's Stock Market And Economic Growth: Politicians' Sayings and Impact!



BY: SHANKER MAN SINGH

Some political parties and investors have objected to the offensive remarks made by the top political leadership, which are considered to be the most sensitive sector of the economy, to provoke the capital market and send the wrong message to the market. After this statement, the capital market NEPSE index has gradually declined. The Chairman of the CPN-Maoist Center has recently clarified that it is very correct to call the capital market a developed form of imperialism.

Prachanda's secretariat said on social media Twitter that the theoretical issue raised by Chairman Prachanda about the capital market was correct. However, we would like to make it clear that the party will take conscious initiative and make efforts to protect the investment of investors in the current Nepali capital and stock market, and also to protect the interests of even smaller investors. 'In principle, the stock market promotes economic growth by increasing investment levels and productivity. They increase the savings rate and also increase the efficient distribution of savings. As a result, more savings go to the corporate sector and economic growth is expected.

There is a positive correlation between stock market growth and economic growth, but in between, sometimes open questions arise. Just to reiterate, stock markets in Asian, African and European countries were at risk as a result of the 2008 global financial crisis, and the negative impact of economic growth was worrisome. Why did the share market rise even when the real economy of Nepal was weak in the past? One factor is almost obvious: the stock market has a relatively large impact on small businesses and low-income service businesses. Looking at the stock market, for example, optimism about the successful use, arrival, and radically improved testing and treatment options for effective Covid-19 vaccines could boost current stock prices.

According to some investors, this is a good sign if investors are consciously reducing their attachment to politics. The stock market is affected not only by politics but also by other policy decisions around the world. However, the recurring political instability in Nepal has had an im-

mediate effect on the stock market, but political parties should take the rising stock market as a message from investors to politicians.

Although the situation between politics and the economy in Nepal is not so comfortable, the situation in the stock market seems to have created such a situation in recent months. Similarly, investment in the share market has increased due to the accumulation of investable funds in banks and financial institutions due to lack of demand from the private sector and also due to cheap interest rates and increase in interest rates.

Just as the stock market rises when interest rates rise and the stock market falls when interest rates fall, the relationship between interest rates and the stock market is always reversed. It is not clear if low interest rates in the market are right in expecting a never ending continuation.

However, long-term adverse supply effects, especially "globalization", could lead to long-term structural changes as global demand improves. But what does the rise or fall of the stock market do? Differences in economic growth?

The general public, unaware of the stock market, considers the stock market a casino. It occupies such an influential place in the economic theory of production and distribution that it is natural to have at least an equally important place in the theory and practice of economic development.

From a historical or analytical or policy point of view, it is Emphasis on savings and capital markets can also be described as management and supply of capital.

It has been pointed out that it will be easier for the economy to grow. The relationship between the above-mentioned economic growth process and the process of capital accumulation has led to earlier theories of economic development, and the work of modern economists is also expected to be limited to whether capital is sufficient.

Higher rates of capital formation generally lead to faster growth in production and income, but additional capital formation does not provide the same momentum in productivity growth. It has also had a profound effect on

## VIEWPOINT

the way it is used in the capital markets. The capital market is important for all financial instruments, be it short term or long term or commercial, industrial and government financial instruments. Capital market refers to all the institutions and medium and long term fund raising mechanisms through various means available in stocks, debentures, bonds, etc. In these markets, both private sector and public sector corporates raise billions of rupees.

Major components of the capital market are stock exchanges, banks, investment funds and companies, specialized financial institutions or development banks, mutual funds, savings banks, non-banking financial institutions, etc.

In addition, the establishment of the Nepal Stock Exchange has brought about significant changes in the functioning of Nepal's capital markets, especially since the liberalization policy adopted in the 1990's and the automation of trade and operation of the central depository system a few years ago.

