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OPINION
Prof. Dr. Surya Dhungel



FORUM
Dr. Prabin Manandhar



VIEWPOINT
Binoj Basnyat

NEW

SPOTLIGHT

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Feb.- 18, 2022

FORTNIGHTLY

JUDICIARY

Impeachment Politics

INSIDE



FACE TO FACE
Balananda Paudel



FACE TO FACE
Krishna Prasad Dahal



LOCAL LEVEL ELECTIONS
Process Kicks Off



अब बचत खातामा मुद्दतीको प्रतिफल

सम्भव छ !



विशेषताहरू

- ❶ बचत खातामा १ लाख पुगेपछि स्वतः मुद्दतीमा परिणत हुने सुविधा ।
- ❷ समयावधि इच्छा अनुसार (१ वर्षदेखि ५ वर्षसम्म) हुने ।
- ❸ परिणत भएको रकममा बैंकले मुद्दती खातामा प्रकाशित गरेको उत्तम व्याजदर कायम हुने ।
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Notes From The Editor



With the registration of impeachment motion in the House of Representatives against chief justice Cholendra Sumsher Rana, the long dispute in the judiciary over the removal of chief justice is over for the time being. Supported by 98 lawmakers of four ruling parties, the impeachment against CJ Rana does not meet the necessary number of lawmakers. Given the current position in the House of Representatives, the support of main opposition CPN-UML is required to impeach Rana. With the decision of CPN-UML not to support the impeachment motion against Rana and possibly registering another impeachment motion against four other justices has put the judiciary in a fragile situation. Although CPN-UML has not said anything about when it will register the motion in the parliament, it has already collected enough signatures to register the motion at any time. As the politics of impeachment enters in the parliament, Nepal's fragile judiciary is now in a more uncertain course. This will create further problems in delivering impartial justice. We have decided to cover the impeachment motion as our cover story. Although Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is merely a grant assistance provided by United States of America for the broader development of Nepal, fake and distorted information disseminated through various channels has put it in the controversy. After prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba himself took the initiative, it looks like the MCC will now be tabled in the House of Representatives. Instead of giving space for fake and distorted information, tabling MCC in the parliament will give the right information to the people. This will also help further strengthen bilateral relations between Nepal and the United States of America, which has stood firmly with it in the last 7 decades.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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Conflict Of Interest In Public Institutions In Nepal



BY: DR. PRABIN MANANDHAR

Nepal has moved from an unstable to a stable government and then again to an unstable government. During this period, unstable governance continued owing to the apparent conflict of interest in the public institutions.

A conflict of interest involves a conflict between the public duty and the private interest of a public official, in which the official's private-capacity interest could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities. It's the abuse of political and administrative power potentially leading to corruption.

There are several examples of conflicts of interest in present Nepal including the appointments of businesspersons or financiers (bank owners, school operators, hospital managers, contractors in key public posts and corresponding changes in policies and contracts that benefit their business; collusion within and between public officials, and service providers or service seekers.

Even the constitutional Development Fund has created the conflict of interest as it violated the key democratic principle of separation of power by giving the executive function of budget execution on the legislature. How does the government set up a monitoring mechanism and internal audit of such a loosely managed fund, which is not a part of a structured fund-flow mechanism?

Now the question is: can public officials prevent conflict of interest given the fact that all public officials have private interests of some kind in their capacity as private citizens? Is it even possible in a country where there is no mechanism to regulate and channel political financing, and there is a lack of political discipline? How is it likely in a power-based society like ours with nepotism, favoritism, or various forms of gifts and benefits?

The answer is YES, but there are challenges. Pursuit to lessons and good practices, public institutions can and should establish policies and procedures to identify, monitor, and manage conflicts of interest. It's

also important to improve the budgetary process, creating transparency and openness in government spending, cutting bureaucratic red tape, and strengthening performance audits to minimize opportunities for corruption.

There is a need to study political appointments and procurement decisions from the perspective of conflict of interest, and raise public awareness for effective identification of potential conflict of interest and management. We need to empower ordinary citizens so that they can ask the right questions to the duty bearers and elected officials demanding transparency and accountability in political appointments, public procurement, and political party financing.

We need a cultural change in public conduct where youth can play a change-making role. Further, timely information disclosure and functioning grievance response mechanisms will help address conflict of interest.

Nepal's development is dependent on good governance at all levels of government. Without political will and commitment, the continuing conflict of interest will put democratic gains and development at risk.

Preventing conflict of interest is self-discipline. The first step in bringing an end to the conflict of interest starts with you; comply with the code of conduct, obey the policy and procedure about conflict of interest and encourage those around you to do the same.

Author: 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

NEWSNOTES

ADB Country Director Visits Road Improvement Project Site

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director for Nepal



Arnaud Cauchois on 14–15 February visited the Narayanghat-Butwal section of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SA-SEC) Road Improvement Project (SRIP) and observed the current status of the construction amid concerns of delays. The visit also included meetings with ministers of economic affairs and cooperatives and physical infrastructure development of Lumbini province, mayor of Butwal, senior government officials, and local authorities.

“The road construction and maintenance work has picked up pace in the recent months, but clearly it needs to be expedited further,” said Mr. Cauchois. “I had constructive meetings with the project team, consultants, and contractors, and I am hopeful whatever issues remain in terms of managing resources and construction materials will be resolved soon.”

In his meetings, Cauchois also emphasized on the urgency to complete construction of bridges before the onset of the monsoon in places where the original bridges were damaged or destroyed by the 2021 floods. He also discussed improving road maintenance, better traffic management, and deploying better road diversions to avoid traffic congestions as the roads are being constructed and upgraded.

Cauchois was accompanied by Project Director of SRIP Sushil Babu Dhakal, and other staff of the Department of Roads. Mr. Cauchois visited at least four bridge construction sites, crusher plant sites, batching plant site, labor and contractor camp sites, among others.

“This stretch of the road once upgraded is expected to bring economic benefits by providing better access to local and regional markets and making movements of goods and people easier,” said Mr. Cauchois. “Further delays are unacceptable, and everyone involved must work together to complete this strategic road network on agreed schedule.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the work to some extent. And delays in tree cutting and shifting of electric poles also hindered the work progress,” Mr. Dhakal said. “But now these issues have been almost resolved, and we have asked the contractors to accelerate construction work and deploy all their resources to make up for the lost time.”

The project, financed by ADB, is upgrading 154 kilometers (km) of Nepal’s strategic road network (113 km

of the East–West Highway) and improving the country’s domestic and regional transport connectivity.

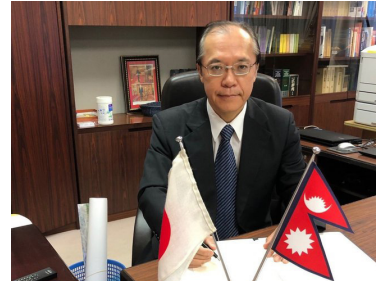
Japan Donates Medical Equipment To Kathmandu Cancer Center In Bhaktapur

The Ambassador of Japan to Nepal Kikuta Yutaka, signed a grant contract with Dr. Anjani Kumar Jha, Chairman of Kathmandu Cancer Center, for installing medical equipment at the Center, which is in Bhaktapur District.

The project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of USD 74,033 (approximately NPR 8.75 million).

The project will support the installation of medical equipment, including operation theater lights with camera and monitor, high performance operating table that can be adjusted in various ways according to the needs of operation at the Kathmandu Cancer Center. Kathmandu Cancer Center has been providing consultations and treatment to cancer patients but was unable to handle complex surgeries owing to the lack of medical equipment.

“The Embassy of Japan believes the project will support the Center to respond to the high demand for better medical services for cancer patients and to improve its specialized cancer treatment through the installation of high-performance equipment. It also believes that the support will contribute towards further enhancing the friendship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal,” says a press release issued by the Embassy of Japan Kathmandu.



Akimitsu Okubo Appointed As JICA Nepal Head

Akimitsu Okubo has been assigned as the new Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Office

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) appoints Akimitsu OKUBO as its new Chief Representative for JICA Nepal Office.

Okubo will take over Yumiko Asakuma who recently completed her tenure in Nepal. Prior to this assignment Okubo was working as the Senior Representative of JICA Nepal Office since Aug 2021. He began his career in JICA from 1998, mainly working in the governance sector handling international cooperation.

He particularly contributed as the Director of Law and Justice Team of Governance Group of JICA headquarter



ters in Tokyo (2014-2018) and was responsible in formulation and management of legal projects not only in Nepal but also many other nations, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and West African countries.

On the other hand, in order to raise awareness of legal cooperation in the public, he took the initiative in editing a publication, "Legal Cooperation in Japanese Style," in 2017. He also served as Director of Legal Affairs Division in the headquarters of JICA in Tokyo before coming to Nepal.

Okubo holds a bachelor's degree of law from the University of Tokyo (1993) and a master's degree of law from Cornell Law School (2005).

Okubo is privileged to lead JICA Nepal Office as its new Chief Representative and expressed his commitment in providing continued support to the people of Nepal and its government together with colleagues of JICA Nepal Office in enhancing development and prosperity in Nepal by realizing JICA's vision "Leading the World with Trust

UAE Ambassador Calls On CoAS General Sharma

Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Nepal paid a courtesy call on Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS) General Prabhu Ram Sharma at the Army Headquarters, Bhadrakali on Monday.



According to a press release issued by the Directorate of Public Relations and Information, Ambassador Saeed Hamdan Al Naqbi paid the visit to CoAS General Sharma and held talks on the issues of mutual interest and cooperation and reciprocity.

The Nepali Army has expressed confidence that such meetings will further help in strengthening and deepening the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Nepali PM Deuba Pays Tributes Lata Mangeshkar says 'A Great Singer' Lost

Nepali present Bidhya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur in his tweet mourned the demise of Lata Mangeshkar and paid rich tribute to the legendary singer.

In his message, Prime Minister Deuba remembered legendary singer late Mangeshkar as great singer who also gave her voice to number of Nepali songs.

Similarly, top Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala has expressed her condolence message saying that the death of singer Lata Mangeshkar is unrecoverable loss to the music world.

In her condolence message, Koirala said that it is

a matter of proud to play in films sung by late Lata Mangeshkar. Actress Manisha said this with a video message in Deshsanchar.

"The greatest singer pall the time is no more. Her departure is an unrecoverable loss to the world especially in film sector her death

leaves a big gap. I was fortunate to find role in sings with her voice. There will not be person like her," said Koirala.

Late Mangeshkar died today at the age of 92 in Mumbai India.



Nepal And India Sign MoU On Construction Of A Motorable Bridge Over Mahakali River

India and Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for construction of a motorable Bridge over the Mahakali River connecting Dharchula (India) with Darchula (Nepal), under Indian grant assistance.

The MoU was signed by Ambassador of India, Vinay Mohan Kwatra and Secretary, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Government of Nepal, Rabinendra Nath Shrestha, in presence of Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Government of Nepal Renu Kumari Yadav.

The project will enhance cross-border connectivity between the Sudurpaschim province of Nepal and the Uttarakhand state of India across

the Mahakaliriver where close people-to-people links exist between communities on both sides of the border. This is in line with the priority shared by both the governments to expand cross-border connectivity for streamlining commercial, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. The construction of the bridge is planned to commence soon.

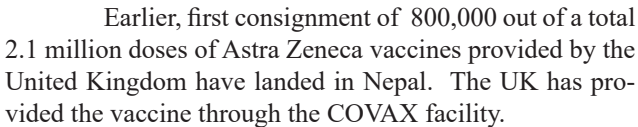


United Kingdom Provides 1312080 Doses of AstraZeneca Vaccine To Nepal

Nepal Receives 1,312,080 Doses Of AstraZeneca Vaccine From The British Government.

As many as 1,312,080 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine under the COVAX facility from the British government have arrived in Kathmandu on Monday.

An official of the Ministry of Health and Population said that vaccines were brought by Qatar Air today morning at 9 am.



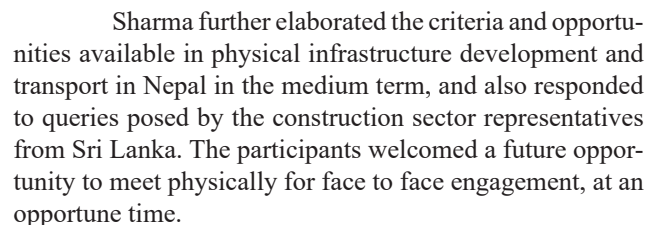
According to Ministry of Health and Population, additional 862,080 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine arrived in Nepal on Monday.

Japan Assists Medical Equipment for Meri Stop Community Hospital In Kailali District

The project will support the installation of medical equipment at the hospital, including electrocardiogram (ECG), cardiac monitor, C-Arm machine, ultra sonography (USG) machine, endoscopy machine, operation theater table, operation theater lights, electrolyte analyzer, x-ray, computed radiography (CR) system, immunoassay analyzer, and generator.

Sri Lanka And Nepal Continue Collaborations In The Construction Sector

Keshab Kumar Sharma, Joint Secretary of the Development Assistance Coordination and Quality Division of the MPIT, provided a comprehensive overview of the procedures in place, as well as the investment prospects in road works and transport. He also underlined the criteria and experience that is required while also providing a general outline of prospects in other areas such as hydro power development, architectural and engineering design, consultancy work and building construction.



