

DAO Kathmandu Regd. No. 148/11/063/064  
ISSN: 2091-0711



**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**VIEWPOINT**  
Shobhakar Budhathoki



**CULTURE**  
Sreejan Shrestha

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

www.spotlightnepal.com

April.- 08, 2022

FORTNIGHTLY

DEUBA'S INDIA VISIT

# Warming Relations

INSIDE



**ELECTIONS EXPENDITURE**  
**QUESTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY?**

**CLEAN COOKING**  
**HAZY DRIVE**

**INTERVIEW**  
**BINAYAK SHAH**



# ग्रामीण लघुवित्त संस्थाहरूको सहयोगी निकाय साना किसान विकास लघुवित्त वित्तीय संस्था लि.

लघुवित्तको कार्यक्रम मार्फत ग्रामीण समुदायको आम्दानी एवं रोजगारीका अवसरमा अभिवृद्धि गर्नका लागि गरिबी निवारण गर्ने कार्यमा सघाउ पुर्याउने उद्देश्य लिएको यस वित्तीय संस्थाले देश भरी एघार (११) वटा इलाका कार्यालय र केन्द्रीय कार्यालय मार्फत ७६ जिल्लाका १२७५ वटा साना किसान कृषि सहकारी संस्था लि. र समान प्रकृतिका अन्य सहकारी संस्थाहरू मार्फत लघुवित्तका लागि थोक कर्जाका साथै गैह्र वित्तीय सेवा समेत उपलब्ध गराउँदै आएको छ। नेपाल सरकार, अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय दातृ संघ/संस्थाहरूको सहकार्यमा समुदायमा आधारित सहकारी संस्थाहरू मार्फत सामाजिक तथा सामुदायिक कार्यक्रम संचालनमा समेत सहयोग पुर्याउँदै आएको छ। यस वित्तीय संस्थाको वेबसाईट [www.skbbli.com.np](http://www.skbbli.com.np) बाट थप जानकारी लिन सकिने छ।



**साना किसान विकास लघु वित्तवित्तीय संस्था लि.**

केन्द्रीय कार्यालय कार्यालय बबरमहल, काठमाडौं।

फोनं. ०१-५३२०९१३/५९०९६१२/४१११८९५





**Editor and Publisher**

Keshab Poudel

**Contributor**

Sabine Pretsch

**Design/Layout**

Sahil Mokthan, 9863022025

**Marketing Manager**

Madan Raj Poudel

Tel: 9841320517

Nabin Kumar Maharjan

Tel: 9841291404

**Editorial Office**

Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 977-1-4530250

**E-mail**

spotlightnepal@gmail.com

P.O.Box: 7256

**Website**

www.spotlightnepal.com

**Kathmandu DAO Regd. No.**

148/11/063/64

**Central Region Postal Regd.**

No. 36/067/068

**US Library of Congress Catalogue**

No. 91-905060, ISSN : 2091-0711

(Print), ISSN: 2091-0754 (Online)

**Printing**

Megha Offset Printing Press P. Ltd.,

Dhapasi, Kathmandu

Tel. : 977-1-4363624

Nepal-India relations are unique in the world in the sense that there is nothing separate and dividing them. However, it is not at the political level. From time immemorial, Nepalese and Indian people have travelled each other's countries, each other's religious shrines, and taken part in the cultural and spiritual activities without any hindrance and bar. This is the reason overwhelming numbers of people from both the countries rarely take notice at the twists and turns of the diplomatic game. However, this unique relation is seldom gets reflected on the state to state level relations. For the first time, Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke on the same tone giving high importance to our civilizational connections. Prime Minister Deuba even returned performing a spiritual visit to Viswanath Temple in Banaras. Relations are not only just for the sake of give and take but go beyond that. Nepal and India relations are an example. By spending whole day in Banaras taking part in different activities related to the spiritual and cultural activities in Bishwonath, a highly spiritual shrine of the Hindus of Nepal and India, Prime Minister Deuba also gave the message that cultures and religions also have importance in our relations. We extensively cover recently concluded visit of Nepalese Prime Minister Deuba to India. We also cover the Chinese foreign minister's recent visit to Nepal and elections accountability. The cover story for this issue is, however, on clean cooking. At a time when global energy crisis is hitting Nepal making LPG as impossible to sustain economically, Nepal has good time to go for clean cooking utilizing our own electricity saving the foreign currency. As Nepalese are celebrating Nepali New Year 2079, New Spotlight family wishes to all readers, patrons and well wishers Happy New Year 2079.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

# CONTENT

## TRENDS

Fanny Jonckeur 3

## NEWSNOTES

4

## BUSINESS BRIEF

8

## OPINION

Dipak Gyawali 10

## ELECTIONS EXPENDITURE

Questions Of Accountability? 18

## VIEWPOINT

Shobhakar Budhathoki 22

## INTERVIEW

Binayak Shah 24

## CULTURE

Sreejan Shrestha 26

## CLEAN COOKING

Hazy Drive 29

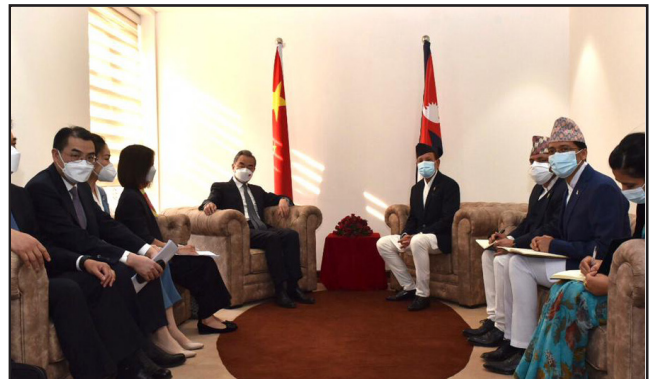
## TRAVELOGUE

Abhishekh Adhikari 34



COVERSTORY: DEUBA'S INDIA VISIT : Warming Relations

12



CHINESE FM'S VISIT : Hiking Diplomacy

17

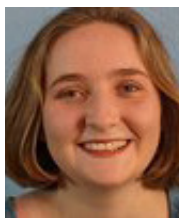


EU AMBASSADORS: Visit To Remote Nepal

28



# Echoes In The Valley, Kirtipur



BY: FANNY JONCKEAURE

If you heard traditional music this Saturday, it surely came from Kirtipur. On the 26th of March, the city welcomed the new edition of Echoes in the Valley. This not-for-profit music festival witnessed its first ever edition in 2017 and it has been going on since, even if last year the festival took place virtually and in 2020, it had to be canceled due to Covid. But this year, the festival came back full force with more than 5000 people according to the organizers.

It hosted 11 different groups of artists from various nationalities and genres, as well as activities held from temple to temple. Indeed, from 9.30am to 9pm, Kirtipur resonated from every corner of every street. From the Happy Village Orchestra to Ser O Jooni, and from Nanashi to Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol & ensemble (see the full list on their website at the end of this article), the day was full of surprises and mirth. Scattered on the slopes of Kirtipur was a heterogeneous gathering of artists joining on this special moment to share their love, their culture and of course, their art. To get a good understanding of the festivities, I asked a few questions to Bhushan Shilpakar, director of Shilpakar & Co., producer of Echoes in the Valley:

**Do you have an idea of the number of people present at the festival?**

“We are conservatively estimating between 5000-8000 people attending (9:30AM- 9PM) during the eleven and half hour long festival programming yesterday.”

What was it like, finally being able to organize (not virtually) the festival again?

“It feels great! Maybe people are fed up of sitting at home, or isolating, or having to worry about getting sick, so this outdoor event was a perfect opportunity for them to be socializing and have a semblance of a new’ normal’. It was a good decision that we responsibly postponed this festival that was set to happen two

years ago. We were keeping an eye on daily positive cases of Covid and were mindful of government restrictions. Luckily for us, Covid cases were on the decline and the government lifted the ban on large gatherings three weeks ago. Saturday’s event was the biggest music festival to take place in Kathmandu valley after the pandemic, but if you look at our schedule we were also strategically

planning the day-long events in such a way that not everyone had to be gathered in a single place at any given time. There were simultaneous performances, workshops, exhibitions, demonstrations, tours and all sorts of stalls to engage crowds from toddlers to senior citizens.”