The rise in Nepal's stock market, which reached record highs, was also sustained few days back. The Nepse index, which measures the stock market, has increased significantly and the transaction amount has also increased. Meanwhile, the Securities and Exchange Board of Nepal (SEBON) has stated that the participation of investors in the share market has increased significantly as more than 85 percent of the transactions are done through Nepse's online trading system.

According to the board, there are more than four million investors in the primary market of securities due to the development of the securities market and the reforms done by the board, which is about 14 percent of the total population. It is our tradition that the government does not interfere in monetary policy. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that small investors have access to credit in the stock market, on the one hand some people earn billions by investing bank money in the stock market and on the other hand small investors are not deceived.

Statistics are still awaited on how many ordinary investors got loans after the introduction of the 4-12 policy and how effective the policy was. It must be public. Calling the stock market an evolutionary form of imperialism without taking into account the effect of its expression on the psychology of the market may be the product of the thinking of a person with a high political leadership and the organization he leads, but it must be pre-evaluated to see how it affects the investor.

The capital market has to move at its own pace and speed without any external influence and if the market

crashes, it will have a profound effect on many other sectors and the economy will fall into a vicious cycle.

In the current context, it is important for communist leaders to study the background of Deng Xiaoping's path to power in China from 1978 to 1989, how he developed capitalism, and how China has become the world's second largest economy. It is well known that the Chinese capital market has played a major role in bringing China to where it is today.

China's stock exchange is one of the 'best equipped' and most sophisticated in the world. Recognizing capital, Deng led the country into a capitalist system during his 11-year leadership. Even if you look at another neighboring country, India, its capital market provides 'capital supply' for new companies to come. A new company has to come, that needs money, raises that money from the capital market. By mobilizing that capital, it produces, creates employment, earns income, pays taxes on it, and receives revenue for the government. This is just

a representative example of how the capital market has a multidimensional effect on the economy. The capital market is about making money by using computers in the room and robbing the little ones, which is completely wrong. But it is also a means of capital formation and value creation for the economic

development of the nation.

The capital market is affected by the information, the financial condition of the company, the economic condition of the country, the political reasons and the market condition. Therefore, the capital market is largely 'predictable'.

The former governor of Nepal Rastra Bank says, "As a communist, the remarks are not wrong. Because that's how communists view the capital market. The communists have to look at capital with many comments, brokers and imperialists."

At present, the state has control over the interest rate (done by the National Bank). That too when the government was led by the pro-open market economy Nepali Congress. Everything has to be controlled, everything has to be in the hands of the state.

The Finance Minister has called upon the share investors to invest by choosing a company that will provide long-term benefits. The Finance Minister has encouraged the investors to invest by recognizing the company. He urges to leave the responsibility of making share market friendly policy. As a result, investors are compelled to expect a positive message in the capital market and full implementation of policy, direction of action, etc.

***Prachanda's secretariat said on social media Twitter that the theoretical issue raised by Chairman Prachanda about the capital market was correct.***

# Reason, Philosophy And Religion



BY: PROF. DR. AKAL BHADUR SINGH

Reason usually means rational intellect or the logical faculty of mind which deals with the chain of events leading from cause to effect. It constitutes the sovereign faculty of mind. *“Reason is undoubtedly the highest developed faculty of man. It is the sovereign, the governing and self-governing faculty in the complexities of our human existence. It is concerned only with the particular action and does not look at other actions and forces”* - **Sri Aurobindo**. Reason is thus limited but it finds justification in what it does. It is then subject to our interests such as needs, prejudices, opinions etc., each of which is imprinted in our mind as preferred idea. But preferred ideas are the ideas we have cast into the mould of some particular ideas that have particular meaning. In other words, we deny or suppress all other ideas that are not useful for pursuing the particular idea. This makes our life limited because the preferred ideas are themselves limited.