Over ten Sri Lankan companies participated in the virtual meeting including the Construction Industry Development Authority of Sri Lanka and Major Constructors of Sri Lanka. Ambassador Himalee Arunatilaka and, Director/

Export Services of the EDB Indumini Kodikara also addressed the meeting.

Israel Provides Over Half A Million Syringes To Nepal

Hanan Goder, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, handed over syringes to the representatives of Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal.



A m b a s -
sador Goder said, “this is part of the international struggle against the pandemic. Israel is proud to cooperate with the Nepali efforts in this struggle.”

The Embassy of Israel is happy to share humanitarian aid with the people of Nepal as an act of solidarity between our two nations. We believe that this gesture would contribute meeting 2022 Vaccination targets and bringing the pandemic under control.

In addition to the earlier contribution to support the Government of Nepal to fight against COVID-19, the Government of Israel dispatched over half a million syringes to support immunization efforts. The syringes will be used with the COVID vaccine to vaccinate communities in Nepal. The consignment of 5,63,000 syringes arrived via air freight today, 1 Feb 2022.

Since the last two years, the Government of Israel has been supporting Nepal in its effort to fight COVID-19. The Embassy handed over medical supplies (including Personal Protective Equipment, masks, digital thermometers, surgical gloves, hand sanitizers, disinfectant solutions) to the Ministry of Health and Population in June 2020. In July 2020, the Embassy also dispatched similar medical supplies to the Ministry of Social Development in Province 2.

In May 2021, a chartered flight of the Nepal Airlines carried 22 tons of medical cargo from Israel. The supplies included ventilators, oxygen concentrators and other medical equipment. Likewise, the Embassy had handed medical equipment related to Covid to Dhulikhel, Patan and Bir Hospitals and Covid prevention materials to the Nepal Police in 2021.

There Are No Secret And Hidden Documents: MCA Nepal
Millennium Challenge Account Nepal Development Board (MCA-Nepal) said that there are no secret and hidden documents regarding the MCA-Nepal. In its statement, MCA Nepal has made it clear that it is an open and transparent institution with all the documents on its web site for



public dissemination.

“Our attention has drawn to the publication of wrong news regarding the documents related to MCA-Nepal.” Ours is a transparent, open and responsible public institution working in 32 Palikas launching public hearing regarding the project,” reads a statement issued by MCA-Nepal.

MCA Nepal also urges all stakeholders to visit their website and see the documents regarding the project.

Pariyar Appointed Press Adviser To PM Deuba

Journalist Govinda Pariyar has been appointed Press Chief to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

According to PM Deuba’s secretariat, PM Deuba appointed Pariyar as his Press Chief. Pariyar had also worked as a press coordinator for PM Deuba during Deuba’s 4th stint as Prime Minister in 2017.

Pariyar has been working as a press assistant to PM Deuba since he led five-party coalition government formed since July this year reports



Vijay Bahadur Shah Appointed As CEO Of Himalayan General Insurance

Himalayan General Insurance Co. Ltd. (HGI), one of Nepal’s older non-life insurance companies, recently announced that Mr. Vijay Bahadur Shah has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer. Shah will assume his role starting 01 Fagun 2078.

“I am honored and excited to have been appointed as the CEO at HGI. It is truly a privilege to be part of the credibility and history that HGI stands for” said Shah. “HGI has a clear vision and purpose for the future and I will do my very best to lead the company and instill passion in the HGI team as we embark on this journey”.

Shah succeeds Mr. Sushil Bajracharya, who started his career in insurance at HGI and served a committed 28 years in the company, with the last 6.5 years as CEO. In his tenure, HGI has strengthened its position as a professional and transparent company and laid the foundations for a future-ready HGI in the new era.

Prior to joining HGI, Shah was CEO at Nepal Insurance Co. Ltd. for 4 years and was instrumental in the positive transformation of the company.

“Vijay brings a varied and broad perspective to the insurance business,” said Mr. Mahendra K. Shrestha, Chairman. “I look forward to working with Vijay as we continue to make significant efforts and investments to add value to our clients, pursue the government’s objective to increase insurance penetration in Nepal, and on the whole, to raise the bar for the entire industry”.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NIBL Marks 36th Year With Gajjab Fixed Deposit Scheme



On the occasion of the 36th anniversary of Nepal Investment Bank Limited, the bank is bringing; “NIBL Gajjab Cha Fixed Deposit Account” to its clientele. The bank is offering this product with the aim of encouraging financial stability and saving habits amongst future

generations. The product is ideal for salaried professionals, parents and guardians and promises to be a vital source of financial injection in dire times for individuals who are looking to secure their own and their children’s future. Following are major highlights of the product:

- The amount deposited will multiply by 6 in 20 years
- The minimum amount to be deposited is NPR 10,000/-
- The maximum amount to be deposited is NPR 5,000,000/-
- Multiple Gajjab Cha Fixed Deposit Accounts can be opened.
- Credit card up to FD amount with waiver on issuance charge.

Loan against Gajjab Cha Fixed Deposit Can be extended up to 90% of cumulative balance in Fixed Deposit account as shown as account balance.

NIBL has been catering to its customers from 88 branches, 131 ATMs, 21 extension counters, 10 revenue collection counters, and 58 branchless banking counters. The Bank, being the recipient of five Bank of the Year awards for exemplary service and business, was accredited with Euro-money awards for “Best Bank 2018” and “Best Bank 2021” from the international publication - Euromoney. Further, ICRA Nepal (International Credit Rating Agency- Nepal) has given the bank a credit rating of A.

Nepal Railway Train On Dry Run



Nepal Railway Company was beginning the dry run of its train from Kurtha of Dhanusha district to Jaynagar in India, according to The Rising Nepal.

According to the daily, the dry run is a testing process where the effects of a possible failure are intentionally mitigated.

From February 13, the train was to conduct the tests by running once a day from Kurtha to Jaynagar so that any failures can be repaired and mitigated before operating for public transportation, reports The Rising Nepal.

“The train will carry neither passengers nor goods during the dry run. We will test the engine, buggy, train tracks, lights and signs, among others. If we find any fault, it will be repaired,” said Niranjana Jha, general manager of Nepal Railway Company.

EU, IFC Establish New Partnership

The EU and IFC have Established a New Partnership to Accelerate Climate-Smart, Inclusive Infrastructure Investments in South Asia

Six South Asian nations, including India, are set to benefit from a new USD\$ 21.5 million (EUR 18 million) funding from the European Union (EU), which will help to accelerate climate-smart, inclusive infrastructure investments in their regions. IFC, the largest global development institution, focused on the private sector in emerging markets, will implement the project under the program, Accelerating Climate-Smart and Inclusive Infrastructure in South Asia (ACSIIS).

ACSIIS is a five-year program (2021-2026) to help spur investments in energy, water, waste management, transport, logistics, and green buildings to benefit people and businesses in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. ACSIIS would leverage USD\$ 850 million of private sector investments in the region.

The impact of COVID-19 on investments in infrastructure has been widespread and severe. Investment commitments in infrastructure with private participation in 2020 dropped by an unprecedented 52 percent from 2019 levels. IFC estimates that South Asian countries can unlock more than US\$3 trillion of climate-smart investment opportunities by fully meeting the national targets under the Paris Agreement by 2030.

“Attracting private capital for climate-smart infrastructure in a sustainable and inclusive manner will be critical for post-COVID-19 recovery in South Asia,” said Hector Gomez Ang, Regional Director for South Asia at IFC.

“The EU’s support for the program could not come at a better time as it is vital to act now to unblock obstacles to spurring sustainable infrastructure projects. This program will leverage IFC’s experience and expertise in supporting climate-smart infrastructure development in the region,” he added.

The program will also support the development of climate-smart investments in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, health, and education while focusing on key themes such as cities, gender, and green finance. The latest initiative builds on IFC’s previous partnership with the EU to support the Eco-Cities Program in India and other programs in the region.

“The ACSIIS project will support a green and inclusive recovery in South Asia. We are happy to see the existing EU cooperation in India broadening into a regional intervention with multi-sector coverage, in line with the objectives of the EU Green Deal, to promote sustainable development, the fight against climate change and the transition to renewable energy,” said Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the European Union to India and Bhutan.

“This initiative will make a positive contribution to



sustainable connectivity, supporting the EU engagement in key sectors to build a greener future,” he added.

Ruby Shah Receives Zonta International 2021 JMK Scholarship



Ruby Shah Receives Zonta International 2021 Jane M. Klausman (JMK) Women in Business Scholarship

Ruby Shah from Bara has been awarded the Zonta International 2021 Jane M. Klausman (JMK) Women in Business Scholarship, a total of \$10,000 award money. She was

nominated by the Zonta Club of Kathmandu, District 25, Area 2, and the application for the award was sent to the Zonta International District selection where she is the recipient of \$2000 among the 32 total award recipients. Additionally, she has also received \$8000 from Zonta Headquarters (Illinois, USA), making her one of only six scholars worldwide to receive this international scholarship for the academic year 2021-2022.

Ruby Shah is a final-year undergraduate at The British College who is pursuing her BBA degree, concentrating in Finance and Accounting. Since the age of 19, Ruby has been working with several startups in different domains like business incubation, content creation, marketing, and consulting services. She served as the former Chief Operating Officer for Udhayami Nepali where she supervised the team of the company and was involved in curating strategies to create insightful content and events for aspiring entrepreneurs. Currently, she is leading the Rotaract Club of Kirtipur as its Charter President where she is working with 40+ youths of her locality to initiate various community projects and capacity development programs.

With a continuous zeal and effort to empower women in the economic sphere, Ruby has attended several fellowship and training seminars. In 2019, she represented Nepal at the International Youth Engagement Conference in Malaysia as the SDG presenter where she pitched a presentation on ‘The contemporary condition of Youth Centers to empower females in Nepal’ and advocated for the role of youth centers in attaining SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth).

World Bank Report Identifies Reforms For Human Capital Outcomes

Nepal has made significant progress in human capital development, though key challenges remain in the health, education, and social protection sectors, which have been exacerbated by the COVID crisis. Nepal’s transition to a federal state presents an opportunity to promote greater human capital accumulation, but it requires significant investment and improved efficiency in spending, states the World Bank’s report “Federalism and Public Expenditure for Human Development in Nepal: An emerging agenda” launched virtually.

While federalism is helping bring policymaking and service delivery closer to the people, it can be further strengthened through a clear definition of responsibilities of each level of government and ensuring the systems and resources are in place for their implementation, states the report.

“This report provides a comprehensive review of the challenges facing Nepal’s human development sectors in the federal context”, stated Madhu Kumar Marasini, Finance Secretary. “The recommendations are aligned with our national development plans and will inform and support our ongoing efforts to ensure all levels of government have the means and tools to perform their key functions in the delivery of core services in education, health, and social protection.”

The Public Expenditure Review (PER) identifies key reforms to help Nepal improve human capital outcomes in the federal context: (i) addressing gaps in programming, including economic inclusion for the poor, and mainstreaming delivery processes; (ii) clarifying roles of different levels of government and ensuring standards are implemented; (iii) improving management processes and systems, including a social registry; (iv) introducing incentives to promote good management practices; and (v) addressing human resource challenges to ensure that subnational governments have the capacity to efficiently deliver quality services.

“The World Bank is committed to continue supporting government reforms to improve human capital outcomes, drawing on the recommendations of this Report, as well as the Public Expenditure Review Report on Fiscal Policy for Sustainable Development launched in December 2021,” said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. “Human capital is one of the pillars of our Country Partnership Framework, and the implementation of key reforms will be supported through our technical dialogue and financial investment in the health, education and social protection sectors, as well as through our various Development Policy Credits.”



“Human capital is at the heart of the green, resilient, and inclusive development (GRID) approach adopted by Nepal,” said Dr. Biswo Nath Poudel, Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission. “The sustainability of development, adaptation to risks, and reduction of disparities (inclusive) all require addressing the structural issues that hamper further improvements in human development outcomes. The report’s recommendations aim to contribute to further advance Nepal’s GRID agenda in this regard.”

The Nepal Opportunity 2079



BY: BINOJ BASNYAT

2079 BS will make an entrance with two main issues that will shape the national security environment of Nepal. The third wave of COVID-19 will disclose its implications and the nation will need to spend more vitality for arranging for the fourth wave. The three tiers election from local to federal will have to take place to outline Nepal's contour to stability or volatility. Besides social, economic, diplomatic challenges the greatest national security threat to Nepal is political instability and institutional corruption.

Political instability is due to politicization of institutions, intra party feud, personal ambition, undemocratic practices with the internal governance of political parties and lack of transparency. Corruption is leading to institutionalization. Corruption is being directed for influencing strategies and policies, positions and appointments and clinching into power. The money earned from corruption is prevailing as a pillar for influencing elections and convincing the population, the source of national power.

Look Back at Oli's Years in Office

In brief, the country is reaching out to find a new normal in these periods of uncertainty.

