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**VIEWPOINT**  
Binoj Basnyat



**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**FORUM**  
Dr. Prabin Manandhar

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Feb.- 04, 2022

FORTNIGHTLY

**KUL MAN GHISING**

# Rush Hour

## INSIDE



**LOCAL ELECTIONS**  
Goal Is Not Poll



**CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE (CVA)**  
Relief, Respect & Dignity



**MELAMCHI DRINKING WATER**  
Renovation Begins

HBL

साना तथा  
मझौला  
उद्यम कर्जा



# व्यवसाय गर्न सिप र मेहेनत चाहिन्छ, पैसा हामी दिन्छौं

हिमालयन बैंकको 'साना तथा मझौला उद्यम कर्जा' सुविधा

अधिकतम १२ वर्षका लागि **१ करोड सम्म** सरल, सहज रुपमा पाईने 'साना तथा मझौला उद्यम कर्जा' सुविधा लिई आफ्नो सिप र मेहेनतलाई सफल व्यवसाय निर्माण गर्न प्रयोग गर्नुहोस् ।

विस्तृत जानकारीको लागि नजिकको शाखा वा फोन नं ४२२७७४९/४२४६२१८ मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस् ।

\*शतहर लागू हुनेछन् ।

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Himalayan Bank (Viber)

QR SCAN  
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DETAILS.





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Following a constitutional and legal debate over whether to hold the local level elections in April or to hold the elections in November simultaneously with central and provincial level, a high level committee meeting of five party ruling alliance has directed the government to hold the elections from the last week of May. As per the direction of the ruling alliance, the government led by prime minister Deuba is taking initiatives to hold the elections on the stipulated date. As there is ambiguity over the legal and constitutional provisions, the ruling party alliance also directed the government to bring a bill to amend the local level act in tune with the spirit of the constitution. Despite the direction to hold the election in due time, it will much depend now upon main opposition CPN-UML which has been obstructing the House of Representatives over the last seven months. For the amendment of the law, CPN-UML needs to allow the House to continue its functions. Given its dispute with current alliance, UML is unlikely to change its stand. We have decided to look at what will be the political scenario and possibility of holding the local elections in the end of May as our second focus story. However, the cover story will look into the entire electricity scenario in NEA following the appointment of Kul Man Ghising. For almost seven months after disruption, the work for the renovation of damaged infrastructure has begun in Melamchi, with expectations to bring the water in Kathmandu in Nepal's New Year.

As Omicron variant of corona virus surges in Nepal, almost all staffs of New Spotlight magazine have also been infected by the virus. Taking precautions, all of us have had to go to 10 days of quarantine. Thus, we were unable to publish the last issue of New Spotlight. We apologize with our valued readers and customers. From now on, we will continue our regular issues as usual covering the contemporary topics.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

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# MIDDLE BHOTEKOSHI HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

(102 MW)

## *SALIENT FEATURES*

S. No.	Features	Description
1.	Location	Sindhupalchowk District
2.	Type of Project	Run-of-River
3.	Design flow	50.8 m <sup>3</sup> /sec
4.	Geology	Biotite schist, quartzite and siliceous dolomite
5.	Gross Head	235m
6.	Spillway Gate	10 m (w) x 7.4 m (h) & 3 Nos.
7.	Desanding Basin	100mlong Triple chamber
8.	Headrace Tunnel	7124 m long Inverted D shape
9.	Surge Tank	Restricted Orifice type
10.	Penstock	677m long Underground
11.	Powerhouse	Surface
12.	Installed Capacity	102 MW (3 x 34 MW)
13.	Annual Salable Energy	54 crore 20 lacs Units
14.	Transmission Line	4 km/220 kV

## हार्दिक अपिल

सिन्धुपाल्चोक जिल्लामा निर्माणाधीन जिल्लाकै सबैभन्दा ठूलो मध्य भोटेकोशी जलविद्युत आयोजना निर्माण कार्यमा सम्बन्धित सबै पक्षले आ-आफ्नो स्थानबाट आवश्यक सहयोग पुऱ्याई ऊर्जासंकट समाधानको राष्ट्रिय अभियानमा सहभागी भइदिनु हुन हार्दिक अनुरोध गर्दछौं ।



मध्य भोटेकोशी जलविद्युत कम्पनी लि.,  
महाराजगञ्ज, काठमाण्डौं ।  
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## NEWSNOTES

### India's 73rd Republic Day Celebrated In Kathmandu

The 73rd Republic Day of India was celebrated at the Embassy of India in Kathmandu on 26 January 2022. The celebrations began with hoisting of the national flag by Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra who then read out the message of the President of India on the occasion. The Ambassador felicitated war widows and next of kins of deceased soldiers by disbursing their dues of NRs. 6.35 crore and blankets.



The celebration was part of 'AzadiKaAmritMahotsav' which is an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate 75 years of India's independence and remarkable achievements by Indians in all spheres of human endeavour.

As part of the Mahotsav, many events will be held throughout the year and uptill August 2023. In order to mark India@75 milestone in Nepal, it is planned to inaugurate 75 development projects implemented with India's assistance across the provinces and districts of Nepal this year.

The Embassy will also be gifting 75 ambulances and school buses to various organizations and local authorities across Nepal.

The event was live streamed on Mission's social media handle.

### France And Italy Donate 1.3 Vaccines To Nepal

Consignments of 1.3 million COVID vaccines donated by France and Italy through COVAX arrive in Nepal. Consignments of 1.3 million vaccines sent by



France and Italy have arrived in Nepal. According to a press release issued by Team Europe, added to the 4.1 million vaccines sent by Germany, this brings the number of doses shared by EU member states to 5.4 million, half of the donated vaccines received in Nepal through the COVAX facility.

The French government has sent to Nepal 685,400 doses of Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca). France has made COVID-19 vaccine dose-sharing one of its priorities to accelerate worldwide equitable access to safe and efficient vaccines.

On this occasion, the French Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Ms Leela DEVARADJALOU noted that "France extends its solidarity to Nepal in the latter's fight to surmount this health crisis with the aim to help to expand global vaccine coverage". She highlighted the efficiency of working through multilateral platforms and of being part of the efforts of Team Europe which has pledged to donate in total 700 million doses worldwide by mid-2022. Last April, France was the first country to share vaccines through the COVAX facility, with a commitment to finance COVAX up to 200 million Euros. It has since then committed to donating extra 120 million doses by mid-2022. To date, France has donated more than 75 million doses, 47.4 million of which have already been delivered to recipient countries.

The vast majority of French donations are channelled through the COVAX facility, which brings together several key partners such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF to ensure efficient and equitable global allocation. France believes that a bilateral vaccine diplomacy is not a solution, only collective action can make a difference.

Another 663,600 doses of Vaxzevria have been donated by Italy, one of the first countries to support the creation of a multilateral mechanism to counter the COVID-19 pandemic and among the major contributors to the COVAX facility, with more than 385 million euro and 45 million doses of vaccines.

"Closing the vaccine gap is a moral imperative," said Ambassador of Italy to Nepal Vincenzo DE LUCA. "Italy has been at the forefront of the response to COVID-19 and is committed to further increase its efforts. We stand in solidarity with Nepal in the common fight against the virus".

EU Ambassador Nona Deprez said, "These vaccine donations by France and Italy today, and those donated earlier by Germany, are the embodiment of EU's friendship with Nepal. Together, Team Europe (the European Union, its institutions and all 27 Member States) has donated half of the 11 million vaccines shared so far via COVAX in Nepal. And we hope there is more to come!" This reflects EU's commitment for global solidarity and multilateral solutions, which was also displayed in EU's strong support of COVAX, the global vaccine alliance, with more than 3 billion euros.

Similarly on this occasion, Minister for Health

and Population Birodh Khatiwada, said: “On behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, I thank France and Italy for their donation of 1.3 million vaccines in this hour of need. This is an example of the friendship that exists between Nepal and the EU member states. As the entire world is grappling with the COVID crisis, a collective effort is the only solution. Together, we all will prevail.”

These donations are in addition to the medical equipment such as ventilators, masks, antigen test kits, spare parts for oxygen plants and the like donated by 14 EU Member States through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism when the second COVID wave hit Nepal in 2021.

**Nepal Government And JICA Sign Loan Agreement**

Government of Nepal and JICA signed a JPY 10 billion loan agreement to build a resilient society  
The Japan International Cooperation Agency



(JICA) signed a loan agreement with the Government of Nepal in Kathmandu to provide Japanese ODA loan of up to JPY 10 billion (equivalent to NPR 10.39 billion) for the Policy Loan for Economic Growth and Resilience. The agreement was signed with the condition of 40 years repayment and 10 years grace period with 0.01 % interest annually.

The Exchange of Notes regarding the assistance was signed between Madhu Kumar Marasini, Secretary, Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Government of Nepal (GON) and KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal on behalf of the Government of Japan (GOJ) in their respective offices.

Similarly, the Loan Agreement was signed between Iswori Prasad Aryal, Joint Secretary, International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division (IECCD), Ministry of Finance on behalf of GON and Ms. ASAKUMA Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Office on behalf of JICA in their respective workplaces.

The objective of the Policy Loan is to support

GON in reforming economic and financial policies and institutions, and strengthening domestic industrial base and social security for the poor and vulnerable by providing financial support. This Policy Loan will contribute to the achievement of SDGs Goals 1 (No poverty), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), and 10 (Reduced inequalities).

The Policy Loan is the first ODA Loan to be approved in six years for Nepal after Nagdhunga Tunnel Construction Project, and this is the first Program Loan provided to the country by JICA.

To increase the effectiveness, the Policy Loan is co-financing with the World Bank (WB)’s 150 Million USD Policy Lending signed on June 27, 2021. In addition, JICA has provided technical assistance to promote foreign direct investment to Nepal. This Policy Loan aims for synergies with the technical assistance to give momentum to improve an environment to invite foreign investment.

**China Hands Over Two Million Syringes As Grant To Nepal**

China has provided Nepal two million syringes as grant assistance.

The syringes will be used to vaccinate people against COVID-19. “China fully empathizes with Nepali people suffering from the recent pandemic. In light of the needs of Nepal, the Chinese Embassy in Nepal provided to Nepal two million syringes under grant, which have been delivered on January 22nd. With a view to helping Nepal in its fight against the pandemic and realizing its economic recovery, China will keep close co-



ordination with Nepal and provide assistance in anti-pandemic supplies within its capacity,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Nepal said in its press release.

China has been providing anti COVID vaccines to enable Nepal fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

## NEWSNOTES

### Nepal And Israel Establish a Joint Working Team

The Government of Nepal and the Government of



the State of Israel have decided to establish a Joint Working Team to prepare a bilateral agreement for sending Nepali nationals to work in construction sector in Israel.

The decision came after a constructive dialogue between Dr. Narayan Khadka, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal and Hanan Goder-Goldberger, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal.

According to a joint statement issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassy of Israel Kathmandu, the two sides also expressed satisfaction over the completion of all the necessary processes with regard to the selection of auxiliary workers in the care giving sector and announced that the first batch of 99 workers in this sector were leaving for Israel. More than 1000 workers selected for this category are scheduled to leave for Israel in coming weeks.

### Nepal Sends Over 14 Tonnes Of Humanitarian Assistance To Afghanistan

The Government of Nepal sent a chartered aircraft with humanitarian relief materials for the people of Afghanistan from the people of Nepal. The Humanitarian



Assistance containing medicines, garments, and household items was handed over by Sewa Lamsal, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal to Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan amid a brief program organized at the Kabul Airport.

Foreign Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka led the efforts in realizing the humanitarian assistance as a goodwill gesture of the people of Nepal. Economic hardship and harsh winter weather in Afghanistan necessitated humanitarian assistance and support from the international community to the people of Afghanistan.

Private sector apex bodies, organizations, and individuals including the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Nepal Chamber of Commerce, the Confederation of Nepalese Industries, Honorary Consular Corps- Nepal, Agrawal Sewa Kendra, and Himalaya Airlines extended their generous hands in support of the Mission.

At a press meet at the Tribhuvan International Airport before the chartered flight, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Narayan Khadka shared that the in-kind humanitarian assistance included medicine, clothes and utensils among others as per the list provided by the United Nations.

According to Minister Khadka, the in-kind assistance weighed over 14 tonnes except for food items. It is for the first time in the modern history of Nepal that the government provided humanitarian assistance to foreign countries in its own effort.

Minister Khadka viewed that the act had sent across the message that Nepal could provide humanitarian assistance to other countries in the event of disasters.

### Indian Embassy Observes World Hindi Day

The Embassy of India, Kathmandu organized World Hindi Day. After the first World Hindi Conference was organized in Nagpur, India on 10 January 1975, World Hindi Day is celebrated every year on 10 January in India and in various Indian Embassies and High Commissions abroad.

The program was presided over by the Head of Press, Information and Culture Wing Naveen Kumar, First Secretary. He shared the message given by the Prime Minister of India on the occasion.

Video message given by India's Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi on World Hindi Day was also shared with the audience. Senior Hindi litterateur of Nepal Ram Dayal Rakesh was the Chief Guest of the program and member of Pragya Parishad of Nepal Academy Prof. (Dr.) Usha Thakur was the Guest of Honour.

Three eminent poets Sudip Bhola, Vineet Pandey and Abhishek Tripathi were invited from India who enthralled the audience with their poetry recitation.