Reason does upgrade itself through a chain of thoughts and experiences in an ascending order. So it is an unavoidable companion in our search of truth, but the reality is neither thought nor experience gained through thoughts. The reality can be had through wisdom of knowledge, but the transition from the one to the other is not simple evolution but an evolutionary leap; so one cannot make the final jump on the strength of reason alone. The journey ahead is taken up by our spiritual nature that pushes us towards the highest. But one has to understand that the common understanding that the relation between reason and spirit is antagonistic, hostile and that they have no point of contact is not correct. The fact is: there is a gap between the domain of reason and what lies above it. Since the reality is beyond the reach of simple intellectual comprehension, reason must be transcended by a combination of philosophical vision and religious insight.

It is true that the intellectual reason is neither the only nor the best means of knowledge, although it is most convincing. Other instruments of knowledge such as sensations, feelings, imaginations, intuitions are also important but each of them is concerned only with the particular action and does not look at other actions and force. For

example, feelings exist for themselves and come to the surface without our asking. Although they are not rational and self-coordinating, they represent a force that can influence the way we behave, and make us more mature. Therefore, none of them is to be excluded; they have to be lifted up out of their imperfection and made the instrument of light, power and joy. For example, it is often through feelings that reason sees its limitations and grows to its higher levels. Intellectual reason is upgraded by intuition as it cannot go beyond its limit. Intellectual reason is critical rather than creative so it has to be surpassed and left behind when it leads to dead end. This we do when we are creative because reason can construct but cannot create.

The quality of all creation is best when it is least touched by intellectuality. A poet creates his poetry best when he frees himself from the burden of thinking or weaving his words into poetry. The beauty of his poetry flows out of the inner stillness, out of no thoughts. *“The creation of beauty in poetry and arts does not fall within the sovereignty or even within the sphere of the intellect/reason”* - **Sri Aurobindo**. The intellect is not the poet, nor the creator. But whatever the limitations of these other faculties *“they still are the hidden actions of the universal Knowledge-Will”* - **Sri Aurobindo**. But the problem is that they are beyond the reach of intellectual comprehension. While reason can turn upon itself, can stand back from itself and analyze itself and, most importantly, disengage itself from its work, none of the other faculties can do this, although these other faculties are much subtler and deeper than those of physical nature. There is, therefore, a greater and larger truth than reason.

The faculty of reason has been used most proficiently by science, and science has made our life more comfortable and enjoyable materially. But reason/science, philosophy and religion are interrelated in such a way that each of them becomes more effective when it works in conjunction with the other two. Reason is best helped out when philosophy and religion work together and transcend reason firstly because philosophy in the East is spiritual. We have to recognize that science, philosophy and religion are



## OPINION

all evolving because of the synergy associated with their interrelationship, although the essence of religion may not change as fast. Now a scientist can no longer observe the phenomena without taking part in the unfolding of that phenomenon. He has to be the subject as well as the object of his study, and when he becomes the subject of his study, for example science, he will use science as the science for understanding. Science is no longer value-free as was considered a few centuries ago. Science can no longer work without taking recourse to philosophy, to intuition and even to feeling. As rightly said by **Einstein** “science can only complete itself by becoming philosophy”. Science has now to transcend its rational boundary and extended its boundary well into the sphere of intuition and philosophic wisdom.

The realization that subject and the object cannot be separated from one another widened the scope both of religion and philosophy. The philosophers and scientists, starting with the eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophers who were somehow influenced by Eastern thought, realized that they cannot do away with subjective experiences, - which the previous scientists and philosophers termed as mere subjective impressions. This can be considered as an important paradigm shift in the history of Western science and philosophy. While science is not anti-religious in the East, it is not necessarily so in the West as shown by the history of the crusaders. One of the reasons is that religion in the East is not based entirely on faith alone. It depends on the dynamic relationship between faith and the quality of lived experience which does not depend on rational analysis alone but more on the internal experience gained through direct experience which includes intuitive experiences as well as religious disposition. But experience shows that faith is cumulative and so is the relationship between faith and personal experience. While philosophers in the East are also spiritual, philosophers in the West have tried to explain the phenomena more from a rationalistic point of view. But as a result of inter-mingling of Eastern and Western thoughts, particularly in matters related to the role of intuition, Western philosophers, **Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer** and a few others made significant contribution in making clear the role of reason, philosophy and religion. **Kant**, for example, made a clear distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself or the ultimate truth, but most of the Western philosophers thought that nobody can discover the ultimate truth and that nobody is likely to discover it because of the inherent human limitations, and thus stopped short of realizing the Truth, and could not tell

how to move from idea to action.