The Indo-Pacific Region is predominant well focused by the only global power the US. The immediate neighbors China and India are imminent to acquire its political space in South Asia and the Himalaya has been more vibrant. Nepal lying at the central with access to China's ports as well as infrastructure connectivity in the Tibetan region and the new border law has provided ample pretext for Nepal's political elites predominantly the communists to look for an alternative diplomatic maneuvering. Nepal is no more a land locked country but is land linked, which was mentioned by President Xi during his visit to Nepal in October 2019 after 23 years. This outpours the argument that dependence with India has lessened. The institutionalization of relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the Nepal Communist Party has decreased due to internal and external purposes but remains open to another viability. Anti-India oratory for strengthening political influence in the parliament is on the intensification with the constitutional amendments of inducting Kalapani area in the map and the haste to support the new map. These events and happenings have geostrategic bearing and geopolitical consequences.

The US development program the Millennium Challenge Cooperation Nepal compact (MCCNC) has taken a political discourse. Political leaders as well as academicians are having separate connotations on the same verse and more than that, disinformation and misinformation has trampling the perception of the people. US government approved MCCNC designed to improve the availability of electricity and increase road maintenance to advance connectivity, driven growth and to lay a strong foundation for new investment on Nepal's request. There has been no decisive approach on US grant for development efforts showing the way that corruption and political influence strides.

The signing of the Belt and Road Initiative in May 2017 was a catch on China's announcement of the Qinghai-Tibet railway that could be extended to Kerung on the Nepal-China border in 2008. The strategic connectivity is observed as a game changer as well as a nationalist tool for anti-India rhetoric when Nepal solely depended on India for third country trade and transit. The Nepal-China Trans Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network with the 72-kilometer to the border and 170-kilometers to Kathmandu Nepal China Cross Border Railway projects is a provision with one, the funding modalities of approximately US\$319 million for feasibility study and US\$2.3 billion for the project when Sri Lanka's Hambantota has been an example of a debt trap. Two, 98.5% of the railway is likely to compromise high bridges and tunnels making it technically challenging and topographically unsuitable. Third, the railway reached Shigatse in Tibet in 2014 with a plan to reach Nepal's border which is about 500 kilometers north-east in 2020 but has been pushed back to 2025. Lastly the plan is more a political stunt with hidden agendas than a reality that Nepal is enthusiastic about when China and US rivalry is on and China and India confrontation is ongoing.

The uncommon coalition amongst the Nepali Congress (NC), a democratic party, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists-center) NCP-MC) Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist) just formed and Loktantrik Samajwadi Party Nepal is on reign with the Judiciary's pronouncement to re-instate the parliament and appoint Sher Bahadur Deuba as the Prime Minister. The alliance paced up accusing Oli for his dictatorial behavior. The party unity amongst the left aborted contributing to political disunity

creating a void has only complemented to social, cultural and governance breakdown in the near term, which the country is not primed for.

Corruption index expresses no substantive progress in corruption control ranking 117th out of 180 countries.

The nation is in a shattering status. The state of affairs 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.

The last three years which was and opportunity has been missed and missed because one, India's unclear foreign policy that was brought about by the new political environment with the 12-point agreement two, foreign political influence in Nepal's politics and three escalations in China's interests. The political resolve of the world powers and economic undertakings have strategic bearing in Nepal's governance.

Foresight of Priorities

The mandate of the new electorate will have to look into a few provisions as the implications will only bring about instability.

Faulty Provisions in the Constitution

The articles of the eight-year-old and the most expensive constitution of the world is being debated. The ongoing row is about defining the articles of the constitution vis-à-vis the three-tier election. It is election now, as it is the medium that conveys or confiscates from power. Three articles come into discussion Article 85, 215 para 6 and 216. Article 85 spells out that the term of the House of Representative shall be five years by accepting that the House will be dissolved just a few months prior to announcement of the date of election with the upper House's existence. Other provisions do come into play-act if the country is in the state of emergency. Article 215 para 6 and 216 explicit that the heads of village and municipal terms end in five years post-election. But Article 225 states that "The term of a Village Assembly and of a Municipal Assembly shall be five years for the date of election. Another Village Assembly and Municipal Assembly shall be elected not later than six months of the expiration of such a term". This has provided dual connotations raising the question of democratic ethics and democratic convenience. The last local election took place in three stages on 14 May, 28 June and 18 September, so coming to the conclusion of six months post-election has again been the disagreement. It nurtures the premise whether if an election is a process of democracy or another politicization of the measure.

Election is a process of democracy for democratic

rights of the people. Politicalizing election is another stride forward for politicalizing constitutional rights contradicting democratic values which strongly indicates desperation in politics, politicalizing the process of democracy on own conveniences with six arrangements that can be argued one, how power strangles free and fair election two, power as a source of corruption three, politicization of institutions four, intra-party and inter party influence five, impact of financial arrangements on election and finally the people be situated captive to political failing.

Three judiciary decisions have led to the existing government even if Nepal Communist Party United Marxist Leninist (NCP-UML) is the largest political force in the parliament. Oli as the Prime Minister dissolved the parliament two times with an announcement of the dates of election once in December 2020 and May 2021 which was then contested in the Judiciary. The pronouncement led to the President's decision as unconstitutional and reappointed Oli as the Prime Minister. The second verdict reinstated the

parliament and appointed Sher Bahadur Deuba as the Prime Minister. This was implemented with reservations as well as jubilation contesting different articles of the constitution. The March 7th Judiciary decision revived the CPN-UML and the CPN-MC as before May 2028 invalidating the Nepal Communist Party. Politics is scruffier and constitution fragile. This was mainly due to the lack of people's participation to express their support and suggestions in the formulation of the constitution.



Politicization of Institutions

Politicization of institutions and institutional corruption from the streets to the parliament is and will remain an important challenge for the stability. Appointments of constitutional and other significant assignments has been transpired as being more political and financially procured. Finance and political affiliation have been the avenue of appointments. Political cadres' issues and interests are being more important than national. Lack of identifying the state structures and the government is leading to political debate.

The only response will be to form an independent constitutional body to scrutinize and give Justice to the nation and the nationalities. It is time to look beyond politics and identifying clearly what professionalism is as well as difference between State and Government.

Misplaced Political trust Institutional Corruption

With fear being a thing of the past the NCPMC has been put away from its ideology for a new democratic revolution of proletarian domination. Partnering in election with the NC and the UML has been the strategy. And for NC and UML heading the cabinet has been both the appeal

VIEWPOINT

and a lure.

A political mechanism or a steering committee is being talked about with one to continue staying in power two the two parties the NCPS and the NCPMC hope of being defeated the coming up election and third the NC falling in strategic deception and lastly a rivalry amongst the constitutional forces and the constituted forces is in full gear. The unnatural coexistence of political alignments for power with NC is where seeds of instability lie. The two new constituted forces the Maoists is in the verge to lose while the Madhesis is still on the minority in terms of political power. The NC and the UML must come together to rescue misplaced political trust and institutional corruption, prove that raising arms is against the spirit of social, cultural and political unity and more importantly is missing both China's and India's strategy. It goes back to the 12-point agreement envisioned without an exit strategic outlook, but appropriate for political spoilers. More cracks will occur in Nepal's fragile coalition government. Kathmandu needs to decide what it wants from Beijing, Delhi and Washington.

The handling process of the MCCNC both by responsible politicians and Academics is leading to spread of misinformation to the general people and misleading connotations of nationalism. Lack of statesmanship, leadership abilities and political will is determining added politicization as the development efforts by donors' friendly nations as bilateral disagreements alike the Kalapani area. The populations have been devoured with deceptive evidence. Opposing a nation with defiant slogans is generating an incorrect imprint vis-à-vis nationalism. Bilateral or multilateral concerns with disagreements should be mutually dealt with diplomacy in contradiction to public sources with an intention to succeed into public positions. Politicization will affect developmental efforts, political trust and diplomatic behaviour. Political leaders have solved disagreements in the past as political leaders and not just freebooter politicians. As per doing.gov.np, the total Foreign Direct Investment equity inflow is Rs 3207.28 Cr. and grants are very important to developing nations.

The impact of COVID-19 will have direct bearing on the economy and the impersonation to the population

"COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis" says the UN's Framework for Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 Crisis describing that it will hold multifaced affect to societies and economy. For Nepal it will increase poverty, inequalities, fatalities, lowering national GDP, decrease revenue collection, slowing economic growth rate, decrease wage rate, price inflation and causing loss of employment opportunities contributing to socio-economics adversely effecting country's economy. Total imports in Nepal as per the Nepal Market Entry is Rs

1,53,983.71 Cr.

Handling of the health crisis was not encouraging and added national security challenges must not be misjudged like food shortages, expenditure in imports and susceptible to natural disaster. As per the study of APAC Risk Scenarios 2022, there is concern about natural disaster leading to large scale displacement and economic setback in Nepal.

A national strategic body necessitates to be formed to assess the impacts on societies, economies, vulnerable groups and health infrastructure and resources to approve responses. Captivating advantage from global bodies, regional organizations and changing domestic approach could be a course of action. Nepal is mainly dependent on tourism, trade, foreign employment, reliance on imports as well as inadequate health facilities that will contribute to worsening from the impacts.

The team can confirm provisions through the UN and other bilateral and multilateral systems and organizations. The UN is contributing through 131 country teams that is serving 162 countries and territories to support national authorities in developing public health preparedness and response plans to the crisis.

As the Chairs of South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Nepal could initiate socio-economic response on critical components with SAARC Humanitarian Response Plan.

The COVID-19 third wave sweeps across the globe. Nepal's unusual political alliance still strides with likelihood of another political stunt. Politicization of institutions are still on the rise. Economy is slipping away. Diplomacy is merely momentary with who is chairing the ministry. The populations are fatigued of the circumstances but has no say. Nepal's identity is slipping away with religious conversions and social alteration.

To conclude rebalancing could be a better option than rush to the exit with answers to political instability, addressing corruption and preparedness from impacts of COVID-19 crisis and other vulnerabilities. An opportunity is knocking the doors of genuine political leaders to look into the flaws of constitution as 12-point agreement was not envisaged for Nepal's stability. Second, is Restoring trust and fostering cooperation within and between countries will be crucial to addressing these challenges and preventing the world from drifting further apart. Nepal has to initiative stiff choices.

Basnyat is a Strategic Analyst and a former Nepali Army Major General

JUDICIARY

Impeachment Politics

Following the registration of an impeachment motion in the House of Representatives by members of four ruling political parties, chief justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana has been out for now with a new senior justice acting as the chief justice. With an announcement of CPN-UML to register another impeachment motion against four other senior judges including the acting chief justice, the politics of impeachment has created the most unstable and unpredictable situation in the judiciary. Some political leaders and individuals may have gained and some others demoralized in the process, Nepal's judiciary has lost over 7 decades of recognition as an apolitical and stable institution

By KESHAB POUDEL

Since the restoration of the House of Representatives eight months back and appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as the prime minister of a coalition government, lawyers representing four parties of the ruling alliance had started to press chief justice Rana, who was reported to have sided with PM Oli's dissolution, to resign.

However, Rana took a stand against all hostile situations. The move against Rana intensified following the expansion of the cabinet by Deuba in September. The media reported that the PM appointed a minister on chief justice Rana's pressure.

With this news, Nepal Bar Association and Supreme Court Bar Association announced agitation followed by the bench boycott by all the justices.

Although Nepal Bar Association and Supreme Court Bar Association,

both organizations under the control of the ruling alliances, continued their protest despite resumption of court hearing following a nearly two months of showdown.

However, the ruling alliances, which were under pressure from their loyal lawyers, were quietly searching for the appropriate moment to register the impeachment motion against CJ Rana.

By registering the impeachment motion against Rana on 13 February, with support from a total of 98 lawmakers of NC, CPN (Maoist Centre) and CPN (Unified Socialist), the ruling alliances finally vacated the post of chief justice and paved the way for a new acting chief justice.

With no political party having two thirds of majority to pass the impeachment motion in the House of Representatives, Rana will get a re-

lief. However, he will retire during his expulsion given the current political stalemate in the country.

For the sake of a political gain, NC Parliamentary Party meeting drew a conclusion that the NC would also hold talks with other parties and request them to lend support in endorsing the impeachment motion filed against Chief Justice Rana.

Karki To Perform As Acting Chief Justice

Supreme Court's senior-most justice Deepak Kumar Karki has been the Acting Chief Justice following the registration of the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Rana.

Lawmakers from the ruling parties went to the federal parliament secretariat, Singha Durbar, to file the motion of impeachment against Rana. This gave way to Karki to become the



acting CJ naturally as the senior-most justice at the SC.

The impeachment proposed by Dev Prasad Gurung of the CPN (Maoist Centre), Dr Pushpa Bhusal of the Nepali Congress and Jeevanram Shrestha of CPN (Unified Socialist) was backed by Nepali Congress Dr Minendra Rijal and many other lawmakers.

With the registration of the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Cholendra Rana questioning his performance, he has not been allowed to discharge the duties.

The lawmakers from the ruling parties registered the motion of impeachment against CJ Rana in accordance with Article 101 of the Constitution.

As per the Constitutional provision, after the commencement of impeachment proceedings, the Chief Justice shall not be allowed to discharge the duties of his office. This is like suspensions from the office until the case is settled.