Twelve students from different schools of Kathmandu also recited Hindi poetry in the program. The students were given prizes by the Chief Guest for their excellent performances. The editor of the Hindi monthly magazine ‘The Public’, Veena Sinha’s book of Hindi short stories collection and ‘The Public’ magazine were released by the Chief Guest. Besides, a Hindi poetry collection of Nepal’s Hindi litterateur Karuna Jha was also released on the occasion.

**Rubin Museum Of Art, New York, To Return Wood Works To Nepal**

The Consulate General of Nepal, and the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, jointly announced the return of two art objects from Rubin’s permanent collection to Nepal.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Acting Consul General Bishnu Prasad Gautam, and Executive Director Dr. Jorrit Britschgi, on their respective behalf of the Government of Nepal, and the Rubin Museum of Art, at a ceremony organized at the Museum for this purpose.

The art works scheduled to return include upper section of a Frieze/Torana (17th century) and a Garland Bearing flying Apsara/Gandharva (14th century). The Tor-



na was lost from the main door of Yampi Mahavihara/I-Bahi, Patan, Lalitpur. According to the Museum officials, the

artwork arrived at the Museum in 2010. The work of flying Apsara is originally from Keshchandra Mahavihara, Itum Bahal, Kathmandu which was lost in 1999 and added to the Museum’s collection in 2003.

Receiving the art objects, the Acting Consul General remarked, “The proactive and warm response and thoughtful collaboration from the Rubin have positively contributed to Nepal’s national efforts to recover and reinstate the lost artifacts.”

He expressed deep gratitude to the Rubin Museum, its Executive Director, Board of Trustees, the Museum’s scholars and officials for their initiative and cooperation in returning these artifacts back to Nepal. He also appreciated the support received from media, civil society, and others in this endeavour.

**NA Peacekeeper Deployed Under UNIFIL Recognized**

The 62nd contingent of Barda Bahadur Battalion Peacekeeping Mission of the Nepali Army deployed in the UNIFIL Mission, Lebanon has succeeded in becoming the best among the other 10 nations deployed in the mission, reports The Rising Nepal.

UNIFIL Head of Mission/Force Commander Major General Stefano Del Col at Force Headquarters, Nakura, handed over the certificate and token of love for standing top among the other serving nations.

Since its deployment in the mission area, the Battalion has been carrying out its duty controlling the infection of COVID-19 and jabbing vaccines against the virus in all eight municipalities of its area of responsibility.

In addition to conducting effective public interest programmes such as the maintenance of fort and controlling border points in Lebanon, the construction of “agricultural ponds and public gardens” was completed in the local Blida Municipality with the largest investment of the Nepal Army so far.

In addition, for the first time in the history of the mission, the contingent, in a meaningful manner, facilitated the importation of olive oil production in the Lebanese-Israeli border area by learning from past experiences and coordinating with local authorities, Lebanese Armed Forces and other stakeholders to reduce potential risk.



## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Japan Provides Over 10 Billion Rupees To Nepal

Japan Provides 10 billion Yen to Nepal for Economic Growth and Resilience



The Government of Japan has decided to extend loan assistance of up to ten billion Japanese Yen (¥10,000,000,000), approximately NRs. 10.4 billion, to the Government of Nepal as a Policy Loan for Economic Growth and Resilience.

Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of

Japan to Nepal, and Madhu Kumar Marasini, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance have signed notes to this effect. Another set of Loan Agreements for implementing the project was signed by Ms. Asakuma Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, and Ishwori Prasad Aryal, Joint Secretary, the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance.

This Loan aims for supporting the Government of Nepal in its reform program through cofinancing with the Nepal Programmatic Fiscal Policy for Growth, Recovery and Resilience Development Policy Financing by the International Development Association (IDA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has badly affected the hard-earned development gains of Nepal. The outbreak has hit almost every sector of the Nepali economy. In particular, the entire service industries, including tourism, aviation and hospitality sectors, have been hit hard by the outbreak. On the occasion of signing the notes, Ambassador Kikuta stated that “the Government of Japan has provided multifaceted support to Nepal to prevent and control the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, Japan has provided vaccines, medical equipment and training in this field, which will greatly contribute to the health care system even after the pandemic. Our next decision is to provide financial support for economic stabilization and development of Nepal as a whole. I hope that this support will be effectively utilized to realize post-COVID-19 economic recovery and social resilience.”

The Embassy of Japan is committed to extending all possible assistance to Nepal in its endeavor for nation building and strengthening the friendly relationship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal.

### Himalaya Airlines Receives ISO QMS Certification

Himalaya Airlines becomes the first airline in Nepal to achieve ISO 9001:2015 QMS certification

Himalaya Airlines, a Nepal-China-Joint Venture, has become the first airline in Nepal to successfully achieve ISO 9001-2015 QMS certification. The airline has received the certificate on Dec 29, 2021 in recognition of the organization’s Quality Management System (QMS) which complies with ISO 9001-2015. The airlines earned the ISO certificate

for “Providing Air Transport for Traveling Passengers and Freight, including Aviation Related Training Services”.

Earlier to this, Himalaya had acquired its first ISO certification for Quality Management System of Aircraft Maintenance and Engineering Services in August 2020. ISO 9001:2015 is a globally recognized quality management standard developed and published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) which ensures that the products and services meet the needs of customers, through an effective quality management system.

ISO 9001:2015 certificate no. 120057/A/0001/UK/En was issued to Himalaya Airlines by United Registrar of System and United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). Fulfilling meticulous documentation processes, Himalaya successfully completed the audit process, verifying that the company’s QMS satisfies all the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Congratulating the team for ISO certification, President of Himalaya Airlines Zhou Enyong said, “It is a proud moment for Himalaya to receive ISO 9001-2015 certification and a noteworthy achievement of the team effort. It is a continuing process for the company and we shall continue to optimize the standardization of work with due compliance at all levels.”

Vijay Shrestha, Vice President, Himalaya Airlines expressed, “This indeed is a remarkable accomplishment for team Himalaya. With the collaborative efforts of the team to maintain high documentation standards companywide, H9 has been able to acquire this ISO certification. This demonstrates Himalaya’s dedication for high performance work practices and is a significant confirmation of our ongoing commitment to quality.”



### World Bank-financed Moderna Vaccines Arrive In Nepal

Of the four million doses of Moderna vaccines financed by the World Bank, 1.66 million have arrived in Nepal. The remaining doses will be delivered shortly. Nepal will deploy these vaccines for adolescents 12-17 years to safeguard them from the health impacts of COVID-19.

The vaccines, procured under the COVAX cost-share option, comply with World Bank’s Vaccine Approval Criteria for financing and are certified as safe and effective for children as young as 12 years of age by the European Medicines Agency and the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

“Nepal was the second country globally to finalize procurement of vaccines through the COVAX cost-share scheme. The supply of Moderna vaccines is timely for Nepal, as we expand our vaccine coverage to adolescents 12-17 years of age,” said Birodh Khatiwada, Minister for Health and

Population. “The Government is committed to vaccinating the entire eligible population by mid-April 2022 and the World Bank-financed Moderna vaccines will be instrumental in helping Nepal achieve its COVID-19 vaccination goal.”



In line with the recommendations of the National Immunization Advisory Committee and the Na-

tional Immunization Committee, the Moderna vaccines will be administered to adolescent populations through immunization sites set up in schools, as well as sites to reach out-of-school adolescent populations.

The World Bank also approved a second round of additional financing in the amount of \$18 million on January 12, 2022, bringing its cumulative COVID-19 health response financing to \$122 million to support Nepal in scaling-up its vaccination efforts to cover its additional eligible populations.

This Second Additional Financing and the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness (CERHSP) aim to prevent, detect, and respond to the threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen the systems for public health preparedness in Nepal. The CERHSP project and its additional financing will continue to be implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Population by the Department of Health Services and associated institutional bodies.

“I am very pleased that the World Bank has been able to help make safe and effective vaccines available for Nepal’s adolescent and youth populations. This is critical since Nepal’s children have already missed almost two years of in-person schooling because of the pandemic,” said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. “I am hopeful that these vaccines will help increase health and protection of children in the classrooms and support continued learning to make up the learning lost due to COVID-19.”

**Nepali Workers Set Out To Israel; Labour Minister And Ambassador See Them Off**

A total of 99 Nepali youth workers set out to Israel in the first phase as per the agreement related to temporary employment of Nepali workers in Israel. Ninety nine

Nepali workers, including 63 women and 36 men left for Israel, reports RSS.

They travelled to Israel for employment on ‘first come, first serve’ basis as the Israel government had already issued visa for the purpose. After this lot, additional youth workers were to go to Israel via two flights on January 29 and 30.

According to RSS, the Department of Foreign Employment had sent to Israel a name list of 500 workers in last Kartik (October-November) and 675 workers in Mangsir (November-December) for job contract. The final name list of 829 men and 354 women among 1,175 selected was published.

It may be noted that the Nepal government and Israel government had signed a labour pact on 30 September 2020. As per the agreement, Nepali workers are entitled to receive a monthly salary of Rs 200,000 in Israel.

Kathmandu-based Israeli Embassy shared that the Nepali workers would get perks and benefits such as remuneration, leave and health expenses at par with the Israeli workforce.

Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security, Krishna Kumar Shrestha and Israeli Ambassador to Nepal Hanan Goder saw off the Nepali youth bound to Israel after being screened as assistant worker in the first phase.

Extending best wishes to the travelling workers, Minister Shrestha urged them to provide service in a way to keep the country’s image high. On the occasion, Israeli Ambassador Goder said Nepali workers would play the role as a bridge between Nepali and Israeli families. The Embassy also wished that may their stay in Israel remain fruitful.

**THAI Smile Airways Appoints Society International As General Sales Agent For Nepal**

THAI Smile Airways, a regional airline operating with full services has announced Society International Travel Services- One of Nepal’s leading travel agencies as its General Sales Agent (GSA) for the Nepal market. The appointment will be in effect from the 1st December 2021.

As per the agreement, Society International Travel Services will be providing a wide range of sales, marketing, and airport operational services as well as full customer and agency support services for THAI Smile Airways.

Through this agreement, THAI Smile Airways intends to not only tap the opportunity present within the Nepalese market by strengthening the services and facilities towards the Nepalese people but also to bridge the gap between Nepal and Thailand by providing air connectivity on this route previously served by THAI Airways International since 1968.



# Remembering Our Kings: Reflecting on Our Nationhood



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

The mid-winter month of Poush just past is when history forces us to remember our kings who shaped our national identity. Despite the reluctance of parties and leaders who were instruments that foisted a republican order on the country, people at large – including cadres of those very parties – came out to celebrate their birth anniversaries.

King Birendra's fell on 29<sup>th</sup> December and Nepal's founder King Prithvi Narayan Shah's was celebrated as National Unity Day on 11<sup>th</sup> January with verve that also served as a public reprimand to the current rulers widely seen as kleptocratic and supine before foreign interests.

In 2006, under a Delhi-tutelage 12-point deal backed by generous Western funding, the alien agenda of "republicanism, secularism and federalism" (to borrow words from former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai) was imposed on the country to erase its past identity. The statue of Prithvi Narayan Shah in front of the government secretariat was vandalized and nearly toppled by frenzied followers of current rulers who have yet to apologize for it. But that did not stop the people gathering there to celebrate. Indeed, such was the public mood that the president showed up even as her government did not have the guts to officially celebrate Prithvi Narayan Shah's 300<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, and the prime minister issued a weak and pathetic-sounding tweet of greetings!

Two years earlier, Hari Prasad Sodari (I understand, a disciple of Swami Prapannacharya) brought out a massive 1400-page volume on our *Rashtra-Nirmata* with reflections by over 300 Nepalis and some foreign scholars as well. The different chapters, including mine, show Prithvi Narayan Shah's seminal contribution to Nepali nation-building in five areas:

He conquered different, scattered principalities to build an indivisible nation (eight years before the United States became an independent country) that was called Nepal and not Gorkha his home kingdom. Contrary to distorted Marxist narrative in vogue, he did not create a fiefdom: instead, for the first time in history, he built a state belonging to its denizens that could not be divided among his sons as was the practice those days among hill principalities.

Recognizing that a state is defined by its army and its judiciary, he laid down the character and structure of both the justice system in Nepal as well as the Nepal Army as backbones of the state, to uphold, to fight and to die for

by all its denizens.

Given the mind-boggling diversity of ethnic and religious practices, he defined the essence of Nepali nationalism as based on the "multi-hued flower garden" concept where – and this is most significant – every citizen was to uphold their own *kul dharma*, i.e., group-specific traditional practices. He thus placed that much-banded current term "inclusiveness" in the very foundation of the Nepali state, making redundant and meaningless the imposed idea of European secularism.

Down south, Hindu and Buddhist rule had been overwhelmed by Muslim conquest and twelve years before Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered Kathmandu valley, the *Firangis* of British East India Company had defeated the Nawab of Bengal. Prithvi Narayan Shah decreed in his *Dibya Upadesh* (Divine Counsel given at his deathbed) that the very ethos of Nepal would be *Asli Hindustan*, not to be overwhelmed by alien religions.

He emphasized national manufacturing and job creation as being preferred to relying on foreign imports, thus laying the basis of a strong, self-reliant national economy.

These essential foundations of Nepali nationhood were criminally attacked in the so-called Rhododendron Revolution of 2005/2006. Although Nepali manufacturing was sold off for a song and the process of de-industrialization of Nepal begun in the 1990s (ironically by socialism-professing Kangress and Communists!), it was the foundational basis of the country, its cultural and historical identity that were attacked through an unholy alliance of Mughlanis and the West. They were able to do so manipulating a motley mélange of pseudo-Marxists and Macaulay-bred liberals that, forgetting a century of Rana rule that deviated from the principles laid down by Prithvi Narayan Shah, propagated false narratives blaming monarchy, Hinduism and their adherents. Thankfully, a decade and a half later today, many Nepalis are waking up.