**How did you choose the artists performing? Was it hard?**

“Our vision is clear– we promote folk, traditional and indigenous music. We choose our artists keeping this as a basis. We also feature Nepali and international artists from other genres to not only spice up the mood of the festival but also to show that folk, traditional and indigenous music can go hand-in-hand with modern and contemporary music.”

**Why is it important for you to have this festival?**

“When we started six years ago, there was no music festival dedicated to folk, traditional and indigenous music. I am sure you noticed that we try to keep the vibe as local as possible, which means that we don’t build large stages, or use unnecessary amounts of hoarding boards as stage backdrops. Instead, we use pre-existing dabalīs that are raised platforms built hundreds of years ago for public gatherings; tucked away courtyards; and temple grounds as performance venues. During the festival, we promote food stalls run by the local community that sell local food and beverages. Music scene in Nepal and around the world is predominantly male. At EITV, we make a constant and consistent effort to always feature as many female artists as possible. This year, we are happy to share that over 60% of our performers were women.”

**Finally, what do you take from it, what does this festival brings you?**

“If you watched the final performance yesterday, as per tradition, we conclude the festival with a performance by a Nepali maestro. Last night, it was Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol, a veteran percussionist and his diverse ensemble. When the seventy-three year old Nhuchhe Bahadur strapped on the large dhimé drum and began to beat on it, all one could see and feel was his joy

*Fanny is an intern from France.*





## NEWSNOTES

### India Provides Support To School Building In Udayapur

Dr. Narayan Khadka, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Namgya C. Khampa, Charge'd Affaires, Embassy of India, Kathmandu jointly laid down the foundation for construction of a new school building Bal Mandir Secondary School at Triyuga Municipality, Gaighat in Udayapur District.



The project is being undertaken in Education Sector with the grant assistance from Government of India at the cost of

NRs.31.13 million under India-Nepal Development Cooperation as a Community Development Project.

Bal Mandir Secondary School is an old established school of Udayapur District. Once completed, the school will shift to its new premises. Currently, 1100 students are enrolled in the school, about 70% of which are girl students.

Since 2003, India has taken up over 523 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) in Nepal and has completed 467 projects in the areas of health, education, drinking water, connectivity, sanitation and creation of other public utilities across all 7 provinces of Nepal at the grassroots level. Out of this, 71 HICDPs are in Province-1, including 8 completed projects in Udayapur District and another 8 projects under various stages of completion.

### Japan Hands Over A New Health Center In Udayapur

The Government of Japan handed over a newly-built health center to the Female Awareness Campaign Team Nepal in Udayapur district today. Along with H.E. Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Kikuta Yutaka, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Narayan Khadka, attended the ceremony.



The new building has been built with the support of USD 67,944 under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government.

On the occasion, Ambassador Kikuta congratulated everyone involved in the project. He also appreciated the efforts of all who worked together with the Embassy to complete the project and hoped that the health center would become a community asset and serve the local people. This project stands as another shining example of friendship in the year of 120 anniversary of the first dispatch of Nepali students to Japan, he added.

This health center is an essential medical service center in the area. Previously, the health post was administrated in a rented residential house, which did not have enough space and facilities to provide appropriate medical services. Therefore, a new facility had to be constructed to ensure continuity of health care.

The Embassy of Japan believes the new facility will

contribute towards assisting doctors and nurses to provide more effective and appropriate medical services as they will now be able to treat more people in a safe and hygienic environment. The Embassy also believes that the support will contribute towards further enhancing the friendship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal.

GGP was established to implement projects directly benefiting the people at the grassroots level for the socio-economic development of the community. Since 1991, over 200 GGP projects have been implemented in Nepal.

### India To Fund NRs.41.13 Million For Waste Water Management Project

The Embassy of India signed the MoU with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Government of Nepal & Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality, Solukhumbu for construction of Khumjung Khunde Waste Water Management Project.



The community development project shall be built under the India-Nepal Development Cooperation with the financial assistance of the Government of India at a total estimated cost NRs.41.13 million.

The construction of this project will improve the health and quality life of the people living in Khumjung village, Solukhumbuproviding them with safe water and improved sanitation, which are essential for improving the public health.

### Ghodejatra 2022 Concludes

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari observed the 'Ghode Jatra 2078' amid a spectacular ceremony organized at the Army Pavilion, Tundikhel on April 1, 2022.

Various equestrian skills to include Trick Rider, Taagan and Charger Race, Sword Jump, Show Jump, Tent Peking, Cross Tent Peking, Lance Hit Pack, Lance and Ring, Sword and Apple, Drill Ride, Musical Ride, Vaulting Exercise, Horse Ball, Cross country and Fixed Jump, Hungarian Post and Fire Jump along with the cycle races among others were presented during the function.

President Bhandari gave away awards to the winners and runners up of show jump and musical ride competition.

On the same occasion, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Prabhu Ram Sharma gave away the prizes to the winners of the Horse Races.

Present on the occasion were Vice President, Acting Chief Justice, Chairman of the National Assembly, Speaker of the house of representative, Former Prime ministers, Chiefs of Constitutional bodies, Secretaries of Government of Nepal, Ambassadors of foreign embassies in Kathmandu, heads of sister security organizations, Resident Defense Attaches, retired and serving Generals of NA and media personnel among others.

### Over 200,000 Nepalese Benefit From ITEC



The 57th Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Day was celebrated by the Embassy of India on 29 Mar 2022 in Kathmandu.

Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra hosted the event and welcomed the ITEC alumni who did their higher education or training in various reputed institutes of India

Minister of Education Devendra Paudel was the Chief Guest for the event, and General Prabhu Ram Sharma, Chief of Army Staff, Nepali Army was the Special Guest.

Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra felicitated Special Guest for the event General Prabhu Ram Sharma, COAS Nepali Army and Honorary General of the Indian Army.

Similarly, ambassador Kwatra also felicitated senior ITEC alumni Prof. Dr. Ram Kewal Shah, Vice-Chancellor, Madhesh Institute of Health Sciences, Janakpurdhama for their outstanding services towards the country and in recognition of their achievements which exemplified the highest standards of training imparted through ITEC.

The ITEC alumni, including retired officers of the Nepali Army and Dinesh Kumar Ghimire, Secretary Water and Energy Commission, fondly reminisced about their time spent training with various civilian and Defense Institutions in India.

### Zonta International And Zonta District Club Members Call Upon President Bhandari

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari gave an audience to the Zonta Club of Kathmandu along with the delegates from Zonta International and Zonta District 25 during the area meeting in Kathmandu.



The delegates briefed President on Zonta International's, Zonta District 25's and Zonta clubs of Nepal's various work on empowering women and girls. The President provided her valuable sugges-

tions on the country's focus and priorities for women, girls and children.

Zonta Club District 25 Area Meeting of Area 2 (Nepal and Bangladesh) was held in Kathmandu with the theme "Educate, Empower and Enlighten". The Area meeting was inaugurated by Governor Ztn Errick Elavia. Lieutenant Governor Ztn Shreejana Rana updated the participants on the Zonta membership numbers in District 25 and shed light on ways to keep members engaged and motivated in the clubs' programs.

### IFC And Nepal Stock Exchange Ring The Bell For Gender Equality

For the second consecutive year, IFC joined the Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) to 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality,' an annual global event that highlights how the private sector can spur women's participation in the global economy and promote sustainable development.

Accelerating the pace of gender parity could lead to important economic, environmental, social, and governance gains in emerging and frontier markets. If women fully participated in formal labor markets, the global gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by \$28 trillion, according to the

Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative.

"For the second year in a row, we join hands with IFC and the UN Global Compact Nepal for the 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality event,'" said Krishna Bahadur Karki, CEO of NEPSE. "We recognize that stock exchanges can play a key role by nudging listed companies to do more to promote equality."

A growing body of research shows a range of business benefits associated with gender diversity on corporate boards and in senior leadership. It also underlines the positive influence of gender-diverse management and boards on a company's sustainability profile, including improved financial performance and shareholder value, and rising investor confidence, among others.