Article 101 (2) states one-fourth of the total members of the House of Representatives may move a motion of impeachment against the Chief Justice or a Judge of the Supreme Court, member of the Judicial Council, chief or official of a Constitutional Body on the ground of his or her failure to fulfill his or her duties of of-

fice because of serious violation of this Constitution and law, incompetence or misconduct or failure to discharge the duties of office honestly or serious violation of the code of conduct.

If the motion is passed by at least two-thirds majority of the total number of the members of the House of Representatives, the concerned person shall be relieved of his or her office.

The Constitution, however, guarantees a person charged with impeachment shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to defend himself/herself.

The motion is proposed by CPN (Maoist Centre)'s Dev Prasad Gurung, Nepali Congress's Dr Pushpa Bhusal and CPN (Unified Socialist)'s Jeevan Ram Shrestha and it is backed by 98 lawmakers including Dr Minendra Rijal.

Secretariat's Joint Spokesperson Dashrath Dhamala said the motion will be presented before the Speaker and the Speaker will probably present it before the Business Advisory Committee for discussion and will proceed with further action.

History of Impeachment

This is not a first impeachment motion tabled in the parliament against the chief justice. Although there was no provision in the first in-

terim constitution, the first chief justice of Supreme Court Hari Prasad Pradhan was dismissed by the King and later he was appointed again.

In 1995 CPN-UML registered an impeachment motion against Biswonath Upadhyaya for his decision of reinstating the House of Representatives. However, the motion was withdrawn later with no chances of success.

NC led by Sher Bahadur Deuba also registered the impeachment motion against then Chief Justice Sushila Karki. The motion was withdrawn later when the possibility of passing it looked unlikely.

Chief Justice Gopal Prasad Parajuli was removed under a letter by the secretary of Judicial Council. The justices of Supreme Court led by Rana forced Parajuli to accept the fate. Although it is against the constitution to remove chief justice by a secretary of Judicial Council, former CJ Parajuli was shown the door of exit.

In a similar way, acting chief justice Deepak Raj Josh was sent home by pressure of the justice led by Rana himself. Although Joshi was rejected by a hearing committee for chief justice, his colleagues including Rana rejected his plea to work for remaining tenure as second senior judge.

Three Leaders Meet

With the firm public stand of main opposition party CPN-UML to vote against the motion and possible registration of impeachment motion against four senior justices of Supreme Court, a discussion was held between Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and CPN (Unified Socialist) Chairman Madhav Kumar Nepal at the Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar on February 15.

According to Prachanda's press coordinator Surya Kiran Sharma, the meeting discussed the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Rana.

"Chair Prachanda said that

the meeting between the three top leaders focused on the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Rana,” said press coordinator Sharma.

Following the filing of the impeachment motion against the Chief Justice, the ruling coalition has intensified the discussions.

CPN-UML's Threat

As the main opposition party CPN-UML is threatening to impeach four justices of the Supreme Court, who constitute the constitutional bench - Acting Chief Justice Deepak Kumar Karki, Meera Khadka, Ishwar Prasad Khatiwada, and Anand Mohan Bhattarai - Nepal's judicial system is on an uncertain course.

When asked if the UML would carry out its threat of registering the impeachment motion against the four justices, a UML leader told New Spotlight that party lawmakers had submitted their signatures to party leadership which could be used 'for appropriate action at appropriate time'.

“We have made all kinds of preparations,” the source said, adding that party Chair KP Shamra Oli told lawmakers that UML would not ignore repeated political attacks by opponents.

Oli, however, told party leaders that the party would avoid any knee-jerk reaction. Earlier, UML



leaders had said if the ruling alliance sought to impeach Chief Justice Chondra Shumsher JB Rana, they would act against four justices who sat on the constitutional bench and had invalidated the Oli government's second move to dissolve the House of Representatives, besides ordering the appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as the new PM.

UML Chief Whip Bishal Bhattarai said that party Chair Oli told the party lawmakers that the ruling alliance moved the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Chondra Shumsher JB Rana to delay local polls, to pass millennium challenge corporation deal anyhow and to unset-

tle the judiciary.

He said the party leadership would take a call on whether it should move the impeachment motion against the four SC justices after carefully dwelling on the issue and studying legal provisions. Oli said the ruling alliance's move against CJ Rana was aimed not only against an individual, but also against democracy.

He said the party would not throw its weight behind Rana, who had committed numerous mistakes, but the move was condemnable as it weakened the judiciary.

Bhattarai said the UML would retaliate against the impeachment through the Parliament, streets, and judiciary.

Ruling Alliance's Stress On Resumption Of HoR

Boycotted by main opposition party CPN-UML, which has been demanding the resignation of the speaker of House of Representatives on his role, a four party meeting held on February 14 discussed the issues for taking initiatives to resume the parliament meeting and forward the bills that are awaiting the parliamentary processes.

The meeting summoned by Speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota dwelt on forwarding the parliamentary businesses in an effective way by holding





regular discussions with the political parties represented in the parliament including the opposition parties. The meeting took place at the Federal Parliament Secretariat in Singha Durbar.

Speaker Sapkota said discussions on taking initiatives to forge consensus on the issues of national importance were going on.

“Serious consultations were held in today’s meeting to take initiatives to resolve the deadlock of the parliament and resume House business,” according to Sapkota.

The Speaker added that important bills related to citizenship and civil aviation should be passed. The bills approved from the National Assembly and sent back to the House of Representatives should be passed.”

He said he had serious talks with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and leaders of different political parties about the bills that should be passed from the House.

“Extensive discussions were held on contemporary issues and all issues of the national life. There is a common view of all that this discussion should be continued,” said Speaker Sapkota.

Similarly, leader of CPN (Unified Socialist) Jeevan Ram Shrestha who participated at the meeting said the Speaker called the all-party meeting in the context of running the

Parliament. A total of 42 bills including citizenship are ‘stuck’ in the House of Representatives due to continuous House obstruction by the main opposition CPN (UML).

NBA Welcomes Impeachment Motion

As Nepal Bar Association itself is a party against chief justice Rana, the NBA has stated that registration of an impeachment motion by political parties against Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher JBR was a positive step.

Issuing a press statement, general secretary of NBA Leelamani Poudel said the political parties and Members of Parliament should make additional efforts to conclude the impeachment motion as per the constitution.

The NBA has also appealed to the entire political parties and the MPs for their positive intervention to pass the impeachment motion.

The NBA is staging protests for 107 days putting forth its different demands including the resignation of the Chief Justice.

Ministry’s Views

Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Dilendra Prasad Badu has said the parliament would conduct a discussion over the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Rana.

“The parliament will hold discussions on the proposal. A process has moved ahead for an end to the constitutional stalemate.”

Ninety-eight lawmakers of the ruling parties today filed an impeachment motion against CJ Rana, putting 21 accusations on him.

Following the filing of the motion, Nepali Congress whip Pushpa Bhushal said the CJ failed to prove his effective role in the judiciary, prompting them to seek his removal from the post.

He has been alleged of not conducting the Constitutional bench effectively, exerting influence on several appointments, not implementing the Supreme Court reports and failing to deliver on the duties on basis of the power balance, thus creating a disappointing atmosphere in the judiciary.

Bhushal further argued that they had to file the impeachment motion against the CJ, as he failed to deliver as per the Constitution.

Meanwhile, chief whip of CPN (Maoist Centre) Dev Prasad Gurung said the CJ could not perform his leading role in the judiciary fairly.

“The independent judiciary is hampered by the deadlock for three and half months and failed to perform as per the Constitution and democratic norms and values.

The lawmakers of the ruling political parties have made 21 accusations against Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana in the impeachment motion registered at the federal parliament secretariat. A total of 98 lawmakers have signed for the impeachment.

They have accused CJ Rana of being incompetent to uphold democracy, human rights, rule of law, constitutional supremacy and independence of the judiciary

Anomalies and aberration, corruption and brokering thrived in the judiciary during his term and misuse of authority went unchecked, according to lawmakers.

Other points of accusation are - arbitrary use of constitutional rights and responsibility ruined the image of the entire judiciary in the country. The CJ was slow and off the mark to perform for augmenting the role of judiciary and rule of law in the country.

CJ Rana's activities and decisions invited severe criticisms as he worked against the code of conduct and against law. He failed to maintain checks and balance between the State organs, the accusations went on.

He even did not exhibit moral grounds to retain public trust in the judiciary and became incompetent to contribute for long term importance from the viewpoint of jurisprudence, among others.

With the registration of an impeachment motion against Chief Justice Cholendra Shumser JB Rana questioning his performance, he has not been allowed to discharge the duties.

The Process of Impeachment

Article 101 (2) states one-fourth of the total members of the House of Representatives may move a motion of impeachment against the Chief Justice or a Judge of the Supreme Court, member of the Judicial Council, chief or official of a Constitutional Body on the ground of his or her

failure to fulfill his or her duties of office because of serious violation of this Constitution and law, incompetence or misconduct or failure to discharge the duties of office honestly or serious violation of the code of conduct.

If the motion is passed by at least two-thirds majority of the total number of the members of the House of Representatives, the concerned person shall relieve of his or her office.

The Constitution, however, guarantees a person charged with impeachment shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to defend him-

self/herself.

The motion is proposed by CPN (Maoist Centre)'s Dev Prasad Gurung, Nepali Congress Dr Pushpa Bhusal and CPN (Unified Socialist)'s Jeevan Ram Shrestha and it is backed by 98 lawmakers including Dr Minendra Rijal.

Secretariat Joint Spokesperson Dashrath Dhamala said the motion will be presented before the Speaker and the Speaker will probably present it before the Business Advisory Committee for discussions and will proceed with further action.

As the ruling alliance does not have a two-thirds majority to impeach the chief justice Rana, the motion is going to be a political fiasco as the life of the current House of Representatives remains is less than eight months. However, the motion has further weakened Nepal's independent judiciary and institutions.



Summit For Democracy And Focus On Human Rights



BY: PROF. DR. SURYA DHUNGEL

After a period of decades, an unprecedented focus was globally made last December for ‘Renewal’ of gradually shrinking ‘Democracy’ by nearly 257 top democratic and scholarly brains, including 100 participating democratic Heads of State or Governments, at a global “**Summit for Democracy**” (8-10 December 2021). The summit had three main objectives: a) *countering authoritarianism*, b) *fighting corruption*, and c) *defending human rights*. This was a first-ever unique and equally great event organized on the initiative of American President Joe Biden, based on his promise made during his Presidential inaugural Address in January last year. In response to the U.S. Government’s commitment to advance the Summit’s goals, President Biden shortly announced the establishment of a fund of US Dollar 424 million toward the Presidential Initiative, a landmark set of new foreign policy for advancing the ongoing work to bolster democracy, fight corruption, and defend human rights worldwide. In line with the Summit’s themes, the initial support mainly centers on five areas of work:

- 1) Supporting a free and independent media;
- 2) Fighting corruption;
- 3) Bolstering democratic reforms;
- 4) Advancing technology for democracy; and
- 5) Defending free and fair elections and political processes.

Excerpts: “Through their [official interventions](#), leaders from 100 governments announced a wide range of commitments and pledges in support of **democratic renewal** centered on the Summit’s three themes of (1) strengthening democracy and defending

against authoritarianism; (2) fighting corruption; and (3) promoting respect for human rights. These pledges included commitments to counter efforts to combat disinformation; strengthen electoral integrity; better promote the human rights of activists, women and girls, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities, and marginalized populations; address drivers of inequality and inequity; strengthen enforcement of financial disclosures and close other vulnerabilities in the financial system that are exploited by corrupt actors; and invest in the development, use, and governance of technology that advances democracy and human rights. Non-governmental participants – among them leading activists and dissidents – echoed calls for new commitments in these areas, and implored participating governments to stand up to authoritarianism, kleptocracy, and repression.”

Being conscious of the pressure coming from autocratic regimes that democracy and freedom do not ensure efficiency and delivery of services to the needy people, hence the gradual decline of liberal democratic values around the world, appearing in reports of even credible agencies like International IDEA and Freedom House, a renewed effort to strengthen democracy was thus needed. This was echoed in the speeches of the world leaders at the Summit. Reflecting on the messages of world leaders that ‘Democracy doesn’t happen by accident, we have to renew it with each generation, and this is an urgent matter on all our parts, ...’, the Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. SherBahadur Deuba also reiterated his full commitments to work toward democracy and human rights in his speech at the Summit. He

had spoken the same earlier in Glasgow and later at the World Human Rights Day function hosted by the National Human Rights Commission in Kathmandu.

Key Question Now?

Will these commitments echoed by 100 democratic world leaders in Government, including UN Secretary-General, materialize in the post-summit phase, especially in developing countries like Nepal, and other South Asian or African nations? To what extent do the financially stigmatized political leadership and development partners of young democracies remain committed to their words? Generally, the country's political leaders, legislators, government authorities, constitutional bodies, UN agencies, civil societies and NGOs (and INGOs), media groups, and private sector (especially business community), including key donors, are not fully updated with the recent trends and developments. Open institutional dialogues on emerging issues are minimum. Lack of knowledge and use of advanced technology is another constraint.