According to the **Eastern** philosophy, a stream of thought originates from different sources and the problem that seems almost insurmountable in the West finds a deceptively easy answer in the East without being caged in one's own words and without straining one's mind too far. Knowledge flows freely and spontaneously from within; from the higher to the lower. As said by **Radhakrishnan**: *The whole course of Hindu philosophy is a continuous affirmation of the truth that insight into reality does not come through analytical intellect, though it is accessible to the human mind in its integrality.*

Note that the greatest achievements we have made are not through science and technology, but more through the achievements made in the field of art, culture, sculpture, aesthetics, philosophy and religion. We have achieved unprecedented achievements in the field of material life, in the field of science and technology, but the achievements made in the field of inner development are more important and far reaching. Although science has proved to be an efficient tool and guide for our outer existence, it is an insufficient guide for our existence as soul because it is basically scientific/rationalistic, economic and utilitarian which are exactly the attributes required for material existence.

The life of reason and intellect thus stands between our material existence and inner reality because we do not realize that we have to leave the intellect behind as we leave the boat behind once we cross the river. The limitations of reason become obvious when it is confronted with the truths of our psychological experiences which are beyond the reach of rational analysis but are within the grasp of higher faculties i.e. insight, intuition and intuitive discernment. Psychological experiences are as real as any other mundane experience, but the problem is that we do not understand the significance of psychological experience unless we assimilate them internally, but when we do it we transcend the rationalistic intellectual reason. This leads to psychological transformation of our life which materializes when we transcend the limitations of our mental attributes and use their positive aspects to enhance the quality of our inner life.

Perhaps the most difficult task reason has to accomplish is to differentiate between the Finite and the Infinite as illustrated by **Plotinus**. **M. J. Eastcott**, too has expressed the difficulty in a similar vein:

*“You ask how we can know the Infinite. I answer not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The Infinite, therefore, cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty*

*superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are no longer your finite self—in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness. Like only can comprehend like; when you thus cease to be finite you become one with the Infinite.*

The inmost essence of religion is the search for God and finding God. It is finding the intimate relationship between man and God, and be at one with God. It is the journey from matter to spirit. In the East, philosophy is necessarily spiritual; it elevates us above the material world and makes us superior to circumstances, but it always works in collaboration with intellectual reason, because it proceeds from facts of experience. It acts as the connecting link between the rational mind and its spiritual content. Philosophy and spirituality are interrelated in a way as are theory and practice. While philosophy provides an approach to spiritual realization, it is not the ultimate realization. Therefore, it does not, by itself, provide the true knowledge. It cannot take us there, but it can show us the way. As said by **Radhakrishnan**: “*Philosophy is only the lover of wisdom and not its possessor. It is not the end of the voyage that matters, but the voyage itself. To travel is a better thing than to arrive*”.

This limitation of philosophy has also been highlighted by **Sri Aurobindo**: “*Even the highest philosophizing cannot give a true inner knowledge, it is not the spiritual light, does not open the gates of experience. All it can do is to address the consciousness of man through his intellect and, when it has done, to say, “I have tried to give you the truth in form and system which will make it intelligible and possible to you; if you are intellectually convinced or attracted, you can now seek the real knowledge, but you must seek it by other means which are beyond my province”*”. In fact, what philosophers do is to explain the *thing* through words, ideas, symbols, images etc, but none of them represents the reality. The objective is to be at one with the reality which is beyond the scope of philosophy. Religion has then to proceed ahead without the help of philosophy.