"With countries gradually recovering from the global pandemic, this is the right time to push for increased participation of women to accelerate the recovery process," said Pradeep Man Vaidya, President of United Nations Global Compact Network Nepal.

In Nepal, the number of women on corporate boards is extremely small. An IFC study in the country's power sector shows that out of 132 board members from 20 companies, only 12 (9 percent) are women. Despite Nepal's Companies Act 2066 BS requiring at least one or more female shareholders, only three out of 10 public companies have women on their boards.

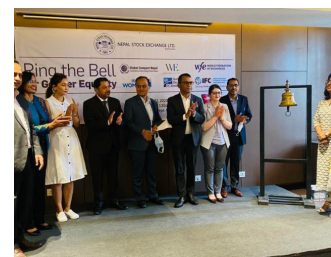
"The Ring the Bell initiative is designed to highlight the catalytic role that stock exchanges can play in fostering gender equality and driving inclusive growth," said IFC Resident Representative in Nepal Babacar S. Faye. "It is encouraging to see the commitment of private sector companies in Nepal as demonstrated by 19 power sector companies that worked with IFC's Powered by Women Initiative to level the playing field."

IFC has long been engaged in efforts at the capital markets level to support women as economic actors. This work includes women in leadership capacity, support to regulators on integrating gender indicators into corporate governance codes, and co-sponsoring annual Ring the Bell for Gender Equality activities in conjunction with International Women's Day. This year, a record 120 exchanges are participating in these events worldwide, from less than 10 exchanges in 2015.

### Foreign Minister Dr. Khada Meets Indian Foreign Minister Dr. Jayashankar

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Narayan Khadka held a meeting with External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar in Colombo. Matters including the ongoing preparations for PM's visit to India were discussed in the meeting.

On the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Ministerial, the Foreign Minister held separate meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Don Pramudwinai, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh A. K. Abdul





## NEWSNOTES

Momen. Matters pertaining to Nepal's bilateral relations with the respective countries were discussed in the meetings.

Addressing the Eighteenth Ministerial Meeting, convened in Colombo as the preceding Meeting of the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit, Minister Dr. Khadka stressed the need of renewed commitment and concerted actions from all Member States to revitalize the BIMSTEC process.

Dr. Khadka further emphasized the need to work together to uplift people's lives and livelihoods, create equal opportunities and realize the aspirations of peaceful and prosperous Bay of Bengal region.

He underscored Nepal's commitment to constructively contribute to the BIMSTEC process for ensuring that it delivers better for the peoples of the region.

Later, the Foreign Minister called on Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa at the latter's office in Colombo. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction on the state of cordial and friendly relations between the two countries and expressed hope that the bilateral cooperation would be further strengthened in the days to come.

The Foreign Minister appreciated Sri Lanka's commitment to the BIMSTEC process. He also underlined Nepal's willingness to work closely with Sri Lanka to enhance cooperation in the areas of mutual interests.

### Japan Hands Over New Health Post In Rolpa District

Japan has handed over a newly-built Health Training Center and Emergency Shelter to the Rolpa Municipality in Rolpa District. The new building has been built with grant assistance of USD 80,375 under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government.



On the occasion, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Kikuta Yutaka sent a message congratulating everyone involved in the project. Ambassador Kikuta appreciated the efforts of all

who worked together with the Embassy to complete the project and hoped that the health post would become a community asset and serve the local people during and after the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This health post is an important medical service center in the community and provides free medical services. The old building had nearly collapsed and therefore had to be rebuilt to ensure the continuity of health care in the community.

The Embassy of Japan believes the new facility will contribute to enhancing health services in Rolpa Municipality of Rolpa District. It also believes that the support will contribute towards further enhancing the friendship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal.

GGP was established to implement projects directly benefiting the people at the grassroots level for the socio-economic development of communities. Since 1991 over 200 GGP projects have been implemented in Nepal.

### Fifth Conference Of Survivors To Combat Trafficking In Person 2022 Concludes

At a time when political parties are heading for the nationwide local elections next month and provincial and federal elections is coming closer, the declaration passed by Fifth Conference of Survivors of Combat Trafficking In Person 2022 Conference is highly important to draw the attention of national parties to publicly express commitment against human trafficking..

Concluded recently announcing the Jorpati Declaration, the fifth Conference of Survivors to combat trafficking in person 2022 also called for immediate end of human trafficking.

Organized by Shakti Samuha led by Chari Maya Tamang, who was a victim of trafficking; the declaration said that the human trafficking is not only violation of human rights but also serious crime against humanity.

The two day conference, March 12-13, has stressed the need to take the human trafficking not only as social agenda but also political agenda in the context of globalization. Along with the state, there is also the need of commitments and accountability of political parties to end human trafficking.



Conference of Survivors of combat trafficking in person was held in 2007, 2008, 2014 and 2019 first, second, third and fourth respectively. Issued by chair Tamang and vice president Tara Bhandari, the declaration was approved by 205 persons representing different stake holders and representatives from all seven provinces and came from all seven provinces and national level.

The declaration among other calls for the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen to formulate the act, directives and working producers immediately necessary for the effective rescue work and returning to the county and rehabilitation. The declaration reminded that all those works related to rescue and rehabilitation of rehabilitation of those persons in trafficked is either delayed or getting difficulties.

The declaration also calls for all three tiers of government local, provincial and federal to provide effective support for education, livelihood related skills and other such sustainable integrated programs to those persons rescued from trafficking.

The resolution also calls for the management of safe rehabilitation centers and development of community based protection system to aware the community in the process rehabilitation the community. The resolution stresses the need to provide alternative system to those who don't have family and don't want to go to community for adjustment.

The resolution also calls for sustainable and secure rehabilitation at least one in each province. The resolution also demanded other various issues related to adjustment, rehabilitation, security, employment and human rights projections of persons in trafficking. The resolution also demanded to amend

the laws, regulations not to let any trafficker go free,

**Pokhara International Airport Completed**

PM Deuba and Chinese Foreign Minister Virtually Attend Completion of Pokhara International Airport



Chinese Minister Wang paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister of Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba at the latter’s official residence in Baluwatar. Following this meeting, Minister Wang together with PM Deuba virtually attended the completion ceremony of the Pokhara Regional International Airport.

**Nepal And China Signed Nine MoUs**

Foreign Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka and State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC Wang Yi witnessed the signing and exchange of agreements, MoUs and documents at Singh Durbar after the official talks.

Visiting State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi sat down with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal Dr Narayan Khadka at the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar.

The meeting between the duo focused on Nepal-China relations, their mutual welfare and concerns and other issues at the national, regional and international level, it has been said, reports RSS.

Expressing his gratitude for medical equipment and COVID-19 vaccines provided by the Chinese Government and reiterating Nepal’s firm commitment to its one-China policy, the minister drew the attention of the Chinese minister to negative impacts on the country’s economy due to the country’s blocked transits with China.

Following this meeting, a bilateral meeting between the Nepali and Chinese delegations has begun. The 25-member Nepali delegation led by Minister Khadka includes high ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and secretaries of various other ministries.

The 17-member Chinese delegation led by Foreign Minister Wang comprises Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wu Jianghao, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Commerce, Sheng Qiuping, Director-General, the Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Liu Jin-



song, Deputy Director-General, Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jiang Xiaoyan, Deputy Director-General, Protocol Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Song Jia and Secretary to State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang,

Deng Zhi.

Nine different memoranda of understanding (MoU) were signed between the two countries after the meeting. The MoU to be signed are related to financial and technical support, feasibility study of transmission lines, service to be provided by Chinese health workers in Nepal.

Similarly, Minister Khadka hosted a dinner reception in

honour of his Chinese counterpart Wang in the evening, reports RSS.

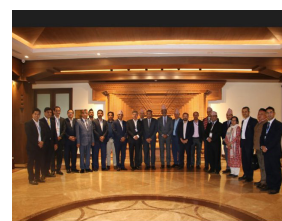
**Nepal, India 9th LOC Review Meeting Concludes**

The 9th India-Nepal LOC Review meeting concluded in Kathmandu. The meeting was aimed at reviewing the progress of projects being undertaken in Nepal under the Government of India’s (GOI) Lines of Credit (LOCs), ensuring better project implementation and more effective utilization of the large amount remaining under the said LOCs.