Are most of the ill-equipped stakeholders, or a few of honest ones, especially the political leadership, prepared to start a new journey through commitments in principle and action toward sincerely carrying out the tasks imbibed in three onerous messages of the 'Summit for Democracy', ie, respecting human rights, fighting corruption and countering authoritarianism? The stigma of human rights violations, corruption and disrespect of rule of law is a very painful scratch of the wound on many politicians, who unknowingly or clandestinely shelter authoritarianism or perpetrators, have in some cases difficulties to confronting the blunt reality of breaching human rights ethics and corruption. This is normally very true in post-conflict societies where victims suffer and some perpetrators are put in power. Despite many such challenges, democracy has to prevail through reforms and resilience, as there is no better alternatives yet. The 'Summit for Democracy' is therefore an eye-opening event for reformers as well. Democratic constitutionalism, rule of law principles and human rights norms offer new tools and space to fight the ills of authoritarianism and corruption, eventually paving the path for peace, equality, and justice.

At this crucial moment of Nepal's democratic history, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) aims to accept the challenge of time and take this opportunity innovated by the "Summit for Democracy" in favor of human rights. NHRC will explore ways to analyze events, outcomes and floated ideas and try to work together with other partners and stakeholders to understand the underlying messages and importance of this historic "Summit for Democracy", firstly by initiating 'dialogues' among human rights communities, civil society groups, media and other key stakeholders. Secondly, NHRC could work towards developing a plan of action, on the one hand, to link up the

Being conscious of the pressure coming from autocratic regimes that democracy and freedom do not ensure efficiency and delivery of services to the needy people, hence the gradual decline of liberal democratic values around the world,

outcome of the Summit with relevant aspects of its own sixth strategic plan, and share ideas with other human rights partners, including government authorities and political actors. On the other hand, NHRC will continue examining the relevance of the Summit for the larger benefit of the society, state institutions (eg, local federal entities),

the international community (including UPR, SDGs, CCA-UNDAF Process), educational institutions (eg, universities) for maximizing the outcome of the Summit to strengthen human rights and the people.

Finally, since the Summit has put emphasis on **the electoral process and media** from the democratic perspective, it is important that the Summit outcome is tied up with the forthcoming elections of all 761 national, subnational and local governments through fairness and fearlessness in voting and representational rights that may help further strengthening the governance institutions with maximum level of inclusivity and gender representation.

Professor (Dr.) Surya Dhungel is a Human Rights Commissioner, Nepal.

Note: Your comments, notes and suggestions for developing effective post-summit strategy and coordination and action are most welcome (surya.dhungel@nhrcnepal.org) (21 January 2022)

ENERGY

SOLU CORRIDOR TRANSMISSION

A Game Changer

The completion of 132 kV Solu Corridor Transmission line is going to be a game changer

By A CORRESPONDENT

For Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority Kul Man Ghising, the completion of 132 kV Solu Corridor Transmission line is a matter of great satisfaction as he has spent a lot of time to end the obstruction and charge the transmission line.

Started in his first tenure, the project was nearly completed when his first tenure was over. After he left NEA, nothing moved and the project work remained at a standstill.

As he took the charge of MD for the second tenure, he moved to Udayapur and convinced the local community to allow the construction of remaining four towers. In the just seven months into his second tenure, the project has completed and charged again,

After years of delay due to the obstruction created by locals, 132 kV

Solu-corridor Transmission line finally charged.

The Solu Corridor 132 kV double circuit transmission line, constructed to supply electricity generated from the hydropower projects of the Solukhola area to the national grid, has thus come into operation.

The transmission line, which was built with the investment of the government of Nepal and a concessional loan from the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM), was brought into operation by charging it recently.

The length of the transmission line from Mirchaiya of Siraha to Udaypur, Okhaldhunga and Tinla of Dudhkund Municipality of Solukhumbu is 90 kilometers and the number of towers is 302, according to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Under the Solu corridor transmission line project, substations of 132/33 kV of 30 MVA capacity and 33/11 kV of 8 MVA capacity have been constructed in Tinla.

The substation construction has been completed and is operational from August, 2019. Electricity will be supplied to Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga and Khotang from the Tinla substation.

Managing Director of NEA Kul Man Ghising said that there was some delay in the construction of the project due to dispute over selection of contractor, interim order of the Supreme Court, obstruction from locals demanding change of the route and difficult geographical conditions.

“Infrastructure has been prepared for the flow of electricity from pri-

vate sector hydropower projects in the Solu River Basin. The problem of 23.5 MW Solu Khola that could not run at full capacity even after the completion of construction and other hydropower projects under construction has now been solved,” he said.

“Once the project’s electricity flows into the Solu corridor, it can be diverted from Mirchaiya to Saptari, Sunsari, Morang and other districts to supply power. It will also be easier to export surplus electricity to India from Dhalkebar substation,” he said.

He said that the electricity service in Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga and Khotang will be reliable and leakage will be reduced as electricity will be directly supplied from Tinla substation.

Electricity of 23.5 MW Solu Khola, 18 MW Upper Solu, 86 MW Solu Khola (Dudhkoshi), 82 MW Lower Solu Khola and other hydropower projects will be connected to Tinla substation, the NEA said.

The NEA has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) of 325 MW with 12 hydropower projects in the area after the construction of this transmission line.

The 23.5 MW Solu Khola Hydropower Project was temporarily connected to the 33 kV line from January last year after the construction of the Solu corridor transmission line was delayed.

There was obstruction in Katari Municipality-4, Maruwa of Udayapur for two years demanding relocation of the transmission line.

Project Chief Janardan Gautam said that many problems and obstacles were created in the construction of the Solu corridor transmission line and other projects should be constructed by learning lessons from it.

A contract agreement was signed with the Indian company Mohan Energy in March 2016 for the construction of the transmission line. The contract agreement was implemented from September 2016.



Change In the Policy

After years of effort, NEA is finally able to introduce Policy Arrangement To Relocate Electricity Poles. This is going to be another milestone saving time and money of NEA.

Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Kul Man Ghising said that a policy arrangement has been made to address the complaints from various quarters, such as obstruction of urban beauty and obstruction of road expansion.

“We have heard a lot of people saying that they will move the poles. We have set clear procedures and criteria to control and manage it,” said Ghising.

“People who are in trouble can go to the local office of NEA and apply to solve the problems without following the people who come saying that they will move the poles. After that, the process of technical scrutiny will proceed as per the procedure. The structure will be moved only if it seems possible with options, otherwise it will remain the same,” he said.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has implemented the necessary process and criteria to move the electrical structures (wires, poles and transformers) of the distribution system constructed to supply power to consumers.

The NEA has made the work of moving the structure systematic through the “Procedure on Electrical Structure Transfer.” Arrangements have been made in the working procedure for the transfer of electrical structure, technical

inspection, approval of officer, expenses incurred during the transfer and the obligation to be fulfilled.

The provision has been made to apply to the concerned local office of NEA for the transfer of the existing structure of NEA’s existing power distribution system on the land where the house or compound of the person or organization is located.

The NEA will relocate the structures including 400/230 volt (LT line), 11 kV and 33 kV line wires, poles and transformers connected to them only if it is feasible after technical inspection.

In various urban areas of the country, including the Kathmandu Valley, requests have been made to the NEA by government bodies, local levels, consumer committees, individuals and organizations to move the electrical structures in the course of road expansion. The NEA has made arrangements to move the electrical structures only if it is deemed appropriate by the technical inspection and ensures that there is no protest at the place of transfer.

The NEA is confident that the procedure of transferring structures, including electric poles, wires, transformers, approving authority and who will bear the cost of relocation is clearly managed in the working procedure.

Along with the application, documents including citizenship, copy of land ownership certificate, recommendation of the concerned local level should be submitted. However, any office of the government of Nepal or a government-owned entity must send a letter stating the reasons for the transfer.

The chief of the local office of NEA should conduct a technical check within 15 days of receiving the application for transfer of structure.

On-the-spot inspection of the site will be carried out on the basis of easy access to maintain the electrical structure, the structure will be organized and safe and others will not be affected, read the press statement of NEA.

Responsible persons have been assigned to approve the transfer if



it seems appropriate in the on-site report through the procedure.

The approval of the 400-230 voltage level distribution line will be given by the head of the concerned provincial division office. Approval to move the 11 kV level distribution line for road expansion will be given by the Deputy Executive Director of Distribution and Customer Service Directorate. Approval will be given by the managing director to move 11 kV privately owned property of individuals and organizations and a 33 kV line for road expansion. The Board of Directors will approve the transfer of 33 kV and 11 kV ringmen lines owned by individuals and institutions.

The provision has been made that the overhead line on private land cannot be placed underground in the same land.

If the structure of other bodies (telecommunication, cable, drinking water, etc.) is affected, the consent of the concerned body has to be submitted.

At the request of the locality, 70 per cent of the cost of relocating the electrical infrastructure will be borne by the local level and the remaining 30 per cent will be borne by the authority. If the structure has to be transferred at the request of the individual/institution/body, the applicant will have to bear the entire cost. The NEA will complete the transfer of pole within three months, six months and a year of the cost deposited by applicants based on cost estimates up to Rs. 500,000, Rs. 500,000-2,000,000 and more than Rs. 2,000,000.

The completion of Solu-corridor, with the policy change, is going to be a game changer in the NEA.



LOCAL LEVEL ELECTIONS

Process Kicks Off

Elections Commission has added 200,000 new voters for May 12 Polls

By A CORRESPONDENT

As soon as the government announced the date for the local elections, the Election Commission stopped the voter list update process. With the inclusion of an additional 200,000 youth, the total number of voters on May 12 will be 17.9 million, reports The Rising Nepal.

The ECN has decided to make the day before the upcoming local elections as the cut-off date for the young voters to complete their 18 years of age in order to make them eligible for voting the next day.

The decision shows Nepali citizen completing 18 years of age on May 12 can vote in the local level elections slated for the next day, May 13, 2022.

A Nepali citizen can obtain citizenship certificate after completing 16 years of age but voting right could be exercised only after completing 18 years.

According to the ECN, this provision is being implemented for the first time in Nepal's election history.

There were 15.42 million voters in the elections in 2017 while on 20 December 2020; the number of voters had reached 16.24 million.

"The ECN wants to en-



sure the voting right of every Nepali completing 18-year age. The voters' registration process is stopped as per the legal provision of not continuing it after the announcement of the date for the polls," Spokesperson of the ECN Shaligram Sharma Poudel said.

EC Vote

To push the process of elections, EC is preparing to begin registration of the political parties for the local level election slated for May 13. As per the 68-point election schedules approved by the EC, the political party registration program will take place from February 17-26.

According to the working procedure of the EC, the political parties which are already registered in the commission also need to reg-

election purposes.

As per the legal provision, if a registered party wants to participate in the election, it will have to submit the application along with the required documents within the time limit specified by the commission.

Shedding light on the reason behind the re-registration of the political parties for election purposes, EC Spokesperson Shaligram Sharma Poudel said, "The number of parties registered with the commission is more than 100. Not all of them are required to participate in the election."

"The registered political parties should also be given election symbols. It is also required to understand whether the political parties are up to date," he said.

After the political parties apply for registration, the commission will set a time limit of one week for investigation, said Poudel, adding, "The time limit will be from Feb 28 to March 6."



ister them for the election purpose.

As per the existing laws, political parties should register them in the Election Commission for

Vaccine To All Eligible

Nepal has announced that it will provide Covid-19 vaccine to all eligible population by mid-May

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when many countries around the world are struggling to provide vaccine to all their eligible citizens, Nepal has made a big progress thanks to the support provided by various bilateral and multilateral agencies.

Started from early March in 2021 by the vaccine donated by India, Nepal's vaccine campaign has never faced any shortcoming as such. With donations of another neighbor China, the pace continued.

With the banning of export of vaccine by India, Nepal was in a difficult situation. However, the United States of America came to rescue Nepal's vaccine drive donating 1.6 million Johnson and Johnson, or the Janssen, single shot vaccine to Nepal. European Union, Japan and later The World Bank and Asian Development Bank backed Nepal's effort to vaccinate its eligible citizens.

Minister for Health and Population Birodh Khatiwada said that the target of vaccinating the eligible population against COVID-19 would be completed by mid-May.

Speaking at an official program organized to make public the achievements of the first 100 days after he assumed the office, Minister Khatiwada said that the vaccination campaign was being conducted every day across the country.

The program was, however, conducted on the 125th day of Khatiwada taking charge of the Ministry for Health and Population (MoHP).

"We had planned to complete the vaccination campaign by mid-April earlier for those aged above 18 years. Since the vaccines for adolescents aged 12-17 years also became available from December, 2021, the targeted deadline has been extended by a month," said Khatiwada.

Among the population aged above 18 years (19,922,164), 89.2 per cent people have been vaccinated with

the first dose while 73.8 per cent with the second dose.

Regarding the children aged 12-17 years, which covers a population of 3,405,455, 84 per cent have been vaccinated with the first dose and 38 per cent with the second.

"After administering the first and second doses, we must continue with the booster doses. Booster dose has been prioritized for senior citizens, patients with long-term disease and front liners for now but will be made available for all after February 13," said Khatiwada.



He also added that the government has planned to vaccinate those aged 5-11 years as well. "We are coordinating with concerned authorities to procure the vaccines for these children. It has been assured to arrive soon," said Khatiwada.