That awakening was also seen on December 29, the birth anniversary of King Birendra. The official lead was taken by the newly elected chief of Rashtriya Prajantara Party Rajendra Lingden. Speakers, including me, reflected on King Birendra's three decade-long reign, two as head of the Panchayat system and the last decade as a constitutional monarch. It was in his last decade as the monarch

of a Westminster multiparty system that the country quickly went from the euphoria of democracy and unbridled market liberalization to party kleptocracy and a civil war by the Maoists against parliamentary democracy. A quarter of a century earlier, all the current ills in Nepali political governance were already visible in their basic outline.

King Birendra is remembered by many for upholding national interests over personal gains. I still remember his state visit to Moscow in 1976: as president of the Nepali Students' Union USSR, I had to present before him the grievances of Nepalis there. He graciously and effortlessly resolved them much to the satisfaction of the students. Years later, as a government engineer in the Ministry of Water Resources, we who took part in water negotiations would share stories of King Birendra's strong national stance. A hint of that is given by India's former foreign secretary Jagat Mehta in his book out of Observer Research Foundation: *India-Nepal Relations: the challenge ahead*. Mehta recalls what we all knew – King Birendra's rejection of Indian insistence stationing Indian troops at hydro project sites for security. Mehta admits that such Indian suggestions have only deepened Nepal's apprehensions regarding its sovereignty and Indian intentions. King Gyanendra said as much to me years later when I was his water resources minister: "Dipak, on national interests, no giving up even an inch!"

Today, with the decline of the Old World Order and the push by regional and international super powers to encroach on Nepal's sovereignty, King Birendra must be remembered for his Zone of Peace Proposal. It was made at the farewell address after his coronation on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1975 to institutionalize peace for Nepal's security, independence and development, and the context has to be understood. Nepal had seen the first blockade by India starting April 1962 but lifted in October that year after the breakout of Sino-Indian border war on 20<sup>th</sup> October to 21<sup>st</sup> November 1962.

The second blockade was imposed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1970 and was lifted only on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1971 with the start of the breakup of East Pakistan (Bangladesh Liberation) between 26<sup>th</sup> March to 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971. King Mahendra passed away on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1972, and the annexation of Sikkim began a year later with its absorption into India in May 1975. One can understand what must have worried King Birendra, and justifiably, as he proposed his Zone of Peace: he lived to see the third blockade between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> July 1990 that ended the Panchayat sys-

tem. Unfortunately for his republican successors, their new dispensation brought about by the 12-Point Delhi Deal did not spare Nepal a fourth blockade either between 23<sup>rd</sup> September to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2016!

It was Nepal's and King Birendra's great diplomatic success that 114 countries had endorsed the Zone of Peace proposal (except India, and for obvious reasons!). Unfortunately, the leaders and parties of the new dispensation that replaced the Panchayat quietly shelved it. Which is probably why their current attempts to burnish their nationalistic credentials with the pointed Kalapani-Lipulekh map rings rather hollow to the larger global diplomatic community!

A few quotes of King Birendra from the book by his press secretary Narendra Raj Pandey that [I recounted in my earlier piece](#) (which I have called his Dibyapad) might be worth reflecting over:

Without properly assessing whether Zone of Peace Proposal was in Nepal's interests or not, Nepal in 1990 succumbed to India's pressure and put the proposal in cold storage.

The announcement of Jana Andolan from Chakribari during the blockade was part of India's strategy to which the Nepalese fell.

The concept of SAARC was first broached by Nepal with Sri Lanka in 1990 during the state visit. Later it was shared with Bangladesh. President Ziaur Rahman agreed... Indira Gandhi did not say 'no', while

Zia ul Huq of Pakistan said if it was Nepal's idea, he would go for it.

Whose brainchild is the four-country sub-regional concept in South Asia? As an outfit under SAARC umbrella, it is understandable but outside of it, what could be its rationale?

If the judiciary has to succumb to political pressure to treat a guilty belonging to a political party leniently, then the people will start losing faith in the judicial system.

Some kind of Grishma Bahadur Devkota-type of work has to be undertaken on the Jana Andolan and to have the other side of the coin also appropriately documented for posterity.

The best remembrance of King Birendra might be what has been argued by Independent Civic Society: restoring the 1990 constitution which he promulgated would be honouring him and also the great democratic political



# Goal Is Not Poll

*Following a growing pressure from all sides, the five-party coalition agreed to hold local polls by mid-June*

By A KESHAB POUDEL

After a month-long debate over whether to hold the elections for local level in June or November, with federal and province levels, leaders of five political parties have agreed to hold local polls by mid-June.

With the ambiguity in the law and constitution, one cannot say for sure whether local polls will be held by mid-June. The dispute on tenure of the local level surfaced following contradictions in the local level act and constitution regarding the tenure.

As per the local level act, the elections of the local level should be held at the end of May. However, the Constitution of Nepal says the local level elections will be held following the completion of five years tenure.

As there is a division among the lawyers regarding the interpretation of law and constitution, this is the same with the country's major political parties. Some constitutional lawyers see the provision in the law is against the constitution thus it must be declared null and void.

However, other lawyers hold the view that there is no such ambiguity and law has elaborated the spirit of constitution.

"The local level act is against the spirit of the constitution and it must be declared null and void. As the article of the constitution has clearly fixed the tenure of local level as five years, such tenure cannot be shortened by law," said senior advocate Bhimarjun Acharya.

However, senior advocate and former attorney general Ramesh Badal holds the view that there is no such contradiction and ambiguity between the law and constitution. "As per the constitution and law, the local

level elections must be held by mid May," said Badal.

Ruling party coalition leaders hold the view that the tenure of local level will complete by September because the elections of the Madhesh Pradesh were held in September.

With main opposition party CPN-UML's insistence to hold the elections and growing pressure from Nepal's leading development partners and Nepalese civil society, the five ruling parties has shifted the stand.

The second meeting of the five-party ruling coalition held on 29

January forged consensus to hold local level elections by mid-June 2022. Top leaders of the ruling parties met twice

and the second meeting concluded to hold the local elections.

The meeting held at Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's official residence in Baluwatar suggested the government to conclude the local elections by Mid-June, said government spokesman Gynendra Bahadur Karki after the meeting.

He said the High Level Political Committee meeting also suggested the government initiate the law amendment process if necessary and if it contradicted with the constitution.

Minister for Communication and Information Technology Karki, who is also member of the high-level

political committee, said the local level elections will be held by mid-June.

He informed the government would announce the election date by consulting with the Election Commission. Nepali Congress leader and committee coordinator Ram Chandra Poudel said the meeting of the coalition had discussed consulting law experts regarding the upcoming election.

Given the ambiguity in law and constitution, the committee also directed the government to hold discussions. However, the meeting took the decision after holding the discus-



sion with the legal experts again at the PM's residence in Baluwatar before the meeting.

## The Dispute

The controversy appeared over the conflict between Article 225 of the constitution and the Local Level Act, 2073 BS. The legal experts had suggested that the law should be amended in accordance with the constitution.

Top leaders including Prime Minister and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', CPN (Unified Socialist) Chairman Madhav Kumar Ne-

## POLITICS

and the laws regarding the election.

The Minister said discussions were on regarding this topic although views were aired that the Act should be aligned with the Constitution in line with the established principle that the Constitution supersedes to the extent of contradiction when the constitution and the laws clash.

### Lawyers For Elections

Lawyers have demanded that the government and the Election Commission hold local elections on time. Speaking at an interaction program on 'Constitutional and Legal System of Local Level Elections' organized by Press Chautari Nepal in the capital, Senior Advocate Tikaram Bhattarai said that the people's representatives would not exist if local level elections were not held on the scheduled date.

"The constitution stipulates a five-year term with separate existence for federal, state and local governments. It also states that the term of the local level cannot be extended. Therefore, the election should be held on time," said Senior Advocate Tikar-



pal and leaders of the Janata Samajwadi Party and Janamorcha, of the five party coalition, were also pressured by the directive of the President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, who in regular consultations with prime minister Deuba handed over directives urging to hold the local level elections not to create any constitutional void.

The five-party alliance sees the president's move as motivated by political reasons of president Bhandari and her association with CPN-UML and its leader KP Sharma Oli.

Minister for Communication and Information Technology Karki said that the local, provincial, and the House of Representatives (HoR) elections would be held as provisioned in the constitution. He assured of conducting the elections in time as per the people's aspiration and keeping their sovereign rights intact.

"We need to amend the act to hold the elections in mid-June. However, the major opposition party has been obstructing the parliament for a long time. All these topics are related to the people and these have to be discussed in parliament," said Karki.

Stating that making the parliament effective was not only the government's responsibility but of the main opposition party's as well, he suggested the UML not create the illusion among the people by making this issue a political one as it is a party that

has come through a long democratic exercise.

"The government is fully cognizant of the principle and significance of the periodic election. The present government will steer the nation forward as per the spirit, norms and values of democracy and the Constitution," Minister Karki said.

Noting that the Constitution has envisaged extending the right of the Singhadurbar (the Centre) and the services and facilities provided by it to the local level itself, he said, "This government is committed to making these rights and services more effective."

Minister Karki said that the local level election would be managed as per the provisions of the constitution and urged all to be confident that the election would take place. He said

consultations were held with law experts in the meeting of the five-party high-level political mechanism in the presence of the Prime Minister as there was some confusion regarding the contradictions in the Constitution



am Bhattarai.

Another senior advocate, Sunil Pokharel, said that raising the Article 225, which is not related to the term of the local government, is an attempt to create a situation after 2054 BS.

# Change Of Guards Part -II



BY: BINOJ BASNYAT

There were many enthusiasts in the last days of office of Purna Chandra Thapa (PCT), former Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS) that put up judgement on how the Chief of the Nepalese Army (NA) performed in the stipulated three years tenure. The primary argument is “Was there a line of reasoning to carry the evaluation of the performance in form of a media campaign?” This is bracing the leadership to come to an assumption to be a populist in comparative to literal professional soldierly charisma, which is principally based on performance for shaping the force for national responsibility envisioned in the constitution. My previous opinion “changing of guards” published on 22 August 2018 ([Changing of the guard \(kathmandupost.com\)](http://kathmandupost.com)) acknowledged six challenges for the national force, which necessities to be appraised. You get to read considerable opinions on pros and cons of the former chief, raising eyebrows of the inevitability of bringing military transact to the public domain with the argument of the top leadership’s cognizance and media paranoia. The governance structural layouts in the administration system consigns the Chief of the Army (CoA) as just the man behind the wheels on matters concerning national security. This goes back a few decades.

During the period of Constitutional Monarch, the Principal Military Secretariat in the Royal Palace performed as the arbitrator on deriving to strategies, policies and concepts on matters of national security considering South Asian and international security environment.

A few headings that I would like to discuss that has institutional impressions and national security manifesting. As accepted NA is the only stable, most trusted institution. It is always a pride to be known of being a member of it.

## Impression during the Inning

Two notions were delivered to the general public through a rare personal presence in the media conference by PCT. One, that the NA is corrupt pointing out that his predecessor Rajendra Chhetri was involved in financial irregularities and two, the internal governance lacked systemization and clarity indicating that the previous institutional heads were short of competent leadership merits. Both issues are serious concerns for institutional precision, professional growth and national security.

In the political realm, Nepal Communist party Maoists (NCPM) attempted to blemish or even disassemble the semblance while executing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) but was tricky to accomplish. A politically motivated motion by the NCPM encouraged them to attempt various modalities but at the same time feared the long-standing organizations that would impede their political goals. NCPM believed in dismantling the deep-rooted old democracy and to capture state power and set up “new people’s democracy” (naulo janabad) inherited from the thoughts of Mao Zedong. The Maoists struggle was in the form of a new democratic revolution that can telescope the phases of bourgeois and proletarian domination merged with Leninist theory of “continuous revolution”. The constitution still upholds that the NA should be democratized, when the army is under a democratic practice. This is just one instance.

The two stable and unwavering institutions were the Institution of Monarchy and the NA even after the ten-year-old conflict and signing of the CPA. NA has the impression as a reliable, pro-

fessional institution not just by the ones in uniform or the veterans but by the general public, the political parties, the civil society and the international community.

In the academic ambit former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Kul Chandra Gautam opinionated in Kathmandu Post on 11 Nov 2021. “Does Nepal really need a national army and the Armed Police Force that are larger than those of Argentina, Australia, Canada & South Africa? I propose some specific recommendations to reform and restructure the Nepali Army to suit Nepal’s real national and human security needs.” [Restructuring Nepali Army \(kathmandupost.com\)](http://kathmandupost.com).

I argue that the opinion is influenced with a few western thoughts, which may possibly or may not be favourable for sustained stability, depriving the tangible realigning of the enduring geopolitical competition and the impact that would bear on smaller nations particularly Nepal. Altering geostrategic environment, trends of geopolitics and assessable Himalaya reveal that defence capabilities obligates to be deemed into. Indo-Pacific Region is primacy comparatively.