From the Indian side, the meeting was led by Sridharan Madhusudhanan, Joint Secretary, (Development Partnership Administration – I), Ministry of External Affairs, and comprised of officials from Embassy and the EXIM Bank.

From the Nepal side, the meeting was led by Ishwori Prasad Aryal, Joint Secretary (International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division), Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal (GON) and included officials from several departments involved in the execution of projects under the Government of India’s Lines of Credit.

The LOC review meeting was preceded by the inauguration of substations under the Modi-Lehkhath Transmission Line and Substations Project in Laha Chowk, Kaski district.



The project, being financed under the LOC of USD 250 million (LOC II), involves the construction of a 42 km long power transmission line and its associated substations at New Modi, LahaChowk and Lekhnath in central part of Nepal.

The USD 20 million projects are executed by KPTL Ltd. and ABB India. The substations package is completed while the transmission line package is likely to be completed soon. The inauguration was done by Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal in the presence of senior GON officials, an Indian delegation and local representatives.

**Nepal Is For Safe, Orderly, And Regular Migration**

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Narayan Khadka has said Nepal is for working with the international community to realize the vision of safe, orderly, and regular migration.

Minister Khadka said it while addressing the Ministerial Meeting of the Champion Countries of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) held in Rabat, Morocco in a hybrid format.

According to a press release issued by Ministry of Foreign affairs, Minister Dr. Khadka, in his pre-recorded address, underlined Nepal’s commitment on GCM and highlighted that partnership and cooperation with sending and destination countries, regional consultative groups and other entities are indispensable to maximizing migration’s contribution in securing mutual development benefits.

He further stated that the adoption of the GCM in 2018 was a historic milestone in the governance of international migration as it provided a comprehensive framework for international cooperation to address its multi-dimensional aspects.

Minister Khadka also conveyed Nepal’s willingness to engage constructively in the First International Migration Review Forum.



## BUSINESS BRIEF

### World Bank Provides \$150 Million to Strengthen Nepal's Financial Sector

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$150 million 'Finance for Growth' development policy credit to strengthen financial sector stability, diversify financial solutions, and increase access to financial services in support of Nepal's green, resilient, and inclusive development.

"A well-functioning financial system is a key enabler for the mobilization of private investment and driver of economic activity," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. "By strengthening the financial sector, this project will contribute to Nepal's green, resilient, and inclusive recovery and growth path, particularly benefiting the poor and vulnerable."

The second Finance for Growth operation will support enhanced supervision of the banking sector to address financial stability risks in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts. The operation will help open up capital, insurance, and disaster risk financing markets, and foster financial product innovations. It will also support initiatives to increase liquidity and inclusion through access to external commercial borrowing, financial digitalization, and financial literacy for women. This will help improve the functioning of the financial sector to support private sector-led growth.



The operation also initiates a new climate agenda, supporting climate finance resilience policy measures across banking, insurance, and capital markets. This can pave the way for the introduction of green loan principles and incentives for green lending as well as new insurance and capital market products adapted to address both climate mitigation and adaptation challenges.

"Through this project we look forward to supporting the government's transformative financial sector reform agenda which, among others, introduces a first round of reforms to strengthen financial sector resilience against climate-related risks. This will lay down strong foundations for a more stable, less bank-centric and more inclusive financial sector that is better positioned to mobilize private investment and support real economic activity," stated Peter Mousley, World Bank task team leader for the project.

### 3rd Connect [IN] Entrepreneurship Conclave Concludes

Embassy of India organized the 3rd edition of International Entrepreneurship Conclave – Connect [IN] in Kathmandu. According to a press release issued by the Embassy of India, the Conclave is part of the year-long celebrations to mark 75 years of India's independence under "AzaadikaAmritMahotsav".



Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Minister for Communication and Information Technology and Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Ambassador of India to Nepal, jointly inaugurated the 3rd edition of Connect [IN]. This edition built upon the success of the previous two editions to further cement the growing linkages between the startup ecosystems of India and Nepal.

The day-long Conclave saw participation of about twenty-five entrepreneurs, including five from India, working in domains as diverse as e-commerce, life sciences, fintech, education technology, social entrepreneurship, food tech, and financial services. An audience of close to 400 aspiring entrepreneurs, business leaders, media persons and bankers benefited from the discussions and deliberations that took place during the Conclave. A much larger number watched the Conclave over live stream.

The Conclave was earlier scheduled for 1st week of February 2022 but had to be postponed to March in view of the worsening pandemic at the time. The organizing partner was Clockb Business Innovations, and other key partners included GMR, Tata Motors, Tata Meditech and Tootle.

Connect [IN] is an initiative that brings together innovators, dignitaries and thought leaders from India and Nepal to celebrate the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship in our two countries. The Conclave, whose motto is connecting entrepreneurial minds of India and Nepal, embodies the conviction in two countries that we may have a million problems but we also have a billion minds that can solve them. Through its three editions, Connect [IN] has provided an enabling platform to young entrepreneurs, investors, venture capitalists and experts from India and Nepal to learn from and connect with each other on a range of domains.

The Conclave comprised of four Entrepreneurs in Shots: stories from founders of key startups which have made it big in India and Nepal. From India, these stories included Meesho, a unicorn and one of India's largest social e-commerce and resale portals, and Elucidata, an upcoming firm that uses data analytics to bridge the gap between life sciences and engineering. From Nepal, it included the well-known fintech player F1Soft Group and the e-commerce portal Sas-todeal.

The Conclave also featured three panel discussions

focusing on salient matters in the startup space, such as challenges faced by startups during their early stages, funding of startups from VCs’ perspective, and on how technology can help overcome barriers in traditional businesses. Among the Indian participants were Yatra Angel Network, a VC firm focusing on funding of fintech ventures, and Credenc, a startup using technology and data analytics for better decision making on disbursement of educational loans. From Nepal, these included well-known startups such as Tootle, HattiHatti, Pick and Drop, Pad2Go and SweetFix, and VCs such as Dolma Impact Fund and Business Oxygen. The event also featured speakers from Standard Chartered Bank and King’s College Kathmandu.

The Connect [IN] startup pitch: Pre-event activation camps for Connect [IN] were organized during December 2021 and January 2022 at various locations in Nepal, including at schools in Dang, Sarlahi and Sunsari districts. Subsequently, about 80 young entrepreneurs applied for the incubation and mentorship module, of which 20 were short-listed and underwent training during February and March, in areas like finance, administration, law, investment readiness, sales, marketing etc. These 20 young ‘techies’ are currently in various stages of their entrepreneurial journeys in fields like education, social enterprise, travel and hospitality. An Idea Audition took place subsequently in March, in which four out of these 20 young entrepreneurs were selected and made investment pitch during the Conclave.

**FNCCI, IBN Sign Agreement**

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been reached between the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and the Investment Board Nepal (IBN) for cooperation in internal and foreign investment promotion in the country.

The FNCCI President Shekhar Golchha and the IBN chief executive officer Sushil Bhatta signed the MoU in the presence of Finance Minister and IBN Vice-Chairperson Janardan Sharma amid a function.

According to the MoU, a help desk related to direct foreign investment will be set up at the FNCCI Secretariat.

Similarly, the FNCCI actively helps the IBN to identify and search for foreign investment projects through it. It will organize road programs relating to investments at home and in foreign countries.

Likewise, both the FNCCI and IBN cooperate in subjects of acquiring knowledge and sharing experiences and information, and in carrying out policy reforms in investment

within the public-private partnership concept.

Also, both of the organizations cooperate in organizing in-

vestment-related assemblies, conferences, exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and training sessions at the national and international levels in order to promote direct foreign investment and other investments.

On the occasion, Finance Minister Sharma viewed that the MoU between the FNCCI and IBN has been exemplary for the promotion of domestic and foreign investment in the country and expressed the hope that both the institutions would implement their words.