Since concerns have been raised over disappearance of vaccines, Minister Khatiwada said that they had formed a committee to investigate into the issue.

A five-member committee led by Dr. Gun Raj Lohani, chief specialist at the MoHP, was formed around a week ago and has been directed to submit a report next week.

"Data of vaccinated population is not updated timely from the rural areas. Vaccines get damaged as well and we don't have proper updates on it. The

committee will coordinate with province, district and local levels to prepare a report on the situation," said Khatiwada.

"If anyone has been vaccinated without registering legitimately, s/he can visit the nearby health centre to receive the vaccination card. They will not face any trouble for it. The card will be important to administer further booster doses," said Khatiwada.

Amid different variants of COVID-19 appearing across the globe, gene sequencing to identify the variants has also been started in Nepal, he said.

"We are also coordinating with other government authorities to identify and punish laboratories and hospitals involved in making fake PCR reports," said Khatiwada.

He also added that the health desks were active across the border entry points. "Regarding the people entering Nepal from different border points, 90 per cent are being screened for their health situation and 87 per cent of them are being examined for COVID-19," Khatiwada said.

Alongside the concerns related to the ongoing pandemic, Minister Khatiwada said that the government was actively upgrading other health related facilities as well.

Similarly, construction of a basic hospital (5-bed or 10-bed or 15-bed as per the population) in each local level has been started in 226 places. Constructions of 2,200 basic health service centers have also been completed.

The rabies vaccine, which was only available in Kathmandu-based Teku Hospital, is now being provided through 13 hospitals of seven provinces.

"The support and coordination from front liners, public, organizations and different authorities in prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 deserves praise and we look forward for its continuity," Khatiwada added.

Decade-long Initiatives On EbA



BY: BATU UPRETY

Recent two articles named ‘Remembering our Kings’, and ‘Forest Finance from CoP26’ posted on <https://www.spotlightnepal.com/> inspired to share 2010 initiatives in introducing Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in Nepal at a time of more people focusing on community-based adaptation (CbA). Preparation and approval of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in September 2010 encouraged Nepal’s climate change focal point, then Ministry of Environment, to take-up a single agenda to access fundings for NAPA-prioritised adaptation programmes.

During UNFCCC CoP16 in Cancun in early December 2010, Nepal discussed with UNDP and UNEP representatives for technical support in implementing NAPA. UNDP was encouraged to support in developing proposal for GLOF project taking note of its experience in Bhutan, and UNEP – the UN Environment – for EbA project based on its comparative advantage in promoting nature-based solutions, to access Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF) operated by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). CoP7 decided to establish LDCF, as a dedicated fund for only LDCs with equal approach, to effectively implement Article 4.9 of the Climate Change Convention. Both UNDP and UNEP are the GEF Implementing Agencies (IAs) and LDC Fund can be accessed only through GEF IAs. Two projects – ‘rural’, and urban EbA projects – secured funding from LDCF, and learning in securing funds of these projects is shared here.

In May 2011, the Government invited UNEP to support Nepal in accessing LDCF and UNEP submitted a PIF (Project Identification Form) for the project named ‘catalysing EbA for resilient ecosystems and rural livelihoods in degraded forests and rangelands of Nepal’ (rural EbA project) as a first formal document to the GEF Secretariat to secure funding. Endorsement of PIF indicates approval of concept and guarantees for funding the project.

Unfortunately, Nepal’s PIF of an EbA project was rejected by the GEF Secretariat on 16 September 2011. The CEO-signed letter mentioned ‘the Secretariat has decided not to support this request ...’ and ‘I would advise you not to pursue further development of the PIF’. If the Secretariat and reviewers are not satisfied, there is a practice to ask for additional information, but Nepal’s project concept was ‘rejected’. The prerogative right of a sovereign country to

develop the need-based and NAPA-prioritised project was challenged by the ‘Fund operator’. It was really a ‘sock’ in Nepal’s effort to internalise nature-based solutions as long-term measures to cope with climate change impacts.

In November 2011, I had the opportunity to raise it in LDC preparatory meeting organised for CoP17 in Durban, South Africa and it opened issues on ‘services provided and received’. A meeting was organised between Minister for Environment, Mr. Hem Raj Tated and the GEF CEO to discuss this ‘PIF rejection issue’. Finally, two professionals Ms. Boni (*Bonizella Biagini*) from GEF Secretariat and Ms. Ermira Fida from UNEP proposed a mid-way, and we agreed to revive this project after six months.

The Project name was slightly changed to ‘catalysing ecosystem restoration for climate resilient natural capital and rural livelihoods in degraded forests and rangelands of Nepal’ and its PIF was submitted to GEF Secretariat on 9 November 2012, and its Project Preparation Grant (PPG) was approved on 27 March 2013 after satisfaction from additional information asked by the GEF. A full-sized project was developed and submitted to GEF Secretariat on 21 July 2015. The GEF CEO & chairperson approved project for implementation on 11 August 2015 (<https://assembly.thegef.org/project/catalysing-ecosystem-restoration-climate-resilient-natural-capital-and-rural-livelihoods>) (within 3 weeks). Few months are required to prepare for project implementation which may be related to agreement, designating national project director, formation of Steering Committee, budget and account, staff recruitment, and office establishment as a part of host country arrangement. The Project Document mentioned to commence in September 2015, and technical completion by September 2018.

For nearly 3 years, two forestry officials in the then Ministry of Population and Environment (MoPE), in their capacities as the Secretary and Chief of the Climate Change Management Division (CCMD), delayed ‘preparatory works’ to implement this Project ‘without any practical reasons’. Country faced the ‘cost of inaction’. In February 2018, MoPE was dissolved, and the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation was renamed as the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE). After 27 years, Government returned to institutional provision of 1991 as MoFE was established at that time and was later dissolved.

Close to the technical completion date (September 2018), the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of this project was signed on 25 May 2018. Inception workshop of this Project was organised on 11 March 2019(<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2019/03/11/environment-and-development-need-go-side-side-minister-bas-net/>).

The Project completion date might be extended beyond 2022. Delay of project implementation due to Covid pandemic is natural. Good news – the Project activities are on the ground after nearly a decade of ‘conceptualisation’.

This ‘rural’ EbA Project is under implementation in 10 Local levels, covering 18 wards of Achham, Salyan and Dolakha. The Project focuses its activities in developing local and national institutional capacity, strengthening of policy and strategy (integrating EbA into existing and new policies and strategies), and demonstrating interventions to increase adaptive capacity to climate change and restore natural capital. Over 60 percent of the total budget may be spent for demonstration interventions. This Project is expected to bring a new dimension in clarifying EbA, CbA and normal development works in three-tiers of existing governance system, showing concrete results of nature-based solutions, further realising importance of ecosystem approach, and developing country capacity on EbA.

Realising the importance of EbA in coping with climate change impacts in urban areas as well, an urban EbA project was conceptualised in 2013, and Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA) took initiative in developing this Project. After designating UNEP as the GEF IA, PIF was prepared for a project on ‘EbA for climate-resilient development in the Kathmandu Valley’ which was endorsed by MoF in November 2014 and GEF received its PIF on 2 December 2014. Apledge-based LDCF faced fund shortage for few years. The GEF Secretariat approved project concept on 29 March 2017, and PPG to develop a full-size project. MoF submitted the full-sized project to GEF Secretariat in September 2018 and Project was approved for implementation on 1 August 2019 (<https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/8009>). This 4-year project was planned to commence in 2019 and complete by 2022. Its preparatory work also took nearly a year and Covid-19 further delayed its implementation.

After two years of approval for project implementation, KVDA organized its Inception Workshop on 30 November 2021 (<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/12/16/launching-urban-eba-project/>). Dedicated to internalising EbA in the Kathmandu Valley, the Project will implement

activities to mainstream EbA into development planning, generate knowledge and raise awareness on EbA, and establish climate-resilient communities through EbA interventions. Nearly 80 percent of the total budget may be used in demonstration interventions to decrease vulnerabilities of communities to climate-induced impacts of flooding, landslides and droughts in the Valley.

Both ‘rural’ and urban EbA projects have major focus on ‘actions on the ground’ to increase water availability and resilience of livelihood activities; decrease climate vulnerability; restore & rehabilitate forest ecosystems, including wetlands; reduce climate-induced disasters, and establish urban green spaces and parks. Although target areas are of rural and urban nature, both projects will contribute

to develop country capacity by: (i) developing ‘core’ human resources; (ii) integrating EbA into existing and new policies and strategies (applicable for both urban and rural areas); and (iii) generating and sharing knowledge & good practices through demonstration activities. Nepal may be the only country securing LDCF for EbA projects to cope with rural and urban climate change impacts.

Knowledge generated and learning of a project provides opportunities for change in next one. Experiences of NAPA preparation process provided a basis to change the fund flow mechanism while implementing Nepal Climate Change Support Programme. In urban EbA Project, adoption of national recruitment process, and dedicated Project Finance Officer (KVDA staff) can be considered a new approach. It will likely help intaking this Project as an integral part of the KVDA. This will likely develop again the ‘country capacity’ at least on finance management and previous practice of ‘handover’ will gradually change. Let us hope it will work smoothly.

After completion of these two project activities, EbA advocates will have opportunities to further understand ‘what worked and what did not’, ‘intentions, responsibilities and realities’, and ‘cost of inaction or delay action’; document ‘bottlenecks’; share project operational level lessons and fund-flow mechanisms in three-tiers of governance; and further promote activities to integrate EbA into national to local governance systems. The Project will also inform time required and/or taken right from project formulation to completion of implementation, along with effectiveness of interventions.



"We Are Waiting To Go To Finance Committee"

BALANANDA PAUDEL, chairperson of National Natural Resource and Fiscal Commission, spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues.

How do you look at the performance of the commission over the last three years?

As per the Constitution of Nepal, all the commissions are accountable to the federal parliament, specially the House of Representatives. The concerned committees of House of Representatives have authority to give directions to the committees and suggest on the report after review and discussion. The commission submits its report, with all its activities, to the President and the three tiers of government. As per the constitution and law, this is mandatory for all commissions, including us. As far as our commission is concerned, we have been submitting our annual reports in time. We have already submitted three reports to the President.

How many times have you attended the meeting of federal parliamentary committees to discuss the report?

So far as the committee of National Assembly is concerned, I have attended its meetings twice to discuss our report. However, I have yet to get the opportunity to clarify and discuss our annual report with the concerned Finance Committee of House of Representatives.

How do you view your interactions at the committee in National Assembly?

At the National Assembly, we informed members about the role and work of commission, jurisdiction and modality on the basis of the annual report. They also questioned us and the discussion was wonderful. However, only Finance Committee has constitutional rights to direct and suggest us and ask questions with the government and concerned officials regarding the implementation of the suggestions. For the commission, Finance Committee of House of Representatives is highly important.

As you said, you have not attended any meeting of federal parliamentary committee, how are you working now to show accountability to the people?

To make our process and all our activities transparent, the commission has established its own web-site where the commission uploads all its activities including annual reports. The commissioners also visit provinces and share report. We are also interacting with local levels. For instance, we have also prepared the report of each of the provinces. The commission has already prepared sev-

en reports for seven different provinces. As in the federal level, the commission also submits report to the head of concerned provinces and the head of province hands it over to the provincial government to present in the provincial legislature. However, due to the lack of interpretation of the role of commission and provincial parliament, our report is yet to get proper place at provincial parliament.

What is the process of discussion?

It is the duty of Finance Committee of the House of Representatives to discuss our reports and forward our suggestions to the concerned bodies. During the discussion in the committees, chairperson and commissioners need to be present at the committee and provide necessary clarification in the report. It is also the duty of parliamentary committees to monitor whether the recommendations made by the commissions are implemented or not. The committee has also right to ask questions to the concerned authorities about the state of implementation of the report. As the representatives of sovereign citizens of Nepal, members of parliament have very important to constitutional rights to make commissions accountable and active.

What have you to say about attending the Committee meeting?

As I have mentioned earlier, the commission has already submitted three of annual reports to the President, who handed them over to the government to table in the House of Representatives. However, the Finance Committee is yet to start the process of discussing the reports presented by the commission. As per the constitution, the parliamentary committee has authority to give necessary directions, recommendations and suggestions to our report. The Commission is eagerly waiting to attend the meeting of parliamentary committee and reply any quires regarding the reports. This is the process where the parliamentary committees can force us to be more accountable to the people. It is necessary to start the process of discussions and questionnaires. The process of accountability will begin once the process of discussing and questioning on our report begins. As the tenure of current federal parliament is close to completing, it will be unlikely to start the process. What I can say is that our previous three reports will lose its relevancy for the coming new federal parliament. Somebody needs to be there to ask questions.

Do you see the possibility to attend the parliamentary committee?

We hope that the committee of federal parliament



can summon us in appropriate time. I want to stress that there is the need to start a process to discuss and debate on the report presented by commission in a timely manner. Only through this process we can make the commission accountable to the people. It is the responsibility of the committees of the parliament.

Why are you stressing this?