In the regional dynamics, China’s new border law being executed from Jan 2022 is aimed at the borders with India in South Asia and other smaller states south of the Himalaya as well as the 14 states in the rim. The central sub region of the Himalaya arc where Nepal lies is vital for both our immediate neighbors. Nepal and other South Asians has stiff choices to choose with the altering geopolitical motions. Risk of national security and challenges require the NA and the security sector to transform, rearrange, revitalize and reshape.

To elucidate, NA should aim for a technology supported smart agile force.

## Re-deployments of troops

*The thoughts that prevailed in the NA during the last six years have their own logic when the nation is in the state of transformation. But unquestionably is lost years and missed opportunities with wrong priorities. Populism was at the center of the CoA by assuring the political body that the requirement of additional financial support was not needed but by upgrading higher ranks compromising at the cost of the ability of a fighting force.*

The 3+1 command with Chiefs of Command (command Senapati) has been debated literally in every space with the establishment expressing that the thought should be contemplated as national and not just military. Changing of structures and appointments in the army has direct impacts on capabilities, regimentalization, professionalization and perpetuation of institutional far-sightedness. The army perform with a vision overseeing long-term national security challenges.

Two operational command amendments within five years are more time drawn and less foresightful. The six division commands as per the developmental regions were on geographic lines, which got readjusted on political and administrative set ups supporting federal system of governance with eight Commands. Well-marketed 3+1 command is on geographic lines with river basins as the focal consideration which is actually comparable to the deployment based on developmental regions, which had both geography and administrative baseline.

Geography has changed and connotes not just natural fea-

tures but political interests, infrastructure development, technology, artificial intelligence and geopolitical shifts mainly allowing military maneuverability and the political connotation. Both the powers India in the south, east and west and China in the north of the Himalaya arc is and will strengthen their strategic advances dreading each other's aspiration. The central sub-region of the Himalaya with Nepal, Sikkim (India) and Bhutan was the buffer zone for India. South of the Himalaya is now the buffer, political space an alternative route to the Indian Ocean for China in the 21st century with ambition to be an effective global actor. Xi's visit and the strategic plan \$ 30 billion till 2025 of Tibet is an instance.

In reality a command has three tiers strategic, operational and tactical. The command structure is hierarchic with command, corps, division, brigades responsible for administering groupings of small units.

An example can be the Indian Army which has seven commands with each command holding four corps and twelve divisions, though Theatre Command is finding its way to be materialized with the establishment of the Chief of Defense Staff.

The largest formation of the British Army is a division commanded by a Major General with two or more Brigades up to 40 thousand troops, when the army fights it deploys Brigades under a divisional headquarters, the army has four different types of fighting brigades, the air assault brigade, armoured infantry brigades, strike brigades, several infantry brigades with supporting arms and services including intelligences. British Army could be another example as Nepal's broadening security and defence arrangements for political comfortability and diplomatic reassurance.

The command has changed but not the military act and rules that provides legitimacy for the commands and heads of department to exercise their authority to be accountable, which was one of the challenges identified as: "collective leadership and responsibility". Defense forces function on certain guidelines with structure in commands.

Popularism was at the center of the CoA by assuring the political body that the requirement of additional financial support was not needed but by upgrading higher ranks compromising at the cost of the ability of a fighting force. The thoughts that prevailed during the last six years have their own logic when the nation is in the state of transformation. But unquestionably is lost years and missed opportunities with wrong priorities.

#### **National responsibility**

***The CoA should advise on the political trajectory that the nations should grasp. This would be fulfilling national responsibility and being accountable rather than inscription in newspapers and magazines.***

With the absence of strategic structures that oversee national security, the CoA is looked upon as the focal operator behind the helms of national security even when the nation has been attempting to understand the relevance that national security occupies for stability, which then generates an environment for prosperity.

National support and diplomatic engagements have endured surroundings for international peace efforts through international peacekeeping arrangements by the security sector, which well contributes to the foreign policy.

Though Oli, former prime minister was the head of the government almost throughout the tenure of PCT; the structural changes

that has strategic, operational and tactical impacts commenced when the government was exhausted. There are segments at large like some business, institutions, lack of regulations, politicizations etc. that profit from political instability, which is detrimental to the overall growth of the country.

Wouldn't it be correct if I say that the main responsibility of the CoA would be to appraise the political leaders of mainly the major parties on how the country would contour in another decade or two if challenges are overlooked and institutionalization of corruption and political instability prevails?

The CoA should advise on the political trajectory that the nations should grasp. This would be fulfilling national responsibility and being accountable rather than inscription in newspapers and magazines.

#### **Conclusion**

The rush to devise public opinion and the aggressive nature of media misinformation and disinformation is surrendering a behavior of a soldier. The people must be well informed of the army's contribution to the country but without keeping oneself at the center or being media conscious, shabby or phobia. An example can be one of numerous articles that was published on 10th August 2021 in <http://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/general-purna-chandra-thapa-a-role-model-for-emerging-generation-of-military-leaders/>.

Some press has been portraying of financial irregularities in the army while praising PCT and a few that occupied key trust. This has not furthered to the accountabilities to the nation nor the institution.

The authenticity should have been to find out the source of financial irregularities. The CoA and the few as well as the absence of parameter and law to charge the conspirator and the schemer is where the

problem lies not the NA. The NA is recognized as the strength that belongs to the country and owned by the people.

The nation is in a dire state. The status of national security is vulnerable, uncertainty is taking stride, the national challenges are getting more complex and the political, economic, diplomatic, social, cultural state of affairs is ambiguous.

Together with retirement comes statements, so did it happen by PCT that the security situation will be worse in days to come. This statement expresses the grounds of avoidance to be answerable while holding accountability responsibly as CoA. What segment does the CoA occupy or is accountable on proceeding of national security, is a deep-seated question to be answered?

National Security environment over the past six years has distorted and disoriented by political decisions, unwarranted and unjustifiable activities. But equally is also due to lack of sincere advice by the convener of the highest national security body the NA to the politicians and particularly the ones in chair and the ones that make a difference.

The NA a well-respected force by the global community and will always remain a professional force. The schooling is as such that there is no reason to argue or even mention of democratizing the army or if the army does not remain professional.

CoAS General Prabhuram Sharma takes charge while the country is perforating a newfound geo-strategic and a new geopolitical setting. When the country is politically unstable, economy is in downfall, loosing political trust, conceding diplomatic faith, frustrated population; all grievous national security challenges presaging that the responsibility is even more liable in days to come for the NA.

*Basnyat is a strategic analyst and a former, Major General of the Nepalese Army*



# Renovation Begins

*In more than seven months, the renovations of temporary diversion embankment of the Melamchi Drinking Water Project has begun with a target to bring water to Kathmandu by April 14*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Following the mobilization of equipment by Chinese contractor Syno Hydro at the head work site of Melamchi River, the reconstruction work of temporary diversion has begun, giving rays of hope to water thirsty people of Kathmandu to get water by April 14.

With the system buried by the devastating flood debris of June 2021, the Melamchi Drinking Water Board had to stop the distribution of water supply. Roads, bridges and other temporary infrastructure, including the head work and diversion structures, were damaged by the floods, leaving the project with many uncertainties.

However, early completion of the damaged roads and bridges and mobilization of contractors to renovate the damaged project by Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation has given new hopes.

Although the credit also goes to other secretaries of Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation and project heads of Melamchi Drinking Water Board, the experience and dedication of Secretary Madhav Belbase worked in the completion of the project after decades of delays. Backed by then Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and minister of Drinking Water Mani Thapa, secretary Belbase, who is now the member of Public Service Commission had quietly made every decision to give life to the virtually dead project.

Executing all the major decisions Executive Director Tires Prasad Khatri also played a crucial role to bring the project right back in track following the pull out of Italian contractor Cooperativa Muratori Cementisti (CMC) di Ravenna due to dispute with then secretary and Minister Bina Magar, daughter-in-law of Prachanda.

Italian officials named two senior Nepali bureaucrats—Gajendra Kumar Thakur, a former secretary at the Water Supply Ministry, and Surya Raj Kadel, executive director of the Melamchi Water

Supply Development Board—as the officials who demanded a cut in the amount approved by the Dispute Adjudication Board.

“Thakur and Kadel told the CMC manager for the Melamchi project that they wanted a discount of Rs 62 million on the payment and a cut of 3 percent on the remaining Rs 300 million,” said the CMC official in an interview over the phone from Ravenna, Italy (The Kathmandu Post). Both Thakur and Kadel denied the allegations in an interview with the Post.

After the pull out of Italian Company, the government issued the contract to Syno Hydro to complete the remaining work. However, in the middle of the testing of tunnel in 2019 June, a gate collapsed and two persons were killed on the spot. The project faced another major setback, getting delayed by another seven months.

Working quietly in a hostile situation, secretary Belbase finally revived the project dropping the water from Melamchi to Kathmandu in March 2020.

## Uncertainty over Landslides

Passing a series of hurdles and obstructions due to mishandling and mismanagement, the longest mega project faced blows from nature as well.

As the fragile situation is still prevailing over the sources of Melamchi with further possibility of big landslide in monsoon, the project will supply the water till June or onset of monsoon.

Expert panel in their study has recommended shutting down the tunnel from June to September to prevent the damage in the tunnel in cases of another devastating floods.

Although the report prepared



by an expert committee is yet to be published, it is reported that the expert warned the possibility of another major landslide due to unstable debris above the headwork site.

Minister Umakant Chaudhary said that the water will be diverted to the tunnel as per the recommendations of experts. The Minister said that the process of stabilization of mountain above the headwork will take time and board will take the decision regarding water supply.

“The Asian Development Bank is conducting a study on the details of the reasons behind the floods and landslides, damage caused by them and permanent alternatives to conserve the watershed region,” said Minister Chaudhary.

## Work Begins

“As the work for the reconstruction of the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) has begun to bring the water from the Melamchi River temporarily to the Kathmandu Valley, I am confident that people will receive the water from Nepalese New year,” said Umakant Chaudhary, minister of Water Supply and Sanitation. The national pride project’s head works and a part of tunnel were damaged by the floods caused by torrential rains on 15 June 2021.

Contractor Sino Hydro has reached the site and started work to clear the debris deposited by the floods and landslide upstream of the river.

“Currently, work has begun to bring the water to the capital valley by creating a diversion besides the head works,” said Minister Chaudhary at a press conference organized at the Ministry in Singha Durbar.

According to him, since Sindhupalchowk was announced as a crisis-hit area until October 2021, no work on the project could be conducted before the festive season.

The project has said that water would be brought to the valley by 14 April 2022, the first day of Nepali Year 2079. Minister for Water Supply Chaudhary has directed the construction company and employees of the Melamchi drinking water project to restore and complete the flood-damaged project within mid-April.

The Minister gave such a direction during a field inspection of the national pride project on January 28. The government has reached an agreement with the Chinese Sino Hydro to reconstruct the project damaged by flooding in June 2021.

Earlier, the government had tested the release of water from the project to the residents of the Kathmandu Valley. The Minister also pledged to distribute water from the project to the residents of the Kathmandu Valley within this year.

The Minister said that he would visit and take stock of work progress of the damaged project once a week.

During the visit the Minister was accompanied to the project site by a team of technicians and the Ministry Secretary Pramila Devi Shakya Brajacharya, Director General of the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management, Tires Prasad Khatri, Executive Director of the Melamchi Water Supply Development Board, Basu Dev Paudyal and Chairperson of Helambu Rural Municipality Nima Gyaljen Sherpa.

#### State of Project

More than seven months after the intake of the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) was buried by debris brought by massive floods in the Melamchi River in Sindhupalchowk on 15 June 2021, works have begun to clear them.

“Chinese contractor Sino Hydro has recently moved heavy equipment to the site and begun preparations to remove the debris from Friday (January 28),” said Basu Dev Paudyal, Executive Director of the Melamchi Water Supply Development

Board.

According to him, the work will be executed in a way so that the water from the Melamchi River can be brought to the Kathmandu Valley by the Nepali New Year 2079, on 14 April 2022.

“In the first phase, the debris obstructing the water from channelizing into the tunnel connecting the river and reservoir in Sundarijal of Kathmandu will be removed so that the water could be brought to the valley temporarily,” said Paudyal, who returned from the site after making an observation of the preparation made by the contractor.

A temporary access road to the MWSP’s head works was recently opened. The road was severely damaged by the torrential rains and subsequent landslides in monsoon last year. As the landslides jeopardized the human settlement above the road, the infrastructure could not be repaired or developed until the monsoon ceased.

The board has extended the deadline to complete the construction of the head works by mid-July this year as per the decision of a Cabinet meeting a couple of weeks ago, and directed the Sino Hydro to reach the site. The cost of the contract has also gone up by Rs. 320 million with the time overrun.

The cost variation is made for the contractor to clear the debris deposited at the head works. Earlier in October 2019, the board had signed a contract with Sino Hydro with a mandate to complete the construction of head works in 15 months.

Paudyal said that the actual cost of the project could be calculated after clearing the debris as it is not known whether the head works constructed before the floods is intact.

According to the primary estimates made in August last year, the floods caused damages of about Rs. 2 billion to the project and the head works was buried about 15-20 meters down the debris.

The contractor had completed the construction of civil works of the head works, leaving only a small amount



of hydro-mechanical and electrical works to complete.

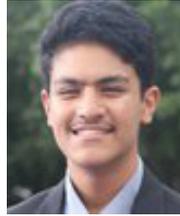
The project had started distributing the water from the Melamchi River by the end of March 2021 while President Bidya Devi Bhandari had inaugurated the water distribution on April 2 last year.