The truth embodied in genuine psychological and/or religious experiences is thus not a mere philosophical construct or a psychological solace. Spiritual philosophy shows the path, but one has to walk along the path individually. But “*the Self cannot be realized except by those whom the Self chooses*” —**Radhakrishnan**. Truth is often realized by way of revelation or through illuminations which can happen singly or through a combina-

tion of revelations, insights, intuitions and/or intuitive discernment. Of these, revelations constitute a special type of grace from above. Although revelations are not totally unconnected with insights and intuition, they help us more to see the truth rather than think about it. The resulting realization makes it easier for us to comprehend the potential as beyond intellectual comprehension.

Our upward journey proceeds first by the laws of reason. Philosophy leads us further along the path but the knowledge so gained is not the whole truth. Intellectual illumination, revelations, insights and intuitions are the faculties that help us to move on and step into the territory of inner experience. The spiritual journey moves ahead from reason to intuition and then to higher levels of our existence through transformation of our mental attributes i.e. emotions, feelings, opinions, prejudices etc. Religion comes to our aid as it is only through the act of living into life that we can fully *utilize* the positive and negative aspects of our mental attributes; *transcend* them when needed, and *know* their spiritual aspects, and finally *use* them for the greater good. *It is the intimate relation between philosophy and religion that makes both of them alive, dynamic and real, -Radhakrishnan.*

Both philosophy and religion can transcend reason, but the faculty of reason needs special treatment. Reason is the sovereign faculty for our material existence related to our vital and mental life, but it often

becomes a hurdle for our spiritual existence which cannot be limited to the satisfaction of the gross needs or to the vital urge of Nature. The purpose of life should be founded on the spiritual force which is beyond the grasp of rational mentality.

It is now universally acknowledged that human progress towards its final destination i.e. Sat-Chit-Ananda is a must, and is in progress. This progression is often characterized as integration of body, mind and spirit or of science, philosophy and religion. Of these, philosophy and religion constitute the most important means of this progression, but we cannot leave out its base i.e. science by which we often mean the reasoning intellect. From this point of view it seems most appropriate to conclude this chapter with the wordings of **Sri Aurobindo**. *Science takes possession of the measures and utilities of force; rational philosophy pursues reason to its last subtleties; but inspired philosophy and religion can seize hold of the highest secret, uttamam rahasyam.*

*Prof. Dr. Singh was one of the founding Pragma in the old pre-1990 RONAST. Recently he has been spending much of his time thinking about the relationship between science and spirituality.*

**Reason does upgrade itself through a chain of thoughts and experiences in an ascending order. So it is an unavoidable companion in our search of truth, but the reality is neither thought nor experience gained through thoughts.**



## आगो वा हिटर प्रयोगमा होसियारी अपनाऔं ।

- झ्याल, ढोका थुनेर आगो वा हिटर नबालौं,
- सुत्ने बेला बालेको आगो वा हिटर निभाऔं,
- आगो वा हिटर बालबालिकाको पहुँचभन्दा पर राखौं,
- हावाको उचित ओहोरदोहोर हुनेगरी मात्र आगो वा हिटर बालौं,
- सकेसम्म बाथरूममा ग्यास गिजरको प्रयोग नगरौं । गर्ने परेमा भेन्टिलेसन खुला राखौं ।

झ्यालढोका थुनेर आगो वा हिटर प्रयोग गर्दा अक्सिजनको कमी हुन गई ज्यान जान सक्दछ ।



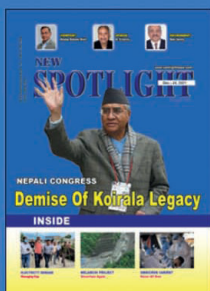
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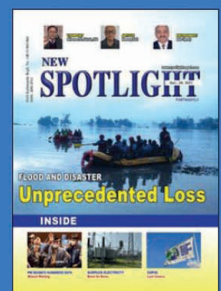
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