To make the constitutional committees more effective and accountable, the committees of House of Representatives have important role to play. As a chief commissioner, I should be asked the questions on our report. If there are any shortcomings, they should criticize us. This has not been happening. We have many things to say but we don't have a place to go. Of course, we have been disseminating the information to the public and all tires of the government. However, this alone is not enough. Only extensive discussions in the parliamentary committee can make us more responsible and accountable. This also gives parliamentary committees the chance to suggest us changes and lacunas on behalf of Nepali people. This process must continue.

You are ready to go the parliamentary committee for discussion on the report. Then, why is the parliamentary committee ignoring your report. Is it because of their time or the reports of the committee are not their priority?

It is the sole duty of federal parliament to decide its priority and preference. It is up to them to carry out their day to day business. In the initial years, the priority of federal parliament was to replace the acts which were against the spirit of the constitution and they also need to pass new acts as per the need of the constitutions. During that period, the parliamentary committees were also busy discussing on the bills tabled in the parliament. However, the situation has changed a bit with passing of many acts. All of us need to work to encourage the federal parliament to start its role to make commission accountable. This will also help to improve the governance process.

It is my constitutional duty to clarify the issues and suggestions before the parliamentary committee.

Since your commission has wider scope, particularly in the distribution of resources, don't you think Federal Parliament needs to be more concerned?

Yes, this commission has wider scope including the distribution of resources equitably among three tiers of government. In this regard, the directions and suggestions of the parliament will be important. One of the functions and duties of our commission is to determine in a detailed basis and modality for the distribution of revenues between the federal, state, and local government. Similarly, our duty is also to make recommendation about equalization grants to be provided to the state, local government, out of the state consolidated fund.

"Committee Will Invite Commissioners As Early As Possible"

KRISHNA PRASAD DAHAL, chairperson of Finance Committee of House of Representatives, is a seasoned parliamentarian with four-time consecutive victory from his Makwanpur Constituency. At a time when there are questions over the role of Parliamentary committees to make constitutional commissions accountable to people, Dahal spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you view the role of committees of parliament to make constitutional commissions accountable to the people?

Committees are also known as mini-parliaments. Not only constitutional commissions, committees can play important roles to make them accountable and responsible to the people as well. We have been working towards that end. Besides discussing on the reports of various government agencies and commissions, we also have major role in the legislation process. All the bills tabled by the government in the House of Representatives come to us for modification and discussion. In the last three years, we have spent a majority of our time discussing the bills.

How do you look at your role as the chairperson of the committee?

House of Representatives has 10 subject committees and Finance Committee is one of them. Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission, Nepal Rastra Bank and Nepal Investment Board fall under our jurisdiction. Finance Committee looks at the entire budget process before auditing. Our country became federal now but we still follow the process of unitary state. For instance, we are yet to fully move as per the policy of fiscal federalism. On the issue of distribution of budget to local and provincial level, we are yet to be financially strong. Despite the practices of federalism, we still have a lot of small projects with the center. We have been sending money to the local and provincial level with condition. Unfortunately, center has been implementing small projects. Due to this, there are difficulties in implementing the fiscal federalism.

So far as National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission is concerned, it has rights to review the sharing of revenues in every five years. It is unfortunate

that the commission is not involved in the making of its act. It is now depending on the act formulated by others. The commission has some problems and it needs to address them.

How do you see the budget distribution?

So far as my three years of experience is concerned the tendency to spend the budget out of the context is growing due to lack of standard and basis -- we are violating the budgetary discipline. Financial anarchy is rampant. We demand additional budget out of the annual budget. Our country has been passing through a very critical financial crisis. There is a need of reform.

As the Commissions have submitted three of its reports, as a committee responsible to make commissions accountable and guide the commissions, what role have you played so far in this regard? Have you ever invited the officials of Commission to discuss on their reports?

All the constitutional bodies present their reports to the parliament through the President and the government. We have a practice in the parliament that only Public Accounts Committee has been discussing the reports, point-wise and inviting the concerned offices in discussion. The committee annually discussed the report of Auditor General and settled the unsettled amount. The committee has also authority to settle the amount in disputes. So far as other committees are concerned, we don't have such practices to discuss all the reports. It is also not necessary to discuss in detail such reports.

Do you have a plan to discuss with commission?

Your raised a valid concern. We held several rounds of meeting with the commissions from time to time. We also discussed with them as required. Honestly speaking, we have yet to discuss focusing on the reports of the commission. As journalists like you and experts have already drawn our attention, it is in our priority now to discuss the reports of the commission. As they have already published three reports, we will discuss with them regarding what they have issues raised and what is the state of such suggestions. As a committee responsible to make the commission accountable and responsible, the committee is planning to take some decisions.



very few interactions with the commission. It is this realization with which we are going to hold discussion with the commission soon. Covid-19 pandemic also hampered the process a lot.

As a chairperson of the committee which has constitutional role to make the commission more accountable, what do you suggest to make the commission useful and effective in revenue sharing?

The name of this commission is it-

Can the commission review its policy?

As per the law, the commission can review the revenue sharing among the three tiers of government. It also can set indicators for this. Although the law fixes the term for five years, the commission can review and suggest to the government as it wishes. In the context of fiscal federalism, the commission has a very crucial role to play and the committee also knows this as well.

Do you have any immediate plans?

Fiscal federalism is a new issue. We want to share our experiences with the commission. As you know, this is the fourth year of committee and three years of the commission. We are considering holding a meeting with the members and chairs of the commission to share our working experiences and lapses in the context of implementation of fiscal federalism. We need to draw certain conclusions on that. We will hold meetings very soon.

Despite being willing to talk and discuss intensively with the commission, we were busy in the first two years in the legislative processes very much. As a committee with such a vast scope, we were preoccupied by other works as well. However, we are equally aware about

self natural resource and fiscal commission -- the commission has developed a formula for fiscal distribution. However the commission is yet to enter in the natural resource sharing issue. It needs to focus on how to use natural resources and how to share among the provinces and local level for the overall development. In a context, when there are growing disputes over the resource sharing, including the water and mining, the commission also needs to focus on it. For instance, the resource sharing of upper riparian and lower riparian and plains and mountains. Similarly, there is a need to develop a mechanism to settle the dispute on sharing of water stream and basin. The commission needs to build a basis for the distribution. As a commission, it has a familiar role. The commission now is focusing on revenue sharing only. However bigger issues include river diversion from one province to another, source of water, how to share the stones and quarries, what the authority of upper state and deposit is, how can we minimize damage and how to settle these issues.

Moving Fast

Kathmandu-Terai/Madhes Expressway Project Needs Rs. 135 Billion Budget

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the pressure of deadline for the completion of the project, constant and continuous budget allocation to the project is necessary. A national pride project of Nepal to reduce the drive to South, the road will be highly significant for the country.

In a discussion with the media, Nepal Army's the Kathmandu-Terai/Madhes Fast Track (Expressway) Project office informed that a budget of Rs. 135.68 billion is required in the next three fiscal years to complete the project in time, reports The Rising Nepal.

The project, which has spent Rs. 25 billion so far, has prepared a plan and program to spend over Rs. 135 billion in the next three years. Brigadier General and spokesperson for the Nepali Army Headquarters Narayan Silwal said that a budget of Rs. 55.50 billion is needed in the coming fiscal year in 2079/80 alone.

For the Expressway being constructed by the Nepali Army, a budget of Rs. 45.66 billion is required

for the fiscal year 2080/81 and Rs. 34.52 billion for the fiscal year 2081/82, said Silwal.

"We have already reached agreements on several packages for constructing the tunnel and sky bridges along the project site, the major infrastructures to be built to complete the project," Brigadier Silwal said.

Meanwhile, Spokesperson for the Finance Ministry Ritesh Kumar Shakya said that the Ministry has ensured managing the required budget for the completion of the project in time. "In this regard, our Joint Secretary Baburam Subedi of the ministry on Wednesday's meeting with lawmakers has also given word to arrange needed budget for the project," Shakya said.

But for that, he urged the project officials to come up with a reality-based budgetary plan. He said the Ministry of Finance was facing problems in arranging the necessary budget for the project due to lack of realistic plan.

Similarly, the NA has already approved the design of the tunnel and the bridges to be built after contracting it to two different Chinese companies.

The contract for the construction of the tunnels had been signed in two packages.

Spokesperson Silwal informed that the design made by the contractors as per the contract under EPC model was approved



by the army and sent to the construction site. "They have started surveying the tunnel site," he said.

The cost of these two packages is Rs. 44 billion. Less than one package, construction of two tunnels and bridges will be started at Dhedre of Makwanpur (1.37 km from Simpani to Chalise Kholsi) and at Lendanda (1.4 km from Ghattepakha to Bandrekholi), reports The Rising Nepal.

Poly Changda Corporation had won the contract for the work at a cost of Rs. 25.95 billion.

China State Construction Engineering has got contract of another 3.3 km package at Mahadevdanda at a cost of Rs. 18.78 billion.

The project with a budget of Rs. 175 billion including VAT is targeted to be completed by 2081 BS. Project Chief and Brigadier General Bikas Pokhrel reiterated that the project would be completed in time and added that there should be no shortage of budget for it.



DR. JAGADISH LAL BAIDYA

A Surgeon's Confessions

Recently released biography of Dr. Jagadish Lal Baidya is a book of life, struggle and institution making

By KESHAB POUDEL

As French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau says in his book *Confession*, an autobiography, “General abstract truth is the most precious of all blessings; without it, man is blind; it is the eye of reason.”

Going through recently published book *Jagadish Ka Pailaharu* of renowned Nepali surgeon Dr. Jagadish Lal Baidya, one can find honest illustrations of experiences of life, profession, draw backs, successes and achievements of Dr. Baidya.

The book gives an impression that what he has expressed are the truth of society and his life and his friendship with Dr. Ashok Kumar Baskota. He is honest about partnership, friendship and personal attachment with Dr. Baskota.

Founders of B & B Hospital, Dr. Baidya and Dr. Baskota have equally played a role to build private institutions to offer quality medical facilities within the country. In some way, Dr. Baidya also speaks of the contribution of his friend Dr. Baskota to make this happen.

At the last leg of his medical career, he faced the most difficult time when her wife was infected with Covid-19 and remained for 60 days in ICU in critical conditions. His die-hard friend Dr. Baskota, who became a spiritual practitioner and a great believer, came to save his wife as well.

In the presence of many guests including his wife, family members, relatives, professional colleagues and friends, Dr. Baidya was suddenly emotional while explaining to audiences with tears how his friend Dr. Baskota saved his wife from death and gave her life.

His expression itself was a testimony of the content used in the book expressed from his inner heart and truth. He has seen many dramatic and dreaded situations in the life of his patients. As a surgeon, he has seen people getting life

after his intervention and sometimes trauma of patients.

As a surgeon of his standing with so much of good relations with all, he had not imagined that he would have to face deadly and traumatic times in his life, such as living under a gun on his temple for hours, listening to demand of ransom of over 20 million rupees.

Dr. Baidya was born in Pokhara and grew up right in front of Machhapurchre. But he has spent most of his academic and professional life in Kathmandu and United Kingdom. In his narration, he has honestly confessed to all these events of his personal and family life.



Former chief justice and chairperson of National Human Rights Commission Anup Raj Sharma unveiled a book *Jagadishka Pailaharu* (Steps of Jagadish), bio-graphy of Professor Dr. Jagadish Lal Baidya, a renowned surgeon and co-founder of B and B Hospital, amid a special function.

Unveiling the biography, former chief Justice Sharma, who is also a class friend of the author, said that the book is very interesting to read which narrates the important period of Nepal through an eye of Dr. Baidya.

In his facilitation address, Dr. Ashok Kumar Baskota, the co-founder of B & B Hospital, said, “I am proud of my journey with my partner Dr. Baidya. His

book also narrates the state of our journey.”

Published by Ghostwriting Nepal, the book *Jagadishka Pailaharu* not only tells the personal story of Dr. Baidya but also talks about the state of society, medical sector and institution building.

“This book includes dreadful events and interesting parts of life of my friends Dr. Baidya,” said Dr. Baskota in his statement.

Reviewing the book, Dr. Surndra K.C highlighted the important parts of the book and its weaknesses. “This book explains the dreadful events of his life when his entire family was locked in a room with a demand of ransom of Rs.20 million ten years back,” said KC. “The book also tells the brighter side of the story as well.”

In his statement, Dr. Sundermani Dixit said that this book tells of many events of Nepalese society of past 70 years. “Dr. Baidya is a touring personality who has a friend like Dr. Baskota. Dr. Baidya and Dr. Baskota are like Ram and Laxman.”

He said that the success of B And B is a concept and hard work of spiritual Dr. Baskota and Materialist Dr. Baidya. In his statement, the author said that the aim of writing this book is to share his experiences with new generation.

“This book consists of my struggle and success,” said author Dr. Baidya. Dr.Baidya said that I have to add few more chapters including Covid-29 because my wife is still suffering from post-Covid situation.

All proceeds from the sale of this book will go to the Charity organization Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC) Banepa.

Publishing the book, Dr. Baidya has contributed to the building of the history of contemporary Nepal and Nepalese society.

Sharing Culture

Japanese Film Festival Online 2022 has brought 20 best films to the audiences of 25 countries, including Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Films offer glimpses of contemporary society of concerned countries. Japan is not an exception. Started from February 14, an online film festival, also available in Nepal, is helping people know and understand the history, culture and contemporary social and economic development of Japan.