The Rs. 36 billion project was conceptualized about five decades ago was completed about two decades after its commencement with multiple deadline extensions and cost overrun.

In the first phase, the national pride project will distribute 170 million liters of water a day – half of the total water that is being brought to the Kathmandu Valley from the Melamchi River in Sindhupalchowk district via a 26.5 kilometer tunnel. Another 340 million liters water would be brought to the valley from the Yangri and Larke rivers in Sindhupalchowk through the same tunnel.

As the government has already spent huge resources focusing on Melamchi, there is no immediate alternative before the government other than to make Melamchi a viable project bringing water to Kathmandu. The project had started during the tenure of Nepali Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and was completed during the tenure of CPN-UML leader K. P. Oli as prime minister. Now NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is one of the trusted party colleagues of late Bhattarai, is the prime minister and his job is to make the project technically sustainable and viable for the water supply to Kathmandu.

# Youth Engagement In Tourism Promotion Of Bungamati



BY: SREEJAN SHRESTHA

People have a connoisseur within them. They immediately draw attention to everything that piques their curiosity. When it comes to youth, they like traveling, doing new things, and acquiring as much experience as possible in a short amount of time. New, gorgeous, and adventurous destinations excite today's youth. They search for intriguing details, large and tiny, and, most importantly, they seek out new experiences, adventure, and taking chances. Whether it is going on a trip, eating with friends, seeing a movie, or simply hanging out, adolescents find ways to have fun.

Bungamati is an ancient Newar settlement in the Lalitpur Metropolitan City in the Lalitpur District. This settlement has numerous religious and cultural sites such as Machhindranath temple, Hyan bribh Bhairav, Karyabinayak temple, Manakamana temple and Prathampur Mahavihar. It is one of the sacred places for thousands of Hindu and Buddhist. One can see involvement of youth during the procession of various jatras and festivals like machhindranath jatra, bhairav jatra, hanuman jatra, karyabinayak jatra and so on.

Bungamati has a long and illustrious history. All festivals are rooted to folktales that have been passed down from generation to generation. These festivals are fun to attend and are a great alternative to looking at a screen for the entire day. The god Machhindranath, who is also known as the patron of Kathmandu Valley. Month long chariot pulling festival of Machhindranath is a homage to rain god and youth of all backgrounds participate in this festival.

Local delicacies often tell a lot about the place itself. Bungamati has many places where visitors can try out authentic Newari food. Bungamati offers it all, from

well-furnished restaurants to tiny eateries. Bungamati is the finest place to experience what a Newar community feels like. In addition to cuisine, youth from every community will get an opportunity to learn about culture, arts and meet people from the Newar community. Also, youth from the Newar community will get a chance to be connected to their roots since it's no surprise the modernization has disconnected them from their roots.

Tourism has benefited greatly from the use of social media. Because youth are active on social media, content about Bungamati could attract more youth visitors. Sharing pictures among peers, online reviews, online galleries, and any other type of presence on social media can help promote Bungamati as one of the key tourist destinations in the valley among youth.

Bungamati has the charm to appeal to youth, and modest upgrades will bring in more guests. Improvements for a decent water and sanitation facility is one of the areas. Following the Covid-19 epidemic, hygiene is no longer merely a method to gratify tourists, but a fundamental health protocol that every tourist site should adhere to. Bungamati practices traditional subsistence ways, and adding adequate and clean public restrooms, the disposal of household and plastic garbage, and proper recycling of recyclable materials would amaze tourists while also contributing to long-term environmental sustainability.

Bungamati has gone a long way since the 2015 earthquake that struck Bungamati very badly, causing many lives and livelihoods of people. It is estimated that the earthquake destroyed about 54% of the houses completely while 35% were partially damaged, leaving only 11% undamaged. It is believed that almost 83% of hous-

es were built 100 years ago and 17% were built 50 years ago. Unfortunately, those houses carrying historical and cultural values were badly impacted by the earthquake. Efforts for rehabilitation were initiated but they did not continue to meaningful results due to the several concerns such as financial and land ownership issues.

The second major disaster that struck Bungamati was the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit the whole world. Many people who were already living in difficult circumstances owing to poverty further suffered due to the pandemic. In addition, loss of employment, lack of food security, and health issues have affected the livelihoods of people and reconstruction efforts in Bungamati.

European Union's SWITCH-Asia funded Sustainable Tourism and Green Growth for Heritage Settlement of Kathmandu Valley (Parya Sampada) project, implemented by UN Habitat aims to promote sustainable tourism and green growth in the Kathmandu Valley. The project has been supporting reconstruction activities and improving the livelihoods of people in Bungamati. The project is also supporting preparation of various policy documents for Lalitpur Metropolitan City such as Green Development Policy, Sustainable Tourism Development Policy, and Heritage Settlement Recovery Policy. As youth and women are key beneficiaries of the project, the project has trained 448 youth and 495 women in entrepreneurship development. Similarly, 311 youth and 332 women have been trained in a variety of sectors such as hospitality, handicraft, and cuisine. These activities contribute youth and women to become independent at the same time supporting the Government of Nepal to achieve SDG No. 8- decent work and economic growth.

In addition, the Parya Sampada project has provided various software and hardware supports to youth by providing trainings on advance woodcrafts, homestay management, pickle making, smart agriculture on fruits & vegetables, bhoj (Newar cuisine), advance stitching, bakery, flute, lakhe dance (dance of a demon in the Newar carnival), dhime baja (important musical

instrument of Newars), food processing, yomari making (delicacy of Newars), tour guide, entrepreneurship development and so on. These activities have enabled the youth of Bungamati to conserve their both tangible and intangible heritage, thereby expanding economic activities in their localities.

The partnership with local communities to rebuild and revive the tourism activity while preserving their traditional values and culture are an exemplary initiative and might just be another reason to visit Bungamati in addition to taste the authentic food, and experience culture and traditions. It is unrivaled in terms of appearance and aesthetics as well. This settlement has all to draw folks in because there aren't many automobiles or



people to disturb the serenity, therefore the setting is very peaceful.

Internal tourism has been moving at a high pace these days and the potential to promote it is endless. Visiting Bungamati provides two main messages. The first one is the local culture and second is how Bungamati was able to revive its economy in the aftermath of the earthquake (reconstruction activities) and the COVID-19 outbreak. Internal tourism not only contributes to revive the economy, it also provides various opportunities to the youth of Bungamati. If we examine closely, there are clear linkages among youth, culture, and tourism, hence the youth have a bigger role to play to promote internal tourism and become a part of the local culture, and the economy of the country.

Finally, youth can help a lot to promote Bungamati as a one of the key tourist destinations in the valley since youth are very active on social media, which has hugely contributed to promote tourism. Sharing pictures among peers, online reviews, online galleries, and any sort of presence regarding Bungamati could attract more youths and other tourists as well.

*Shrestha is working as an Intern at UN-Habitat*

## INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

# Remembering Innocent

*International Holocaust Remembrance Day Marked In Nepal*

By A CORRESPONDENT

“My father, Martin Freiberg, was born in Magdeburg, Germany, on February 20, 1931. It was neither a good time nor place to be born a Jew,” writes Mark Regev, formerly an advisor to the prime minister, a senior visiting fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, in his recent article in The Jerusalem Post.

“He was given the name Martin, after his late uncle, my great uncle, who died in 1915 on the western front in the Great War – a soldier killed in action fighting for the Kaiser and the German Fatherland. Some two decades later, the German state declared my family, and all Jews, to be evil bacteria, vermin that needed to be exterminated.”

“My father never volunteered

who sucks the blood of the downtrodden masses. For the militant Islamist, the Jew is the murderer of innocents and the perverter of morality,” writes Mark Regev.

“The xenophobic ultra-nationalist, the authoritarian revolutionary socialist, and the Jihadi warrior may all abhor each other, but they can unite in common assault on the ‘nefarious’ international Jewish conspiracy.”

### Nepal’s Program

The United Nations Nepal together with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Embassy of Israel and Delegation of the European Union observed the 77th International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Nepal for the eighth consecutive year. They jointly honored the memory of the six million Jews and millions of other minorities murdered during the Holocaust.

In Nepal, the commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day focuses on generating awareness and empowering youth to stand up for human rights, challenge discrimination and foster tolerance, solidarity, and action for lasting impact. On 26 January, as a prelude to this year’s observance, the UN, the three embassies and Yuwalaya, an organization working for/with adolescents and youth, organized the Countering Hate Speech workshop for youth. Six dozen youth from seven provinces in Nepal participated in the workshop and explored ways of addressing hate speech online.

In 2022, this day has a focus on – Memory, Dignity and Justice, because the writing of history and a conscious act of remembering brings dignity and justice to the victims and sheds light on the stories the holocaust tried to erase. This year’s observance was graced by Ephraim Eisenman, a 77-year-old Holocaust Survivor who shared his story of exceptional courage and resilience.

Speaking at the ceremony, Richard Howard, the UN Resident Coordinator a.i said, “we call upon everyone to have a discussion on how we learn from the past to build our societies today, to work together to build communities that thrive in their diversity and communities in which equality and justice are the guiding light. It is that, for which we must strive.”

Hanan Goder Goldberger, Am-

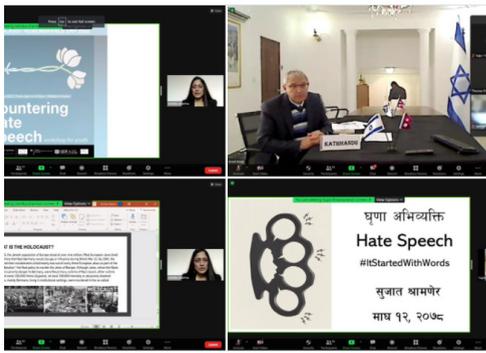
bassador of Israel to Nepal, recited the memorial prayer and said Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Such event should never be forgotten and should never happen again. We must promote values like tolerance, acceptance of the other, nondiscrimination and democracy.

Dr Thomas Prinz, German Ambassador to Nepal, quoted one of the Holocaust survivors and said, “Saul Friedländer in the German Parliament once expressed his hopes that we “continue fighting for tolerance and inclusivity, for humanity and freedom, in short, for true democracy. I think this is exactly what we have to do.”

Likewise, Ms. Nona Deprez Head of the EU Delegation to Nepal expressed, “we will never accept or ignore Holocaust denial, and will combat firmly any kind of antisemitism, intolerance, harassment or violence against any person or community based on ethnic origin, religion or belief.”

During the ceremony, in honor of the victims of the Holocaust, musicians from the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory created a beautiful fusion of Nepali folk music using the Sarangi and classical pieces from the Hungarian dance and the Oscar-winning Schindler’s List.

Like people all over the world, Nepal has also been hosting programs to commemorate the International Holocaust Day. With good bilateral relations, Nepal needs to support the cause of Israel and Jews at international level including at the UN.



to share his wartime childhood experiences with his children. He didn’t want to talk about the discrimination, hunger, humiliation, abuse and fear. Psychologists call this repression, an unconscious defense mechanism to block unpleasant memories. My father simply locked them all away, shut tightly in some inner vault. Like so many survivors, he just wanted to move on.”

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day people across the world gather to remember the Jews murdered by the Nazis and to condemn contemporary anti-Semitism.

“For the Right-wing racist, the Jew is the all-powerful globalist committed to destroying the national ethos and enslaving the common man. For the far-Left extremist, the Jew is a Rothschild capitalist



KUL MAN GHISING

# Rush Hour

*As per his commitment expressed in the beginning of second tenure as Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Kul Man Ghising has been taking several steps to transform Nepal's power system. The recent decision to allow vehicle charging stations in individual households will have major implications in increasing electricity consumption by promoting green vehicles*

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Although it was an official holiday, Kul Man Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, was in an inspection tour to Nala of Kavre district. He inspected the construction work of a transmission line project.

It was not the first time he was travelling on the government holiday. During the regular office hours, MD Ghising has been spending most of his time in administrative and managerial

roles and he has been using the regular holiday and public holiday to inspect projects and other activities of NEA across the country.

This has helped many projects facing obstruction and delay for years to complete sooner. His regular inspection visits also provide him an opportunity to know the ground reality and public perceptions. Since his appointment as the managing director in August, MD Ghising has spent most of his time in NEA's

management and operational sites.

When MD Ghising joined NEA for the second time as MD, there were heap of the problems. The achievement made during his first four-year tenure was in the process of disappearing. Tackling high electricity leakage, wastes of surplus electricity worth of over billion rupees, obstructions in the transmission line and distribution problems, MD Ghising has attempted to settle these issues one by one.



With five months of planning, NEA has brought down the leakage below 14 percent, connecting electricity to big cement factories including Hongsi and industrial corridors, Ghising has already created a market for over 500 MW of electricity. This will likely help NEA to consume its surplus energy in the coming wet season and make a profit.

In just a matter of six months, his efforts have paid off, completing two transmission line projects supported by Indian Exim Bank and some backed by Asian Development Bank.

He also visited Hetauda to clear the obstruction created to World Bank supported 400 kV Hetauda Inaruwa Transmission line project. His visit also eased the obstruction in 200 kV Chilime-Trishuli Transmission line project, the life line to evacuate electricity from Sanjen, Sanjen II and Rasuwagadhi hydro-electricity projects.

Thanks to MD Ghising's managerial skills, NEA is now using its own power stations to meet the high value demand during the peak time and importing electricity from India in normal time. By taking this step, NEA has been saving millions of rupees.

With backing and support from Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal,

MD Ghising has also been amending NEA by-laws recently, allowing charging facilities for electricity vehicles at household level.