Others present on the occasion were the IBN member and FNCCI outgoing President Bhawani Rana, the IBN joint secretary Bhagawan Aryal, the FNCCI senior vice president Chandra Prasad Dhakal, vice presidents, Dinesh Shrestha, Anjana Shrestha and Ram Chandra Sanghai and President of the International Investment Promotion Committee, FNCCI, Aananda Bagadiya among others.

**NRNA Elects New Executive Committee Unanimously**

The 10th Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) International General Assembly and NRN Global Conference started in the Capital concluded by issuing a 14-point declaration.

The NRNA convention unanimously selected a new executive committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Badri KC, Kul Acharya and Rabina Thapa.

Inaugurating the conference, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba urged the Non-Resident Nepalis to use the capital, technology, business knowledge, skills and abilities acquired abroad for the transformation of the country.

Prime Minister Deuba said huge quantity of capital and technology was needed for the rapid transformation and sustainable development of the country and expressed confidence that NRNs would play a complementary role in it.

“The NRNA has acted as a bridge to spread Nepali language, culture, traditions, art and literature abroad and also to pass it on to future generations. Continuing this in the coming days, I am confident that you will proactively conduct our activities that can promote Nepali soil and culture in foreign lands as well,” he said.

The NRNA has said that non-resident Nepalis around the world are committed to mobilize skills, capital and technology in the interest of Nepal and Nepalis to make the basic slogan of “Once Nepali, Ever Nepali” meaningful.

It has been requested to take steps to reform the legal framework for the mobilization of the investment established by the Nepal Development Fund to attract Rs. 10 billion.





# Nepal's Mal-Development: Where And How Did We Go Wrong?



BY: DIPAK GWALI

In mid-February, Morang Chamber of Industries in partnership with Purvanchal University and Golchha Industry Studies Center invited me to Biratnagar to speak about the political economy of development in Nepal and the conundrum faced by its industries. It was part of their larger effort to professionally examine the problems besetting Nepal's industries via their own research as well as through dialogue with experts and officials across the scale, and to suggest remedies. What was telling and inspiring was the sheer energy and creative thrust behind their effort *to examine the wicked problems facing Nepal's industries, to find uncomfortable knowledge why this is so and to propose workable clumsy solutions*, something that is near-absent in their counterparts in Kathmandu. It proves the old adage that interesting things happen in the margins, not the center!

A comprehensive summary of the ills bedeviling industrialists and local entrepreneurs was presented by the Chamber's president Suyesh Pyakurel, the gist of which lay in the wide gap between the government's stated policy commitments and their dismal implementation at best and outright reverse practice at worst. Citing the World Bank's 2021 Nepal Development Update, it was pointed out that Nepal has a "missing" export potential some twelve times its current actual export, something if achieved could create over two million new jobs. During the Panchayat years, we were rice exporters: today we import some 60 million rupees of vegetables per day to say nothing of over 20 billion rupees of rice per year (a figure which is about half the net US MCC grant in five years, it must be noted)! In value terms, we import ten times more than we export, with India occupying 64% of the share and China 14%. Even in electricity which we were self-sufficient in with renewable hydro just some two decades ago, we now import over 40% fossil-fuel produced electricity to meet our needs.

The Chamber's report highlights the dismal state of our industrial ecosystem. Taking examples of several established industries such as animal feed, liquors, textiles and jute, it highlights how raw material imports account for anywhere from 70 to 95% of the total. There is no official encouragement, either to industries or to local producers of raw material, to go for import substitution. On the contrary, local industriousness is highly taxed: an example

given was how a four million rupees sales bill has an added five million excise duty and one million VAT, resulting in six million for state coffers, mostly misused for party cadre upkeep!

A ketchup industry in Itahari finds it cheaper to import tomatoes from Andhra Pradesh than to buy them from local Nepali producers because Nepal's National Planning Commission and its Finance Ministry value only revenue extraction at customs point with no need to consider forward and backward linkages in our production chain. Such contradictions also arise because importers can use legal loopholes in India for subsidies in dollar payments while Nepal's misguided foreign currency and import policies promote such malpractices.

The question is: what underlying political economy takes our economy to hell in a handbasket, so to speak? The vexing example of Mirganj bridge enroute from Forbesganj in Bihar that is five kilometers south of Jogbani was cited as typical of how Nepal pays wholly unnecessary high costs for industrial cargo due to official indifference. The dilapidated bridge's structure broke down in early January 2022 (it had suffered similar malfunction five years earlier), resulting in cargo destined for Biratnagar needing to be re-routed via Bhandabari adding 116 kms extra detour and an additional 20 thousand rupees cost per truck. Moreover, the failure to arrange customs clearance facilities in Bhandabari itself means the trucks have to be escorted by armed police and customs officials for extra 40 kms to the ICP check post in Biratnagar, a procedure that is carried out only once a day. Requests to Nepal officials to find alternative solutions by Morang industrialists have fallen on deaf ears, and economic diplomacy between Nepal and India has remained a dialogue between the deaf and the mute!

Why is this so? The rot, exacerbated by current crop of party leaders, goes back to the Third Panchayat of the 1980s (there were three Panchayats: Mahendra's first ten years of the 1960s, Birendra's next ten till the 1980 Referendum and essentially Aishwarya's third till the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990). The process of Nepal's industrialization initiated by Juddha Sumshere just before the start of Second World War received a boost from King Mahendra in the 1960s and was continued

by King Birendra in the 1980s, his last effort being the establishment of a paper factory with Chinese help. It was in the mid-1980s that two trends collided: Aishwarya Panchayat that institutionalized not industriousness and service delivery but rent-seeking among officials on the Nepali side, and the fatigue that set in among Western development agencies on the outside who initiated what is called “structural adjustment policies”. It was essentially geared towards opening up national economies of the Global South to Western capital and goods in the name of market liberalization, but really propagating a neo-colonial agenda; and it has rightly been called “fatalism in development”.

With the advent of party rule in the early 1990s, mostly under pressure from Western donors to divest the state away from development and to leave that to the market, but also due to a revenge attitude of hitherto banned parties towards Panchayat built industries, the Nepali Kangress government sold off state-owned industries for a song. Then began the process of not import substitution but a massive shift towards promoting imports. While there was praiseworthy progress in fostering private airlines, schools, hospitals and private hydropower development, decline set in with critical sectors such as agriculture and import-substituting national industries.

While it is true that where no market or appropriate industries exist, it is the state that has to create that space either by directly setting up state enterprises or providing an enabling environment to attract risk-taking punters. However, once a government has gotten an industry up and running well, it would be wise to divest it to private operators, mainly but not only because bureaucratically run outfits are rarely able to operate efficiently. Compared to state-run enterprises, private sector increases productivity through both increasing efficiency and exploring new market opportunities not visible to closed and risk-averse bureaucracies.

Nepal presents contrasting cases of doing privatization badly versus doing it right. The state enterprises sold off in the 1990s, let alone increase productivity, have stopped producing anything at all. The Bansbari Shoe Factory or Bhrikuti Paper Mill used to provide meaningful employment to thousands upstream and downstream of the factory chain. Now importers of those items provide employment only to a few office staff and accountants! On the other hand, Butwal Power Company (set up by Norwegian missionaries but nationalized by the Panchayat in the late 1970s) was privatized by the Chand cabinet in 2003 where I was the water resources minister and Dr Badri Shrestha was the finance minister. BPC has more than doubled its capacity, is expanding into new power plants and has established itself as a leading Nepali private hydro developer.

As scholars of political economy such as Karl Polanyi have noted, it is only a strong state with stable government that has been successful in creating market conditions



beneficial to the state, whether in England from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on or in China in the late 20<sup>th</sup>. Lacking that, states have become lackeys to market players as examples from East India Company in India to current Nepal and many other countries of the Global South provide testimony to where it was not markets serving society but society put on the auction block to serve the “satanic mill” of the market.