Organized by The Japan Foundation, the festival, which will continue till February 27, can be watched virtually in 25 countries. Audiences have choice from 20 films which also include latest releases and classics.

A message to the audience

Due to the current pandemic, many people around the world are grappling with feelings of pain, sadness, and isolation. “In these times, our hope is that this film festival can provide even some small sense of relief, and help people to live with a positive outlook on the future. For this year’s festival, we have selected 20 films, from new releases to classics, which fit with the theme,” said the organizers.

Scenic beauty across the seasons, visually stunning and vividly colorful Japanese food, the changing of society from traditional to modern, and fantastic worlds which transcend space and time... “our hope is that by experiencing these various worlds within Japan, viewers will feel refreshed, and whether this festival gives many people or even just one person the dream to one day visit Japan.”

“We welcome all of our Nepali friends to this Japanese Film Festival Online, which you can enjoy varieties of Japanese movies, wherever you are! Please look through the selections available, from documentary films to

heart-warming stories. Register with us to create your account, and choose your preferred films from the list below, then you can explore new aspects of the Japanese culture!,” said the Japanese Embassy in Kathmandu.

The Sumo Successor of Samurai is one of the interesting films which depicts the life and challenges of Sumo players in Japan.

A film all about sumo—Japan’s national sport, a documentary with rare access into the behind-the-scenes lives of famous sumo wrestlers!

Sumo wrestling is said to have already existed in Japan over a thousand years ago and is still a nationally popular event today. Sumo wrestlers (a.k.a. rikishi), who boast huge physiques, not only compete in physical



matches, but also serve in Shinto rituals. This film closely follows famous sumo wrestlers to show how they live, train, and how they feel when they step onto the ring. There is no other sport in the world where two wrestlers weighing 200 kilograms collide head-on without protective gears. Sumo wrestlers are always at risk of injury, but no matter the amount of pain, it is never used as an excuse in the stoic “way of sumo” and “way of the samurai”. This is an invaluable record of the lives of these modern-day samurai up close and personal. The excitement of live sumo tournaments are also palpable.

Among other many films, Happy Flight 2008 was very interesting. The film narrates a story of an international flight from Tokyo to Honolulu, Hawaii. A new pilot boards as an assistant to a more experienced senior pilot, and a new cabin attendant joins the team of a purser who has a reputation for being strict. The ground staff are struggling with bookings, the staff in the control tower are on alert about the weather and birds, and the mechanics are pouring their hearts and souls into accomplishing speed and precision in their work. With the combined efforts of all the workers, the flight finally takes off but they are soon faced with trouble.

Through episodes related to the work involved in operating large commercial passenger flights, the film spins an entertaining tale that shows the growth of new staff members with both humor and suspense. The film exudes a sense of realism through the meticulous research that went into learning about the work of in-flight and on-the-ground flight staff and how they problem-solve. An ensemble of top actors in Japan including Haruka Ayase, one of Japan’s most popular female actors, raises the film to higher planes.

The list includes some big hits in theaters in Japan in 2021 such as Under the Open Sky, Aristocrats, and It’s a Summer Film.

Two animated films from director Yasuhiro Yoshiura, Time of EVE the Movie and Patema Inverted, will be featured in addition to a timeless classic which opened the door for Japanese cinema to reach the rest of the world, Akira Kurosawa’s RASHOMON

Similarly, all other movies in the film festivals have shown different aspects of the Japanese society.

Forest Finance From COP26: The Devil Is In The Detail



BY: BHASKAR SINGH KARKY

Forests play in a critical role in stabilizing the global climate as they absorb nearly 30% of carbon dioxide emissions. In a recognition of the need to halt and reverse the loss of forests to meet global climate targets, COP 26 began with leaders from 105 countries, that together account for 85% of the world's forested area, signing a landmark declaration to end deforestation by 2030. This declaration is backed by \$12 billion in financial commitments from 12 governments and \$7 billion from private companies, including \$1.7 billion dedicated to indigenous peoples and local communities involved in conservation. In addition, more than 30 private sector companies have also pledged to stop investing in activities linked to deforestation.

A similar pledge in 2014 – the New York Declaration on Forests – signed by 40 countries and 57 companies to half deforestation by 2020 and end it by 2030, failed. In fact, deforestation continued and even increased after that pledge was made. But this time around there is some hope as the pledge is backed by financial commitments. Additionally, it emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities by recognizing their contribution to conservation.

However, there are significant challenges for the implementation of this pledge within the intended timeframe. From experience, such voluntary declarations pose a real challenge. If the New York Declaration of 2014 didn't work, the Norway and Amazon Fund of 2019 did not work either. Already, a day after signing this declaration, Indonesia has issued a statement saying it does not intend to end deforestation by 2030 and described the pledge as “inappropriate and unfair”.

Put simply, a political declaration will not halt deforestation. At its heart, it needs to be supported by financial incentives for behavioural change and a financing architecture that is transparent, accountable, and fair. These are still lacking in many developing countries, and without such a financial architecture in place, the investments may not reach the intended targets. From an investor's point of view, there may be concerns around the limited opportunities for monitoring financial flows. Most importantly, a large percentage of the poorest of the poor in the developing world are dependent on forest re-

sources and the bulk of forest finance needs to reach them. The pledge must cater to their needs and aspirations; only then will a standing tree be viewed as more valuable than a felled one.

The private sector who have pledged to stop investing in activities that drive deforestation also faces challenges. There is a problem with delinking deforestation from supply chains, especially in consumer goods and therefore stopping the financing of activities that lead to deforestation is not as simple. Especially given that private and public finance in the form of subsidies continues to drive deforestation. In the end, the funds may not be sufficient to address deforestation and forest degradation at a global scale from the Amazon to the Congo basin to Himalayan montane forest. There is always the danger of large areas getting left out with trade-offs being made even when all forests are equally important.

This pledge is ambitious and involves a large range of stakeholders, but the devil is in the detail. The intentions of global leaders may be good, but to back this, developing countries need appropriate incentive mechanisms and a financing architecture that can be monitored. Also, much of the finance from the private sector is generated by large companies. Such companies are mainly associated with manufacturing, energy and or the transport sector, such as steel, cement, oil, gas, food processing, airlines, and automobiles among others. Developing countries will have to rely on national-level forestry and conservation institutions as intermediaries to deal



with such companies. The government's role is to create an enabling environment for attracting forest finance and be a regulatory body for monitoring investments and progress.

This non-binding pledge brings about a ray of hope for forestry stakeholders by creating an opportunity for increasing investment in better forest management. But if this takes another couple of years to make the frameworks and guiding policies, the 2030 targets could be missed. Sometimes we just have to let honesty be the guiding principle and seize this opportunity in good faith for taking immediate action.

The author is a Resource Economist at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

Nepal Reduces Child Stunting

UNICEF says Nepal's significant progress in the nutrition of mothers and children at risk due to current inequities and COVID-19 pandemic

By A CORRESPONDENT

UNICEF releases the special issue of the Maternal and Child Nutrition on Nutrition in Nepal: Three decades of progress for children and women.

Nepal achieved globally renowned progress in reducing child stunting and scaling up nutrition services during the Millennium Development Goals era (2002 -2016), despite periods of political and economic instability, according to a special supplement of the Maternal and Child Nutrition Journal. However, the country still faces considerable nutrition-related challenges. Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets on stunting and wasting is not advancing at the speed, scale or equity required, and may be further derailed by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF's "Nutrition in Nepal: Three decades of progress for children and women", brings together a set of nine original articles that examine the drivers of success and identify where greater policy and programmatic action is needed to achieve the SDG nutrition targets.

Besides that Nepal has also made some extraordinary success in around maternal and child nutrition.

Stunting in children (under the age of two) decreased by 24-percentage points between 1996 (57 percent) and 2016 (33 percent). This was due to the increased coverage of health and nutrition services and improvements in household wealth, parental education, and sanitation.

Between 1996 and 2016, the early initiation of breastfeeding

saw an increase from 18 percent to 56 percent, and complementary feeding increased from 54 percent to 77 percent.

Between 1998 and 2016, the percentage of households using adequately iodized salt doubled from 35 percent to 77 percent.



More women took sufficient iron and folic acid supplements during their pregnancy, with an increase in the percentage from only 6 per cent in 2001 to 71 per cent in 2016.

Thanks to the involvement of more than 50,000 female community health volunteers, Nepal saw an increase in access to and demand for iron-folic acid supplementation by communities. This was combined with earlier and more frequent antenatal care visits.

Vitamin A supplements have been given consistently to over 80 per cent of children (aged between 6 and 59 months) and saved the lives of an estimated 45,000 children under the age of five, between 2002 and 2015.

"Optimal maternal and child nutrition is the basis for developing a resilient society. The decline in the number of malnourished children, improvements in health facilities and services, and the multisectoral approach used in Nepal over the past three decades - noted in the supplement of the Maternal and Child Nutrition Journal - are a testament to the Government of Nepal's commitment to reducing all forms of malnutrition. The European Union is proud to support and complement the Government's ongoing efforts to improve the nutrition status of women and children of Nepal," said EU Ambassador to Nepal, Nona Deprez.

According to the journal supplement, this pivotal progress in nutrition has been possible in Ne-

pal through the progressive actions taken by successive governments. The Government of Nepal utilized ground-breaking research to test interventions and overcome challenges related to, for example, vitamin A supplementation. The Government is also committed to enforcing mandatory legislation such as salt iodization that protects children's nutrition. The investment in health posts and temporary health centers to reach children and women - in particular, Nepal's workforce of Female Community Health Volunteers - have been crucial in achieving reaching a significant proportion of children with vitamin A supplements and pregnant women with iron and folic acid supplements. Also, investment in other sectoral programmes during the Millennium Development Goal era—including education and sanitation of children—has strengthened children's overall growth. Furthermore, the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan (MSNP) has driven multisectoral and multistakeholder action for nutrition across the full life-cycle, which has also contributed to the progress achieved.

Today, Nepal has a very different policy and programmatic landscape from that at the start of the MDG era, and there are new opportunities and challenges in the quest

to achieve the national and global targets on nutrition. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a human and socio-economic crisis that threatens to unravel past progress on nutrition.

“The learning from the past 25 years that are incorporated in the supplement of the Maternal and Child Nutrition Journal are invaluable. These will inform and contribute to future improvements within the nutrition programme in Nepal,” said Ms. Elke Wisch, UNICEF Representative to Nepal. “The data provided in the supplement will help us to improve maternal, adolescent, and child nutrition by scaling up essential nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions and ensure an enabling environment for nutrition. However, we must act now, given the impact that the pandemic has had on the nutritional health of mothers and their children”

UNICEF calls upon the government and partners to improve the health of children in Nepal, by giving greater attention to improving access to nutritious, safe, affordable, and sus-

tainable diets throughout childhood, adolescence and in the years of childbearing. As economic, social, and physical constraints to nutritious diets coexist, a multisystem approach involving food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems are needed.

Also necessary are:

- Integrating essential nutrition services into the existing service delivery platforms of facility-based health workers (e.g., family planning, antenatal, delivery and post-natal care and well-child and sick-child care) and continuing to strengthen community-based nutrition services through Female Community Health Volunteers to reach more women and children.

- Using multiple communication channels to reach caregivers with factual information, advice and counselling on infant and young child feeding and dietary practices for older children, adolescents and women.

- Strengthening local government leadership and management capacities to plan, budget, implement and monitor nutrition programmes and services, and maintain Nepal's commitment to generating data, information, and evidence to assess progress and inform decisions.



कोभिड संक्रमण भई घरमै बस्दा ध्यान दिनुपर्ने कुराहरु

- पर्याप्त हावा ओहोरदोहोर गर्ने अलग्गै कोठाको प्रयोग गरौं ।
- अरु व्यक्तिसँग भेटघाट नगरौं, भेटघाट गर्ने परेमा कम्तिमा २ मिटरको दूरी राखौं र मास्कको अनिवार्य प्रयोग गरौं ।
- घरका अन्य सदस्यहरुले सम्भव भएसम्म अलग्गै शौचालय तथा बाथरुमको प्रयोग गरौं ।
- क्वारेन्टाईनमा बसेको व्यक्तिले प्रयोग गरेको मास्क तथा पन्जा जथाभावी नफालौं र सुरक्षित स्थानमा नष्ट गरौं ।
- अलग भाडाकुँडा प्रयोग गरौं ।
- समय समयमा साबुन पानीले कम्तिमा २० सेकेण्ड मिचिमिचि हात धुने अथवा सेनेटाईजर प्रयोग गरौं ।
- प्रयोग गरिएका सामग्रीहरु साबुन पानीले धोई सम्भव भएसम्म घाममा सुकाऔं ।
- खोक्दा वा हाच्छिउँ गर्दा मुख र नाक रुमाल वा कुहिनाले छोपौं ।
- ज्वरो, खोकी, स्वासप्रस्वासमा समस्या, घाँटी दुख्नेजस्ता समस्या देखा परेमा नजिकको स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा सम्पर्क गरौं ।



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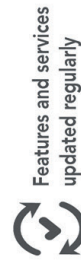


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