Like MD Ghising, Minister Bhusal is also keen to see the result from her work. This is the reason she backed the amendment of by-laws, which is one of the major steps in reforming NEA's overall capacity.

"Electricity Distribution By-laws, 2078 BS is going to be a game changer in the supply, distribution and improvement of quality of the supply of electricity to the consumers," said MD Ghising.

The bylaws endorsed by the 892nd meeting of the NEA Board of Directors on January 4, 2022 have now come into effect.

One of the important provisions in the bylaws is allowing the customers to charge a vehicle with a separate meter of larger capacity in their home compound if the vehicle cannot be charged without the approved load for domestic use.

With the new by law, NEA has decided to provide electricity along with transformers to encourage large investment in electric charging stations.

The power utility has made arrangements to provide meters to the customers if they demand a separate meter

for charging electric vehicles at home through the Electricity Distribution By-laws, 2078 BS.

MD Ghising said that the new customer-friendly electricity distribution bylaws have been implemented to provide electricity service quickly, easily and at cheaper rate and to increase electricity consumption.

"In the past, there was an attempt to ban everything as there was load-shedding. Now, with the end of load-shedding, it is imperative to increase the consumption of electricity generated in the country. With this in mind, we have implemented new by-laws to provide reliable and quality service to the customers as per the demand and to increase the power consumption as well," said Ghising.

"We are reducing electricity tariffs to increase consumption. We are also trying our best to make the service customer-friendly by facilitating it."

Through the bylaws, the NEA has implemented policies for construction and operation of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

It is mentioned that permission will be given to the approved body / firm / person / company to set up public charging stations in private houses, offices, firms / companies / institutions, private and public places and private



real estate.

Institutions operating public charging stations in major urban areas will be given priority, said the NEA.

In addition, the government, public institutions and the local levels will be given priority if they want to operate a public charging station.

The provision has also been made to set up a public electric vehicle charging station on public land with the approval of the government.

“The NEA will provide electricity service, including transformers, to the service providers setting up charging stations with electricity demand up to 200 KV. In the case of charging stations with higher demand, the work of HT line will be done by the Authority but the rest of the work including transformer connection will be done by the service providers,” he said.

A separate electricity tariff has also been introduced for charging stations.

The NEA has also provided facilities for milk moistening centers and cold storages run by cooperatives and drinking water and irrigation operated by cooperatives or communities.

The NEA will supply power from its own transformers to such customers whose demand is up to 200 KV.

This will reduce the cost of purchasing transformers for such customers and they will benefit from this facility, said Ghising.

“Previously, customers had to purchase transformers at their own expense if they had to take loads of up to

50 KV and above from the NEA’s transformers. We have now tried to provide relief to the customers by removing it and providing power supply to the industries carrying load up to 100 KV from the transformers of the Authority,” he added. “If the load is more than 100 KVA, the customers have to buy the transformer themselves.”

Earlier, only 50 per cent of the capacity of the available transformer was supplied with electricity, but now such a ceiling has been removed. The NEA has made an arrangement to cut the line of the house of the customers who charge higher tariff than specified by NEA to the tenants.

The NEA has made arrangements to cut the line of such households if it is found that they have collected

more charge than the stipulated tariff from the tenants.

Arrangement has also been made for the tenants to get electricity service by keeping a separate meter after fulfilling certain conditions. With such an arrangement, even the consumers living in rented houses will be able to consume affordable electricity services like other customers.

Arrangements have also been made in the bylaws to provide electricity service to the consumers living in apartments, mostly residential buildings, and colonies if the prescribed conditions are met.

At present, the apartments have been taking electricity from NEA and supplying it to the occupants at a high cost.

Ghising said that the electricity consumption would increase due to the increase in the use of electronic equipment as the occupants of the apartment could now get electricity directly from the NEA by taking a meter.

**Arrears in installments**

The customers who have arrears of electricity tariff will be able to pay in installments.

Customers who have been blacklisted for non-payment of electricity tariff will be able to pay it in up to 12 installments to reconnect the electricity.





### **Gandak To Parasi 33 kV Double Circuit Transmission Line Completed**

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Managing Director Kul Man Ghising said that the power supply problem of the industrial areas could be solved as soon as both the transmission lines came into operation.

Inspecting the completion work of 27 km 33 kV double circuit transmission line from 132/33 kV substation in Gandak to Parasi, he said that power shortage in the areas has come to an end.

Constructed by NEA, the 19-kilometer single circuit transmission line has been completed and brought into operation within two months.

“The industries in the area were forced to operate turn by turn for some time during the summer season due to insufficient power supply for lack of transmission lines. Now this situation has come to an end and the industry can get electricity as per the demand,” said Ghising.

“A 132/33 kV Sunwal substation is under construction to supply electricity to the industries operating in the Sunwal area. The construction of the substation will be completed by next April /May. After that, an additional 90

MW can be supplied to the industries and the supply will be more reliable with quality.”

After visiting the area a few months ago, Ghising had directed the NEA Regional Office, Butwal and Butwal Grid Division to expedite the construction of Butwal-Jamire transmission line targeting industries of the Sunwal area.

The 19-kilometer single circuit transmission line has been completed and brought into operation within two months, said Nawaraj Ojha, director of the provincial office, Butwal.

The problem of inadequate power supply to Parasi and Sunwal industrial areas of Nawalparasi is likely to be resolved forever. That’s because 24-hour power has been ensured to all industries operating there.

The Gandak-Parasi 33 kV double circuit and Butwal-Jamire (Sunwal) 33 kV single circuit transmission line constructed by Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) have been brought into operation.

Industries, including Laxmi Steels, Palpa Cement and Sarbottam Cement are operating in the Sunwal area. Those industries have demanded more electricity to increase their capacity, while other new industries are also

opening in the area.

“Electricity can now be supplied from three 33 kV circuits, including the old one and the two constructed at Gandak Parasi. Due to the shortage of electricity, the industries in the Parasi area will no longer have to run alternately,” said director Ojha.

The electricity would be supplied to Gandak substation from Bardaghat through 132 kV transmission line from India if required.

The NEA is running a campaign to strengthen the transmission and distribution system and expand the infrastructure with short-term and long-term plans to increase the domestic consumption of electricity produced in the country.

### **NEA Reduces Electricity Leakage By 2.82 Percent**

With the massive mobilization of all technical teams backed by local administration, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is able to reduce the electricity leakage to 9.10 percent in the first five months of the current fiscal year 2021/22.

According to NEA, it has reduced the accumulated leakage by 2.82 per cent in distribution during the first five months of the current fiscal year as compared to the same period last fiscal year thanks to the regular campaign for power supply and control of technical and non-technical leakages.

The leakage in distribution by the first five months of last fiscal year (till December) was 11.92 per cent.

Managing Director of NEA Kul Man Ghising said that the entire team was mobilized to bring down the leakage below the target by making the technical and non-technical leakage control steps more effective.

Ghising said that the leakage fell due to the completion of construction of new substations, upgrading of existing substations, increase in power consumption in the industrial areas and reduction in unit billing of customers by making meter reading more effective.

“The leakage has been re-

## COVERSTORY

duced due to regular monitoring and action to control power theft, including hooking, strengthening of overloaded substations and construction of new substations, changing of conductors and transformers and other works,” said MD Ghising.

“Once the summer season starts, the leakage may increase again, so work is being done to reduce the leakage below the target.”

The largest part of the power leakage was noticed in distribution system. The NEA has set a target to reduce the overall system leakage to 15.5 per cent and distribution leakage to 9.5 per cent in the current fiscal year.

According to NEA, among the distribution centers under the NEA’s seven provincial offices and two provincial division offices, the highest power leakage is recorded under the Provincial Office, Janakpur of Madhes Province.

The overall electricity leakage of 23 distribution centers under the Provincial Office of Janakpur was 12.99 per cent.

It was 17.36 per cent during the first five months of the previous year. The Malangawa distribution centre in Sarlahi has the highest leakage of 43.82 per cent, said the NEA.

Last year, the power leakage in Malangawa distribution centre was 10.17 per cent.

The power leakage at Simraungadh distribution centre in Bara is 39.80 per cent. Last year, the leakage rate there was 53.07 per cent.

The leakage of Jaleswor distribution centre in Mahottari has fallen to 37.61 per cent. The leakage of electricity at Simara distribution centre in Bara is 0.48 per cent due to the large number of industrial customers.

The Inaruwa distribution centre in Sunsari has the highest leakage of electricity among the 24 distribution centers under the Provincial Office of Province-1, Biratnagar.

Out of the six distribution centers under the Provincial Division Office Hetauda under Bagmati Province, Palung distribution centre has the highest leakage at 30.11 per cent.

Of the 20 distribution centers under the Bagmati Provincial Office, Kathmandu, Sindhupalchowk distribution centre has the highest leakage of 31.93 per cent.

Likewise, the leakage of electricity at Helambu distribution centre in Sindhupalchowk is 30.78 per cent.

Of the 13 distribution centers under the Gandaki Provincial Office

Out of the 14 distribution centers under the Provincial Division Office Nepalgunj under Lumbini Province, the highest power leakage is 19.42 per cent in Pyuthan distribution centre.

The Rukum (West) distribution centre has the highest leakage among the 11 distribution centers under the Karnali Provincial Office Surkhet. The leakage of the centre has dropped to 27.13 per cent this year from 31.25 per cent last year.

Achham distribution centre has the highest leakage among the 11 distribution centers under the Sudurpashchim Provincial Office Attaria. The leakage of the centre, which was 18 per cent last year, has further increased to 20.44 per cent this year.



Pokhara, the highest leakage is in the Myagdi distribution centre. The leakage of the centre has dropped to 15.55 per cent this year from 18.92 per cent last year.

Out of the 11 distribution centers under the Lumbini Provincial Office Butwal, the highest leakage is 25.56 per cent in Kapilvastu’s Taulihawa distribution centre.

MD Ghising has been doing his best to improve the quality of electricity distribution, complete the projects in time and make NEA a profitable public utility. This is what he has been aspiring for. He does not seem to care about personal assaults against him by some elements. A saying goes: “The Elephant Keeps Walking as the Dogs Keep Barking.” This applies to MD Ghising as he keeps walking.

# Political Economy Of Slower Population Growth In Nepal



The global population has been growing steadily from 1 billion in 1800 to 7.9 billion in 2021.

Unexpectedly, in Nepal, the census preliminary data shows the slowest population growth in 80 years with a 10.18 percent rise in the last 10 years or 0.93 percent annually on average.

While the growth is not uniform across the world, we could see higher growth in Africa and lower in Europe in the past decades. It shows development and fertility have an inverse proportional relationship in general.

Nepal's population has now reached 29 million. The low fertility rate and out-migration have been cited as the main causes of the slowest population growth. During the years, several other factors including awareness, adult literacy levels, especially among females, late marriages, nutritional status, and life expectancy have contributed to birth rate decline.

I still remember a remark made by a woman in Jumla in 1993 that she would not take a risk of having only 2 children and that they would not survive. She was already a mother of 5 kids in her late-30s. This speaks a lot about family health, poverty, and local health services in rural Nepal.

There were some concerns raised over the slower population growth in the economy with the new census data. This could be a concern in the short term if the country faces deficit human resources. But this is not the case. There is massive unemployment and currently, 2 million people are living abroad according to the census. Thousands of Nepalese are leaving the country for foreign employment.

In the long run, the slower population growth can have net positive or negative impacts. It depends on how the government can make the best use of human resources, increase workforce productivity, and facilitate a policy environment for the private sector to support the growth of skills, jobs, enterprise, and markets. Further, it positively contributes to lower climate change, environmental degradation, and risks of disaster and pandemic.

The population data is interesting in the context of a new federal system of governance adopted in 2015 as the distribution of the population shows imbalances owing to the centralized power, resources, and services in and around the capital. Kathmandu still holds the highest population (2 million) amongst districts and Kathmandu Valley with over 3 million population.

BY: DR. PRABIN MANANDHAR

Terai region has the highest proportion of the population (54 percent) while there are drops in the hills and mountains. This imbalance would create pressure not only on the limited infrastructure and services but also contribute to potential socio-political tensions in the Terai. The federal system should address this imbalance in line with the constitution.

The country is urbanized with 66 percent population living in municipalities and the rest in rural municipali-



ties according to the estimates. There are growing disparities within and between municipalities and rural municipalities. The provincial and local governments have opportunities to support rural-urban linkages through increased physical, social and economic connectivity and good bonding between core and peripheries. It requires intergovernmental collaboration at the vertical and horizontal levels.

In summary, slower population growth is not necessarily negative if we are aware of and take measures towards potential positive and negative impacts. Moreover, the three levels of government should take a political economy approach to address population imbalances in the country. Not to mention, the government should protect the people, wherever they are, against ongoing and future pandemics.

*Dr. Prabin Manandhar is an expert in international development. Currently, he is working as Country Director of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Nepal. He is the Former Chair of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN). He is also a visiting faculty at Kathmandu University. The opinions are of his own and not that of his employer. He can be reached at prabin.manandhar11@gmail.com*

JAPAN JOINS UNICEF

# Helping Nepal

*Japan and UNICEF Join Hands to Strengthen Vaccine Cold Chain in Nepal. This critical support will help Nepal deploy vaccines, including those against COVID-19, throughout the nation*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Whenever Nepal needs support, Japan government always comes forward to help. At a time when Nepal has been facing problems in the storage of Covid-19 vaccines, Japan joins hands with UNICEF to strengthen the vaccine cold chains in Nepal.