A sad testimony to that is how, with de-industrialization of Nepal, citizens of rural Nepal unable to find livelihood means withing the country were stripped of their social persona as well as social protection and thrown into the cauldron of the global labour market in the Middle-East, Malaysia and South Korea. As a result, Nepali import-substituting industries now cannot even find skilled or semi-skilled labour to man their industries. The vicious downward spiral gets worse as Nepal’s remittance dependent economy (with it accounting for some 30% of GDP) gets hit by what is called “Dutch Disease Impact”, a phenomenon where, when one sector of the economy becomes bigger than 10 or 12%, a chain of events takes over – from over-valued exchange rate that leads to more de-industrialization, shift from manufacturing to service industries, decreasing share of exports, trade deficits and so on.

The fault for this lies squarely at the door of democratic socialism professing Nepali Kangress and Marxism spouting UML: they have betrayed their founding political ideology of self-reliance and become vassals to crony capitalism of import trading houses. (The less said of the Maoists the better: there is not an iota of real Maoism in them!) With the Ukraine crisis, as the old world order heads to a decline, we are witnessing the birth of a new one with Bretton Woods-III where nationally produced commodities will be the real currency over printed dollars of Bretton Wood-II. Nepal awaits a younger and new political leadership that can see the promises and pitfalls therein to bring the country out of the current morass.



## DEUBA'S INDIA VISIT

# Warming Relations

*Sharing same cultural, religious and geographical lines with common civilization, Nepal and India have unique factors on their bilateral relations. For centuries, these strong connections of mind and thought have helped to foster bilateral relations without a dispute. Making a last leg of visit to Benaras, a constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and worshipping Bishwonath before coming to the country of Pashupatinath, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit was able to restore heart to heart relations between the two countries*

By KESHAB POUDEL

The course of Nepal and India bilateral relations has always been decided by its own destiny. For the sake of personal political gains, the relations used to be shaken from time to time and they have taken twists and turns. What have not changed are core values of the two countries.

In decades, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, concluding his

visit by worshipping Bishwonath in Benaras has given an enormous indication on the connections of minds between the two countries.

As a constituency of prime minister Narendra Modi and state ruled by BJP leader Adityanath, a devotee of Guru Gorakhnath, Benaras has its own importance in Indian politics and civilization. From Kings to modern Nepali political

leaders, Kasi gave shelter and intellectual minds.

From the time immoral Gorkhanath remains a guardian deity of Nepal. Even after the declaration of republic, his name is still printed in Nepalese currencies. Whoever set the visit, PM Deuba also connected two civilizations.

Deuba, back after the 'suc-



successful' trip, says it will consolidate India bond.

Along with all civilization-al parts, Prime Minister Deuba also handled his diplomatic and bilateral ties well.

Backed by Nepal's seasoned diplomats chief secretary Shanker Das Bairagi and foreign secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal, prime minister Deuba had a very good advisor with him. Having groomed and learned the state craft from early years Deuba's spouse Dr. Arju Deuba Rana, grand-daughter of General late Sher Bahadur Malla, a close aid of King Mahendra, seemed to give perfect advice to the Prime Minister.

Despite some criticism for his visit to BJP headquarter, handling of PM Deuba's visit was quite smooth and diplomatic. From his dress to body language and meeting to media, PM Deuba proved more mature and perfect.

Unlike speaking off and

cuff, Deuba read the written statement not deviating anywhere. This showed the visit was well handled and well prepared.

Prime Minister Deuba returned home after a three-day official visit — one of the shortest by any Nepal PM — to India, and asserted that the trip had been very successful, and would help to consolidate the Nepal-India bond.

Of the nearly 50 hours of the visit — including travel times from Kathmandu to New Delhi, and from there to Benaras and back to Kathmandu — however, Deuba spent only about two and a half hours in meetings to discuss bilateral issues.

Although he spent less than two and half hours in official meeting to discuss bilateral issues, he scored a good mark not allowing critics in Nepal to raise the finger.

He had lunch with PM Narendra Modi and high-level officials from both sides, and called on Ex-

ternal Affairs Minister S Jaishankar soon after landing in New Delhi.

During the visit, the two Prime Ministers remotely flagged off the railway service between Jainagar in Bihar and Kurtha in Janakpur (Nepal), released a joint vision statement on harnessing Nepal's rich water resources for "mutual benefit", and discussed the "border dispute" between the two countries.

Deuba spent time mostly in Benaras as a pilgrim with his wife Arzu by his side. They had an elaborate puja at the Kashi Bishwonath temple, where the visiting dignitaries were received by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

As the mahant of the Gorakhnath peeth in Gorakhpur; Yogi has a large following in Nepal. Guru Gorakhnath was recognized as the presiding deity of Nepal and of the Shah kings until it was declared a "secular" country in 2006 and a republic in 2018.

"Nepal's relationship with



## COVERSTORY

India is multi-faceted, and spirituality is one of its aspects,” Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka, who accompanied Prime Minister Deuba, said. Yogi hosted lunch for Deuba, had two rounds of talks with him, and promised to help build a dharmashala for Nepali pilgrims and elderly Nepalis living in Benaras.

### India, Nepal Ink Key Pacts On Connectivity, Energy

The focus of the meeting between the two prime ministers was on developmental cooperation, including a joint vision statement for power cooperation that envisages joint development of projects and transmission infrastructure.

For long Nepal has been seeking Indian market for export of electricity generated in Nepal. This time Prime Minister Deuba was able to convince India.

India has paved the way for electricity trade from Nepal, rising above the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the declaration of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Although Nepal has been making efforts for a long time for selling the surplus electricity produced during the monsoon in the regional market, it had not been successful. Nepal’s goal of exporting electricity will see light with both Nepal and India issuing the ‘In-



dia-Nepal Common Vision’ on energy development during Prime Minister’s visit to the southern neighbor.

Through the vision, both countries have agreed to increase mutual cooperation in the energy sector. With this, Nepal’s aspiration of entering the regional power market will turn into reality. The Prime

Ministers of both countries have described the Common Vision as the biggest achievement so far in the energy sector. It is believed that this will

pave the way for exporting surplus electricity to India and Bangladesh.

Following the latest agreement with India, Nepal has ensured the market for electricity in India and up to Bangladesh. It may be noted that during Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba’s visit to India, the Indian Prime Minister has publicly pledged to purchase electricity from Nepal.

On the occasion, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal and her Indian counterpart Raj Kumar Singh talked about the development of energy in Nepal during a sideline meeting. Nepal exported 39 megawatts of electricity to India from two projects in Nuwakot five months ago. The projects were constructed with Indian grants.

In lack of the market, ap-





ment on power cooperation committed the two sides to work for joint development of power generation projects in Nepal, development of cross-border transmission infrastructure, bi-directional power trade based on market demand and coordinated operation of national grids. Nepal invited Indian firms to invest in development, construction and operation of renewable and hydro-power projects.

Addressing a joint media interaction with Modi, Deuba brought up the boundary issue, which had become a major irritant in bilateral ties under his predecessor, KP Sharma Oli.

“We discussed the boundary issue and I urged Modi to resolve [it] through the establishment of a bilateral mechanism,” he said.

Deuba noted that Nepal’s relations with India are “highly important” and said his country is “eager to benefit from India’s progress through a mutually beneficial economic partnership”. He sought the enhancement of cooperation in civil aviation, including additional air routes, and the early delivery of 150,000 tonnes of chemical fertilizers by India.

Indian PM Modi said India has been a “firm partner in the journey of peace, progress and development of Nepal and will always remain so”.

proximately Rs 5 billion worth of electricity was wasted, according to the Nepal Electricity Authority.

Nepal and India launched several connectivity and energy cooperation initiatives, including a cross-border passenger train, even as Nepalese prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba urged his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to take steps to resolve a boundary dispute.

The Indian side made it clear both countries need to address the boundary issue through dialogue and to avoid politicisation of such issues.

The Indian side also handed over the Solu Corridor, a 90-km, 132 kV power transmission line built at a cost of ₹200 crore under an Indian line of credit. The line will help bring electricity to several remote districts in northeastern Nepal by connecting them to the country’s national grid.

Modi and Deuba also launched India’s RuPay card in Nepal. The domestic variant of the RuPay card will now work at 1,400 point-of-sale machines in Nepal, and the move is expected to facilitate bilateral tourist flows. Nepal is the

fourth country, after Bhutan, Singapore and the UAE, where RuPay is live.