The Government of Japan has provided the grant assistance to strengthen vaccine cold chain system in Nepal through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Under its grant, Japan has provided high-quality facilities such as 9 walk-in-coolers, 38 solar-driven vaccine refrigerators, 1,109 long-range vaccine carriers and 53 cold boxes to ensure effective COVID-19 vaccination rollout in Nepal. These facilities have been delivered sequentially throughout Nepal since last year and the delivery of all items of equipment was completed on January 30 this year. The grant also supports human resource development for operation and maintenance of cold chain equipment as well as monitoring for effective management of routine and COVID-19 vaccines by UNICEF.

"Nepal is currently experiencing the third wave of COVID-19 with the Omicron variant, which makes the vaccine drive one of the top priorities for the Government of Nepal," said Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Kikuta Yutaka. "Appropriate vaccine storage is crucial in the vaccine campaign and this grant aims to drastically increase the capacity for storage and distribution of vaccines across the country."

"The provided walk-in-coolers are transportable and can be installed relatively quickly and inexpensively, the solar-driven refrigerators help tackle storage issues faced by regions with unstable electricity, and the carriers and boxes enable vaccine distribution to communities unreachable by a vehicle," added Ambassador Kikuta. "I hope this grant can expedite the process in reaching every person waiting for the vaccine, and I sincerely hope the people of Nepal to regain normal, safe days, overcoming the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible."

Japan continues to provide comprehensive support to Nepal. Japan so far donated vaccines, ambulances, various medical and cold chain equipment to strengthen the measures against COVID-19. In addition, it was recently decided to extend a loan assistance of up to ten billion Japanese yen (approximately 10.4 NPR) to the Government of Nepal for economic recovery, growth and social resilience.



"We are grateful to the Government of Japan for its continued support to Nepal in critical efforts to safely and effectively deliver and store vaccines across the country, particularly at a time when Nepal is battling high numbers of COVID-19 infections during the current wave," said Elke Wisch, UNICEF Representative in Nepal. "The cold chain equipment provided through Japan's generous support will not only support the Government of Nepal's current COVID-19 vaccination drive, but also reinforce critical routine immunization services to protect children against main childhood diseases. A strengthened vaccination system will further contribute to ensuring that the health system is robust enough in case of future crises, so that children, families, and communities across Nepal can be protected."

In Nepal, UNICEF has been working for years with the Government of Nepal and partners to strengthen the country's vaccine cold chain systems for routine immunization. After the onset of COVID-19, UNICEF has been providing technical assistance to the Government to strengthen in-country supply chains systems and to ensure that adequate cold chain capacity is in place to accommodate COVID-19 vaccines, as well as supplying syringes, developing a COVID-19 vaccination rollout guideline, training health workers, and working with communities in addressing misinformation and building trust in vaccines and in the health systems that deliver lifesaving vaccines

## ARUN III

# Getting Ready To Go

*Despite facing several local level obstructions, Arun III Project, the largest hydropower project with Indian investment, is going to be completed by April 2023*

By A CORRESPONDENT

People who have lost land to the entrance built for the Arun III Hydroelectricity Project have obstructed work on its power house being constructed at Pukhuwa, Chichila Rural Municipality-3.

According to Jani Kumar Rai, chairman of the Arun III Compensation Victims Struggle Committee, 400 families lost 524 ropanis of land due to the construction of the entrance way. "We have repeatedly asked to be compensated for the land lost but our calls have fallen on deaf ears," a disgruntled Rai said. "That is why we have been forced to stop work on the power house."

Local Harka Singh Rai told The Rising Nepal that the victims would not allow the resumption of work until they were compensated. Some who have already received compensation for the land also claim that they only received a portion of the promised amount.

Passing through several such local level obstructions, Nepal's largest hydro power project Arun-3 is expected to be ready in April 2023. The electricity will be supplied in India.

Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN), a joint venture between Himachal Pradesh and the central government, is building the 900 MW Arun-3 Hydro Power Project in neighboring Nepal. Due to the hard work, efficiency and dedication of the officers and employees of SJVN, this project under construction on the Arun river of Nepal will be ready in April 2023, two years ahead of the target. The central government had given a target to prepare this project in the year

2025. SJVN is moving towards early completion of this project and power generation from the project will start in April 2023. The project will generate 4,018.87 million units of electricity in a year.

Arun-3 is under construction in Sankhuwaswa district in the east of Nepal. It is situated on the Arun River. Its headquarter is located at Khandbari-9 Tumlingtar, 500 km from Kathmandu. In this hydro project, a 70 m high gravity dam and an underground power house with a head race tunnel of about 11.8 km are being constructed on the left bank of the river. Each of the 4 units of the project will generate 225 MW of electricity. The construction work of the project is going on in full swing. Electricity from this project will be delivered to Bihar, India through 400 kV double circuit transmission line. This hydro project will strengthen the economic connectivity between Nepal and India.

More than two thousand people are working at the construction site of the project, of whom 1700 are technicians and Nepalese workers. In May 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had laid the foundation stone of this 900 MW power plant of strategic importance. The cost of this strategic project being built in Nepal has been estimated to be around Rs 7000 crore. With the completion of the project before the stipulated period, the corporation will get an opportunity to sell additional power for two years.

Nandlal Sharma, Managing

Director and President of SJVN said that SJVN has won this biggest project Arun-3 of Nepal by beating foreign companies in the international bidding competition. The project is being constructed by Arun-3 Power Development Company Limited (SAPDC), a wholly owned subsidiary of SJPN. He said that if this project is completed two years before the target, SJVN will get double benefit. This will also reduce the cost of construction of the project. This is a prestigious project for Nepal as well as India and will bring peoples of the two countries closer. Nandlal Sharma appreciated the efforts of the team led by SAPDC CEO Arun Dhiman.

Arun Dhiman, CEO of Nepal-based SAPDC, said that under the guidance of Chairman Nandlal Sharma, this project is being implemented amidst tough challenges in the extreme geological situation. The project work is in the final stages and is scheduled to be commissioned in the year 2023. He said that every employee of the company is playing his role with utmost sincerity to complete the project in stipulated time. The successful commissioning of the project will play a vital role in bringing in more FDI in the hydropower sector in Nepal.

Rakesh Sehgal, chief GM civil designer of SJVN's SAPDC company, which is building the Arun-3 project in Nepal, says that 300 crores are being spent to bring additional machines and laborers to the under-construction companies to expedite the work of the project. He said that after spending this amount,



the corporation can get a chance to earn more income of Rs. 2 thousand crores. The project is expected to generate an income of 1000 crores in a year. In such a situation, the income of two years can reach up to Rs 2 thousand crores.

Jitendra Yadav, Chief Finance Officer of SAPDC Company, said that according to the agreement, it is to be built in 2025. It will be run by the corporation till 2050 and later it is to be handed over to the Government of Nepal. Even if the corporation prepares this project earlier, the corporation will run it till 2050. The earlier it is built, the more time the corporation will have the opportunity to generate electricity. It should be ready and commissioned in 2023. Vigorous preparations are going on for this. In this, when the power gen-

eration starts, the central government will also get the benefit in the form of dividend soon.

The project is very important from 'a strategic point of view' as well.

Built at a distance from Nepal's border with China, it is also considered very important from a strategic point of view. This project is the largest investment of any country in Nepal so far. Looking at the geographical point of view here, it was a challenge to build the project itself and deliver the machines here.

#### **Arun-3 project was the target of anarchists**

This project, which is considered very important for Nepal, has been the target of chaotic elements. When SJVN took up the project in the year 2018, there were several at-

tempts by anti-social elements to create many barriers at the project site. In February 2019, a series of bomb blasts took place near the project's power station, in which the generator and the tunnel boomer were damaged. In the year 2018, there was an IED blast here. Then the boundary wall of the project office was destroyed. However, there was no casualty in these bomb blasts. After these incidents, the Nepal government tightened the security of this project.

Whatever the situation it faces, SJVN has been making all its efforts to complete the largest project invested by India in Nepal by April 2023. Once the Arun III starts generation of electricity, Nepal will also receive around 100 MW of electricity free of charge.

# Nepal GDP To Grow

*World Bank Report Says Nepal's GDP Growth Will Expand By 3.9 Percent*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Following a massive second wave of COVID-19 in mid-2021, South Asia's economy rebounded in the second half of the year.

The World Bank Outlook predicts that in Nepal, output is expected to expand by 3.9 percent in 2022 supported by better agricultural output and rebounding services activity on improving vaccine coverage. Bangladesh is expected to reach 6.4 percent in FY2021/22 ending June 2022, and 6.9

The economic damage brought about by the second wave in India has already been unwound, with output effectively returning to pre-pandemic levels. Contact-intensive sectors, like trade and hotels, however, are still below pre-pandemic levels. Growth in Pakistan surprised on the upside, supported by improving domestic demand, record-high remittance inflows, and a narrow targeting of lockdowns.

Growth in Bhutan has been revised down because of COVID-19 protocols, delays in infrastructure projects caused by migrant labor restrictions, and a stagnant tourism sector. An improvement in domestic demand and resumption of exports contributed to strong growth in Bangladesh. The return of tourists to Maldives supported an estimated 22.3 percent output expansion in 2021.

Consumer inflation in the major economies of the region has been above central banks' targets since late 2019. In India, easing supply disruptions related to COVID-19 and deficient demand led to a return of inflation toward the central bank's target in late 2021.

In Pakistan, high inflation led

to the removal of monetary accommodation, while macroeconomic policies in Sri Lanka remained generally accommodative.

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August led to a rapid cessation of international grants and finan-

to be almost 8 percent lower than projected before the pandemic. Additionally, the pace of per capita income catch-up with advanced economies is expected to slow over the forecast horizon.

India's economy is expected to grow by 8.3 percent in the fiscal year ending March 2022, unchanged from the June 2021 outlook. The forecast for FY2022/23 and FY2023/24 for India has been upgraded to 8.7 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively, reflecting higher investment from the private sector and in infrastructure, and dividends from ongoing reforms.

In the sub-region excluding India, growth momentum will pick up over the forecast horizon and is expected to expand by 4.4 percent in fiscal year 2021/22. Pakistan will benefit from structural reforms boosting export competitiveness and enhancing the financial viability of the power sector.

A rebound in investment and external demand is expected to lead to a 5.1 percent expansion in Bhutan in FY2021/22.

Global Growth to Slow through 2023

Following a strong rebound in 2021, the global economy is entering a pronounced slowdown amid fresh threats from COVID-19 variants and a rise in inflation, debt, and income inequality that could endanger the recovery in emerging and developing economies, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report. Global growth is expected to decelerate



cial support, as well as a loss of access to overseas assets and the international financial system. The country faces a humanitarian and economic crisis. Almost all of Afghanistan's population is suffering from inadequate food consumption.

Growth prospects have improved since June 2021, largely because of better prospects in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Regional growth is expected to accelerate to 7.6 percent in 2022 as pandemic-related disruptions fade, before slowing to 6.0 percent in 2023.

In most economies, monetary and fiscal policy are expected to remain broadly accommodative in 2022, but gradually shift to a focus on fiscal sustainability and anchoring inflation expectations.

Despite the upward revision to growth, output in 2023 is still projected

markedly from 5.5 percent in 2021 to 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.2 percent in 2023 as pent-up demand dissipates and as fiscal and monetary support is unwound across the world.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant indicates that the pandemic will likely continue to disrupt economic activity in the near term. In addition, a notable deceleration in major economies—including the United States and China—will weigh on external demand in emerging and developing economies. At a time when governments in many developing economies lack the policy space to support activity if needed, new COVID-19 outbreaks, persistent supply-chain bottlenecks and inflationary pressures, and elevated financial vulnerabilities in large swaths of the world could increase the risk of a hard landing.

“The world economy is simultaneously facing COVID-19, inflation, and policy uncertainty, with government spending and monetary policies in uncharted territory. Rising inequality and security challenges are particularly harmful for developing countries,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass. “Putting more countries on a favorable growth path requires concerted international action and a comprehensive set of national policy responses.”

The slowdown will coincide with a widening divergence in growth rates between advanced economies and emerging and developing economies. Growth in advanced economies is expected to decline from 5 percent in 2021 to 3.8 percent in 2022 and 2.3 percent in 2023—a pace that, while moderating, will be sufficient to restore output and investment to their pre-pandemic trend in these economies. In emerging and developing economies, however, growth is expected to drop from 6.3 percent in 2021 to 4.6 percent in 2022 and 4.4 percent in 2023. By 2023, all advanced economies will have achieved a full output recovery; yet output in emerging and developing economies will remain 4 percent below its pre-pandemic trend. For many vulnerable economies, the setback is even larger: output of fragile and

conflict-affected economies will be 7.5 percent below its pre-pandemic trend, and output of small island states will be 8.5 percent below.

Meanwhile, rising infla-



tion—which hits low-income workers particularly hard—is constraining monetary policy. Globally and in advanced economies, inflation is running at the highest rates since 2008. In emerging market and developing economies, it has reached its highest rate since 2011. Many emerging and developing economies are withdrawing policy support to contain inflationary pressures—well before the recovery is complete.

The latest Global Economic Prospects report features analytical sections that provide fresh insights into three emerging obstacles to a durable recovery in developing economies. The first, on debt, compares the latest international initiative to tackle unsustainable debt in developing economies—the G20 Common Framework—with previous coordinated initiatives to facilitate debt relief. Noting that COVID-19 pushed total global debt to the highest level in half a century even as the creditors’ landscape became increasingly complex, it finds that future coordinated debt relief initiatives will face higher hurdles to success. Applying lessons from the past restructurings to the G20 Common Framework can increase its effectiveness and avoid the shortcomings faced by earlier initiatives.

“The choices policymakers make in the next few years will decide the course of the next decade,” said Mari Pangestu, the World Bank’s Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnerships. “The immediate priority should be to ensure that vaccines are de-

ployed more widely and equitably so the pandemic can be brought under control. But tackling reversals in development progress such as rising inequality will require sustained support. In a time of high debt, global cooperation will be essential to help expand the financial resources of developing economies so they can achieve green, resilient, and inclusive development.”

The second analytical section examines the implications of boom-and-bust cycles of commodity prices for emerging market and developing economies, most of which are heavily dependent on commodity exports. It finds that these cycles were particularly intense in the past two years, when commodity prices collapsed with the arrival of COVID-19 and then surged, in some cases to all time-highs last year. Global macroeconomic developments and commodity supply factors will likely cause boom-bust cycles to continue in commodity markets. For many commodities, these cycles may be amplified by the forces of climate change and the energy transition away from fossil fuels. The analysis also shows that commodity-price booms since the 1970s have tended to be larger than busts, creating significant opportunities for stronger and more sustainable growth in commodity-exporting countries—if they employ disciplined policies during booms to take advantage of windfalls.

The third analytical section explores COVID-19’s impact on global inequality. It finds that the pandemic has raised global income inequality, partly reversing the decline that was achieved over the previous two decades. It has also increased inequality in many other spheres of human activity—in the availability of vaccines; in economic growth; in access to education and health care; and in the scale of job and income losses, which have been higher for women and low-skilled and informal workers. This trend has the potential to leave lasting scars: for example, losses to human capital caused by disruptions in education can spill over across generations.

DEVELOPMENT

CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE (CVA)

# Relief, Respect & Dignity

*Funded by DCA and implemented by local partners in close collaboration with the elected local levels, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) has proved to be an effective mechanism to distribute relief to hundreds of victims of disasters, like Covid-19 and floods, giving them the right to choose what they need.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Ganiram Saud, 45, a resident of Ward No. 10 of Bhimdutta Municipality of Kanchanpur District of Sudurpaschim Province, lost his house, land and crop to the massive floods caused by the torrential rain of late September 2021.

His family faced floods that worsened their suffering caused by Covid-19 pandemic and job loss in India. However, Saud, who had faced hardships during the devastating floods of 2014, found relief materials and kinds distributed through CVA with ease and in time. Selected by a committee composed of elected representatives, representatives of local NGOs and community members on meeting the basic criteria, Saud, an unemployed person with a family of five, received relief materials as per his need and choice.

IME Pay, a leading digital wallet and online payment in Nepal, was involved in the process of delivering the cash worth NPR 4,500

Local level representatives, community leaders, local businessmen and financial institutions like IME Pay have been involved in the process to protect the dignity of victims who receive the cash voucher to purchase goods as they wish.

Distribution of cash to the victims during the pandemic and disaster has been in practice in Nepal for a long time but the CVA process respects the dignity of the victims giving them choices in purchasing materials on their own.

Funded by DCA and implemented by Nepal National Social

Welfare Association (NNSWA), DCA's local partner, in close collaboration with Bhimdutta Municipality, CVA has included many items ranging from food and nutrition to agriculture inputs seeds to provide early recovery to disaster affected like Saud..

But this is not the first time CVA was at work for the needy. The CVA process was used to provide emergency relief to the people suffering from the first and second wave of Covid-19 and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in some areas of Kanchanpur, Kailali and Achham districts in the past. Given its effectiveness, CVA was applied to deliver relief materials to the victims of floods in September 2021.

In the traditional relief distribution system, the victims, mostly poor and marginalized, used to have no choice and no say in materials as they had to accept the goods and kinds delivered by various agencies. As the criteria of selecting the victims



were vague, and that the materials were given to them as relief packages, they had to accept what was given. However in the CVA implementation process by DCA, the local governments and elected representatives were part of it in stages, from selection of beneficiary to delivery of the cash and voucher. Under CVA, priorities were given to the families of the daily wage labor, dalits, those that lacked regular income source and those without agriculture land during the pan-



## DEVELOPMENT



representatives, community members and local partners with broader consultations and set criteria of the wrong ones being included.

which can be used as a reference for the future. This has helped to build the institutional capacity of the local level,” reiterated Thagunna.

Rajendra Chaudhary, a construction worker, had no regular income since the crisis of Covid-19 in March 2020. “As we had lost everything and there was no work, it was very tough for me being the sole breadwinner to feed nine members of the family. The NPR4500 cash voucher helped me to purchase food that we needed from the local groceries. It was a great relief as I could provide for my family.”

For 45-year-old Gopal Singh Bohara, a small shop owner of Bhimdutta Municipality Ward No. 14 of Kanchanpur district, the Covid-19 crisis made his life more difficult as the lockdown affected his business and income.

“I was managing food by asking here and there as I had nothing left at home. After the lockdown I was not able to open and run my shop and I did not have any other option of income generation,” said Bohara. “With the cash support I received, I have repaid some of my debt and added a few goods in the shop now. The shop is again helping me get back on my feet and uphold the expenses of my family

demic

“Our community had a bitter experience of securing emergency relief materials in 2014. We had protested against the distribution of low quality relief materials then. But the voucher worth of NPR 4500 provided by NNSWA and local ward this time gave us a lot of choices and freedom to select the most urgent needs from local groceries,” said Saud.

Having a good experience of delivering the relief to the people in need during the Covid-19 lockdown, NNSWA, a local partner of DCA, implemented the CVA mechanism to address needs of flood affected population.

“Unlike the traditional responding systems which offer physical items and kinds to the affected people by the agencies concerned, CVA’s approach is human rights based approach with the safety, dignity and rights of the people affected by disaster. Respecting the dignity of individual victims, CVA gives victims choices to select items,” said Dinesh Gurung, Programme Manager- Humanitarian and DRR of DCA.

From the beginning, CVA schemes give importance to the information collection regarding the state of the affected population, availability of goods in the local market and selecting the right beneficiaries. Chosen by a committee of elected repre-

“Supporting Covid-19 affected populations through CVA in 2020 and 2021, we implemented CVA to revive the livelihood of flood affected population,” said Ganesh Thagunna, Section Officer of Bhimdutta Municipality (Environment officer / Disaster focal person). “We are grateful to DCA for funding this, as we have realized it is very vital in response times.”

The fund given by DCA through NNSWA is also used for strengthening local level institutional capacity as well. “DCA helped us to



develop Cash and Voucher Guidelines of six.”

## DEVELOPMENT

The lockdown has badly affected the groceries and small agricultural farms run by poor and marginal communities of people like Bohara. In the absence of cash, many of them were unable to pay the rent. The farmers were unable to purchase seeds, grow them and sell vegetables. The lockdown had multiple effects in the lives of the people and mainly their occupation and income.

During the pandemic and lockdown in 2020 and 2021, DCA provided approximately 21 million Nepali rupees worth of support for Covid-19 response, reaching directly to over 25,000 individuals with food packages and hygiene kit support.

DCA through NNSWA also provided cash assistance of up to NPR20,000 to small and micro business enterprises in Kanchanpur to revive their business.

“Through our discussions, consultations with the representatives of local levels and community, we picked the families who were unable to manage food and were in severe crisis. The local government was doing its best, but it needed more support. Thus, we thought that the



best way would be to approach them with cash support so that they could choose what they want to do with it,” says Ashok Bikram Jairu, Executive Director, NNSWA, DCA’s partner in



Kanchanpur District.

In the first and second waves of Covid-19, many victims were in great panic because the members of their family got infected with the virus. Living under the vicious cycle of poverty, it was difficult for them to take care of their family members as they could not afford medical treatment and much needed diet for the infected.

With a criterion of ‘Infected with Corona Virus’ in the list of beneficiary selection process, Chaudhary and Bohara were selected. “At a time when we were unable to provide any financial support as we had spent most of resources to manage the crisis in early days, the support provided by DCA to small and micro-enterprises saved the life of poor and marginal communities in many ways,” opined Dhan Bahadur Thapa, Chairman of Beldandi Rural Municipality.

### CVA For GBV

Covid-19 lockdown also increased the numbers of incidents re-

lated to GBV. Funded by DCA, Dalit Women Rights Forum (DWRF) a local partner of DCA, in collaboration with local levels has supported GBV survivors of poor and marginalized communities of Kailali district.

“The lockdown had affected my daily income as I used to work in others’ fields and help feed my two children,” shared Chandani Bhatta, who is a survivor of domestic violence and abuse from her husband.

Rays of hope shined for her when DWRF provided her with legal and livelihood support. A seed money of NPR 15,000 as a multipurpose cash assistance was given to her.

DWRF had organized a series of dialogue and interaction programs among the stakeholders including local governments. During pandemic, cases of rape, suicide and GBV were noticed. DWRF was able to support 40 such serious GBV cases during that time through counseling, legal aid and livelihoods input.

In the second wave of pandemic also, DWRF, DCA and municipal governments took decisions to support GBV survivors with cash through the approach of CVA under the Emergency Response Project.

15 survivors of GBV and extreme vulnerable cases received the cash assistance which helped them with living expenses, seed money



for small businesses, inputs for legal aids and other needed support such as medicines and education.

**Adopting CVA in Nepal’s Relief System**

For decades, Nepal followed the traditional ways of providing the relief package to the victims of natural disasters. With distribution based on a top-down approach, the relief materials did not match the needs of local populations.

However, cash voucher schemes provide enormous choices for the victims. As people affected by Covid-19, GBV and floods were able to purchase the goods from the local groceries as per their requirement through the Cash vouchers they were given.

“After evaluating the report of CVA mechanism during the floods and Covid-19 crisis, Ministry of Social Development is now considering adding the process as a scheme to reach victims with relief,” said Narendra Singh Karki, spokesperson of the Ministry of Social Development of Sudurpaschim Province.

“All three tiers of government have authority to implement the rescue, relief and rehabilitation program as per the available resources and local needs. Local level gov-

ernments can choose the modalities and partners to implement the relief packages. The authority’s concern is that such relief packages should be sustainable,” said Dr. Dijan Bhattarai spokesperson of NDRRMA.

The size of cash assistance was determined jointly by the implementing partners and the municipalities considering the relevance to similar future assistance from the government.

To make the new scheme successful, DCA’s implementing partners visited, consulted and collected information on whether traders could run their services if CVA was imple-

mented.

“Engagement with local government officials and elected representatives to reach consensus on the CVA was the first step. We held several rounds of formal and informal discussion on potential scope of work including on the scaling up of the CVA or using other resources from government and other non-governmental actors,” explained Jairu..

As an international development and humanitarian organization serving Nepalese communities who are marginalized through a rights-based approach, DCA’s CVaprogram helps communities in reducing the negative impacts of Covid-19 in Kailali, Kanchanpur and Achham districts of Nepal with mixed modalities based on the local contexts.

This project has made a good achievement in Bhimdutta Municipality in Kanchanpur, Gauriganga Municipality and Dhangadi Sub-Metropolitan City and Kailari Rural Municipality in Kailali, and Mellekh Rural Municipality in Achham.

During the COVID-19 crisis and floods, the CVA has proved to be an effective way to reach the victims respecting their dignity and giving them freedom to choose their own relief materials. The local community and the government stakeholders have really appreciated the CVA scheme and are working on adopting it for future responses too.



## भ्रष्टाचार कानूनी, सामाजिक र नैतिक अपराध हो ।

त्यसैले

- कसैले नाजायज फाईदा लिन दिन खोजेमा,
- अनुचित दवाव श्रृजना गरी गैरकानूनी लाभ लिने दिने गरेमा,
- कुनै काम गरिदिने वा नगरिदिने नाममा गैरकानूनी लाभ लिन दिन खोजेमा,
- गैरकानूनी सम्पत्ति जम्मा गरेको पाईएमा,  
त्यस्तो कार्य भ्रष्टाचारजन्य कार्य हो ।

त्यस्ता कार्यमा संलग्न व्यक्ति वा संस्थाको बारेमा तत्काल अख्तियार दुरुपयोग अनुसन्धान आयोग वा स्थानीय प्रशासनलाई खबर गरौं ।

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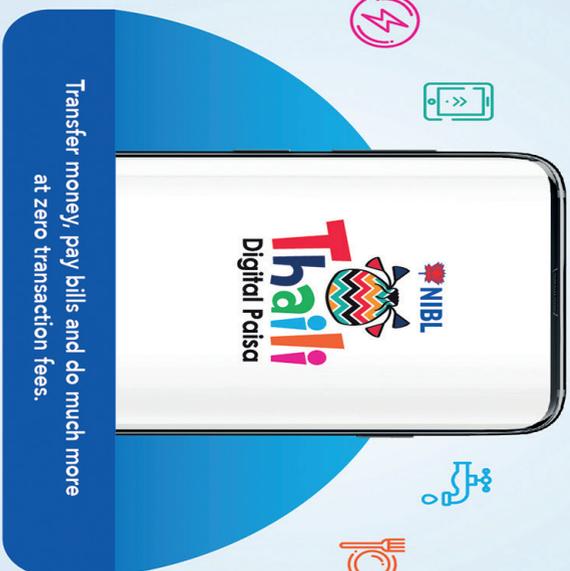
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