Nepal signed a framework agreement to join the India-led International Solar Alliance, and the two sides signed three more pacts – a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on enhancing technical cooperation in the railways sector, and two agreements between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation for the supply of petroleum products for five years and for sharing of technical expertise.

The joint vision state-





## COVERSTORY

He said both leaders had agreed to give priority to trade and connectivity initiatives and also discussed the misuse of the open borders. “We stressed on maintaining close cooperation between our defense and security institutions,” he added.

Foreign secretary Harsh Shringla said the boundary and security issues were briefly discussed by the two sides. “There was a general understanding that both sides needed to address this in a responsible manner through discussion and dialogue in the spirit of our close and friendly relations, and that politicization of such issues needs to be avoided,” he told a media briefing after the talks.

As with all neighbors, there were some outstanding issues on the table between India and Nepal, and “what is important between close and friendly neighbors is that you have the ability to...discuss and sort out these issues in a manner that is satisfactory to both sides,” Shringla said.

Deuba’s first trip to India



since becoming prime minister in July comes a week after a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Nepal.

Nepal, a natural buffer between India and China, traditionally balances its ties with Beijing and New Delhi as both seek to woo it by pouring in aid and investment for infrastructure.

Both countries agreed to speed up the Pancheswar hydroelectric project on their border in west Nepal, which Modi said would be a “game changer” for the development of the region.

“The friendship between India and Nepal and mutual relationship between our people ... cannot be

found anywhere in the world,” Modi told a news briefing after the meeting. “Threads of our civilization, culture and mutual exchanges have been linked since ancient times.”

Deuba said Nepal’s ties with India were “highly important” and Kathmandu was “eager to benefit from India’s progress through a mutually beneficial economic partnership.”

Nepal agreed to use the Indian RuPay card which would strengthen “financial connectivity,” and promote Indian tourist flows, India said in a statement.

Both sides also signed agreements that include cooperation in railways and sharing technical expertise between the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Nepal Oil Corporation.

Analysts said the visit would help further promote the multi-faceted relations between India and Nepal.

“The visit is taking place after four years and will help increase trust and understanding between the two countries,” Dinesh Bhattarai, a Nepali former ambassador to Geneva.

PM Deuba’s visit to India showed that Nepal and India have many commonalities and connectivity to connect rather than the issues of disputes. After paying a visit after almost a year, PM Deuba is successful to revive the good relations at state to state level.



## CHINESE FM'S VISIT

# Hiking Diplomacy

*Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi concludes his three days visit with a short hiking to Shivapuri*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Nepal's mountains and Himalayas attract people from all over the world as a place to get respite, peace and tranquility. Be it short or long, a hike is regarded as a capsule for relaxation and peace.

State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China Wang Yi is not an exception to take pleasure of hiking in Kathmandu. Arriving in Kathmandu on 25 March for a three-day official visit following the completion of a hectic and complex visit to Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, Chinese foreign minister Yi found some ease and respite in Nepal.

Although Nepal-China relations remain a little chill following the ratification of the MCC Agreement by Nepal's parliament, the meeting was not hot compared to China's dealing with India, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Whatever hard and harsh words China uses, it understands Nepal's limitation and constraints. Similarly, Nepal too understands Chinese concerns and her sensitivity.

This may be the reason the Chinese foreign minister dealt with Nepal in a more relaxed and easy mood. Taking advantage of the relations with Nepal, the Chinese foreign minister did his hiking in Shivapuri, close to Kathmandu and gate to Rasuwagadhi,

Chinese foreign minister spent a day in Pakistan, a few hours in Afghanistan and half a day in India. However, he spent three days in Nepal, During his visit; he spent some of his leisure time going hiking in Shivapuri.

However, it neither appeared in any media nor did anybody notice that he was hiking to Shivapuri. Spending three days quietly in Nepal taking a hike, Chinese Foreign minister Yi, the busiest diplomat in the world, dealing with tough international negotiations and diplomacy, gave a gesture that Nepal is a comfortable place for them.

Hiking to Shivapuri, the world's top diplomat seemed to have gotten energy for another round of negotiations. This was not the only occasion the Chinese foreign minister spent his time hiking. During his last visit to Nepal, the Chinese foreign minister did his hiking to Chandragiri.

His three-day official visit to Nepal included hiking to Shivapuri and high-level meetings with prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Foreign Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka, President Bidhya Bandari, leader of Maoist Center Prachanda and Main Opposition party leader KP Sharma Oli. He also attended a function with his counterpart when Nepal and China signed 11 agreements.

Finally, State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China Yi and his delegation left for Beijing in a happy mood. Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stood at Tribhuvan International Airport to give them a warm welcome and warm send-off.

### China's stand

Visiting Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China will continue to firmly support Nepal in safeguarding national sovereignty and dignity, exploring a development path suited to its national conditions and pursuing independent domestic and foreign policies.

While meeting with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China is ready to continue standing firmly with Nepal on issues involving each other's core interests and major concerns.

According to Chinese news agency Xinhua, Nepali Prime Minister Deuba and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi agreed at their meeting that both sides will make good use of the Nepal-China Joint Consultation Mechanism to complete existing key cooperation projects and explore new areas of cooperation.



China will work with Nepal to safeguard the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and the basic norms governing international relations, resist unilateralism and oppose power politics, and contribute to regional peace and stability, Wang said.

Noting that China-Nepal cooperation enjoys vast potential, both sides agreed that deepening practical cooperation not only meets the needs of both countries, but will also inject strong impetus to regional development and prosperity.

Wang said China and Nepal have always supported, trusted and helped each other. The traditional friendship between the two countries has been enhanced through their joint fight against the earthquake and COVID-19, and their win-win cooperation has witnessed continuous and effective progress.

China-Nepal relations have become an example of equal treatment and win-win cooperation between countries large and small, and a demonstration of China's practice of the good-neighborly diplomacy, Wang said.

Guided by the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, China stands ready to expand all-round cooperation with Nepal and push forward their strategic partnership of cooperation featuring ever-lasting friendship for development and prosperity, he said.

The two sides also exchanged views on strengthening multilateral cooperation. Deuba said the Nepali side believes that fairness and justice should be upheld in international affairs, and the United Nations Charter and international law should be abided by.



## ELECTIONS EXPENDITURE

# Questions Of Accountability?

*As the local elections are less than one and half months away, concerned stakeholders have started to ask about transparency in the expenditure of political parties*

By KESHAB POUDEL

“Forthcoming local elections slated for May 13 will be different in every aspect. We have already announced numbers of step to make political parties and candidates transparent and accountable in spending money in the elections. Similarly, we also fix criteria not to allow any person to contest the elections having transaction with local levels,” said Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya, Chief Elections Commissioner. “There will be no mass feast and parties and other such activities aiming to influence the elections.”

What Chief Election Commissioner Thapaliya said is true. However, it will be different in reality. At a time when there is no strong monitoring mechanism and legal provisions, making whole elections process accountable and transparent is no more than a dream.

Chief Election Commissioner Thapaliya is not the first commissioner

to issue such a statement. His predecessors also harped on similar rhetoric just before the elections.

As long as political parties and their leaders choose money over candidates and ignore the code of conduct for the mere win of the elections, nothing can change in the present election pattern,

As the local level elections are approaching closer with the process of candidates selection beginning, there are growing concerns on how to prevent excessive use of money and muscle power and make political parties and candidates accountable and transparent in their use of election funding.

Despite fixing threshold for the expenditure in the coming local elections by the Elections Commission, stakeholders are yet to have reasons to assure that political parties and candidates follow the election commission’s

directions completely.

This kind of doubt is natural given the history of political parties and the candidates contesting the elections. Since many years, candidates and political parties have rarely published the exact figure of elections expenditure.

With no strict regulatory mechanism in place, the cost of contesting the elections has gone up many folds and it is impossible for the common party workers to contest the elections.

As expenditure of the candidates increase in the election campaign, it has directly impacted the quality of candidates at all levels. This also intensifies the level of corruptions at all levels.

With the enormous constitutional power and annual budget, everyone aspires to run the local level elections. However, not all have good motives. In the last local elections, more than half elected local representatives



were petty contractors and middle level contractors. Thus, almost all local level leaders spent huge amount of money to purchase excavators and construction of roads.

The annual reports published by the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority and Auditor General showed the alarming level of corruption and violation of financial rules and regulations.

Going through the past experiences, the Elections Commission has already announced numbers of initiatives to bar contractors from contesting the elections and fixing the threshold for the expenditure for the candidates contesting the local polls.

Looking to the past record of Election Commission and political parties, stake holders are demanding complete transparency in the campaign fund and expenditure of political parties.

According to the Constitution of Nepal, Elections Commission is the sole body responsible to regulate and monitor the political parties. Fulfilling its role, Elections Commission has already announced the code of conduct, mandatory showing of the expenditure for each candidate of local level.

Prepared for the Niti Foundation on the theme the Role of Elections Commission in Monitoring and Regulating the Political Parties, former law secretary and law minister Madhav Poudel has expressed his views that the current practices, laws, regulations and code of conduct are not enough to bring the candidate within threshold. He calls for effective monitoring role of elections and other concerned.

At a time when the Elections Commission has been performing role as ritual announcing code of conduct and regulations, former law secretary's argument is valid.

Election Commission has fixed elections campaign expenditure of the candidates. According to the Commission, upper limit of the expenditure for the mayor of Metropolitan City is Rs.750, 000 and 550,000 for deputy mayor. Similarly, Rs.450, 000 for mayor and deputy mayor of municipality, Rs, 350,000 for chairperson and deputy chairperson of Rural Municipality.

Likewise, the commission has fixed Rs.350, 000 for the ward chair of members of Metropolitan City, Rs.200, 000 for ward chair and members of Municipality and Rs.150, 000 for ward chair

and members of Rural Municipalities.

The commission has also directed the political parties and candidates to use the elections fund through the banking transactions and directed to present the transactions within 60 days of completion of elections. The commission also fixes the number of vehicles used in the election campaigns. However, the violation of Commission's direction has been norms.

Since last few decades, there are growing concerns over excessive use of money by the candidate at local level, Provincial level, House of Representatives and National Assembly. Experts like Madhav Poudel are worried that the unlimited spending by the candidates will intensify the level of political corruption.

"Political parties and candidates should be transparent in the elections expense. Despite fixing the ceiling by the Commission, EC is unable to implement its decision," said Poudel. "The entire elections fund should be mobilized through the banking systems. The priority of the political parties should be how to reduce the elections expenditure."

He also suggested to create election funds aiming at elections cam-





paign. Poudel suggested to use the check in the transaction of over Rs.25000.00. He also said that political parties should discard the donation given by unknown donors. Paudel suggested that the commission should appoint regulatory officials to monitor the expense of candidates.

Constitutional Expert Dr. Bipin Adhikari suggested that even donors need to follow the banking system. He gave an example of how political parties and candidates spend money to host feast to influence the voters in elections campaign.

“Media should not publish news items aiming to help political parties,” said Adhikari. He said that news is manufactured to support candidates and political parties. Dr. Adhikari suggested to discourage the propaganda news created to influence the voters.

Dr. Adhikari stressed the need to publish annually the expenditure of political parties. Voters and news media need to write where and how political parties secure election funding.

As Poudel and constitutional expert Adhikari, common Nepali citizens are also arguing for the need to control the excessive spending in the elections. At a time when political parties do not care about party ideology and elections agenda, candidates with money and muscle power have more opportunities to elections.

Media and common voters have one voice and one argument that quality and agenda of the candidate and ideological strength of the candidate contesting the elections matter. Ques-

tions of elections accountability and transparency are media’s topic and issues for academic discussions. The current situation is that the candidate without adequate financial resources cannot compete for the elections.

As Elections Commission is preparing for elections in war footing announcing elections code of conducts, political parties are focusing on elections centric programs and entering their constituencies to woo voters.

So far as the issues of elections funding, expenditure of candidate, transparency and accountability are concerned, the stake holders hold different views. Political parties have already expressed displeasure over the current spending ceiling fixed by the commission. Some parties criticize the amount fixed by the commission as inadequate.

Formally, political parties prepared paper works limiting on le-

gal limits. However, the candidates spend more money collected through the back door. It is reported in local media that a candidate needs to spend up to 50 million to win the election of chairperson of Rural Municipality.

“There have been public reactions that the candidates spend ten times more money than the ceiling fixed by the elections commission,” said Poudel. We have been listening to this kind of comment since last many years.”

He said that the excessive expenditure in the elections is threat to democracy and rule of law. “This will also affect the governance at local level. Former minister Poudel also said that the time has come to fix the donations amount stressing to introduce the law forcing political parties to reveal the name of donors. If Commission can force political parties and candidate to spend the amount fixed by it through banking system, it will be a positive change.”

No country is immune from the controversy in the election funding. He also said that election funding and transparency are a major issue in United States as well.

**India and Bangladesh**

Every country has its own system and spending ceiling for the candidate. Paudel said that Indian Elections Commission has increased the expenditure limit for the candidate last month compared to 2014 Assembly Elections. In India, a candidate of state assembly



can spend up to 4 million Indian rupees and 9.5 million for the Members of Parliament.

Indian media reported that every candidate violates the ceiling fixed by the commission. The cost of elections campaign increases because of food price. In Bangladesh, Elections Commission fixes ceiling up to 2.5 million taka. Hidden funding is major concern in all the countries.

Constitutional expert Dr. Adhikari holds the view that there is the need to change the mentality that candidates cannot win the elections without money. He said that there is the need to control the use of money for vote buying purposes.

Dr. Adhikari suggested that those who want to donate money to political parties and candidate should use the banking system. He also gave some examples how money is spent to influence the voters. Dr. Adhikari said that democratic system cannot be strengthened without controlling money. Media and voters need to audit expenditure of the candidate and they should be brought under the rule of law.

### Competition In Purchasing Cars

At a time when Elections Commission has announced the code of conduct for political parties and candidates limiting the number of vehicles in use, some questions have arisen regarding the recent reported news on purchasing 1000 vehicles for the Election Commission.

Constitutional expert Dr. Adhikari suggested to see alternative to purchasing new cars. He suggested to rent the existing vehicles available in the private sector arguing that taxis are also used as alternative.

“The commission also needs to think how to reduce the expenditure. He said that the commission should give up its mindset to purchasing car in every election. He said that the commission needs to purchase ballot paper but not necessarily vehicles.

Since the election is going to out of the access of common people, there is the need to create an atmosphere to reject the political parties to end corruption.

### Elections Commission Is Aware To Prevent Excessive Use Of Money

As the date of local elections is coming closer, Elections Commission has taken several steps to ensure free, fair and impartial elections. Chief Election Commissioner **Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya** spoke on various elections issues:

#### Voting rights to Nepalese living abroad

So far as allowing vote for those working in foreign countries and no vote in ballot, the existing election law does not allow election commission to take any decision. We are now in the process of formulating a new law. We will look at that issue. We will include all the issues related to strengthening the elections process.

#### Election Code Of Conduct



After attending several programs and interactions with various stakeholders, what I can say is that the code of conduct announced by the commission is good. We are committed to implement the code of conduct. Don't doubt over us and yourself regarding the code of conduct. It should be abided by all. Political parties and candidates have to respect this. With the participation of all stakeholders, election commission is committed to implement it in word and spirit.

#### Workable Code Of Conduct

We have developed the code

of conduct after a series of intense discussions. We have collected public opinions through our web-site. When it was in the process, political parties gave us so many points. But, now they are complaining that some code of conduct is irrelevant.

#### Every One Should Abide By Code Of Conduct

By following and respecting the code of conduct, we can hold free and fair elections. By respecting the code of conduct, we can contribute to implement the code of conduct framed by ourselves. We need to publicly express that we follow and abide by the code of conduct.

#### One Day Elections

We are introducing some new ways in the elections. After the elections of 1991, this is the first time the commission is holding the elections in single phase. We are preparing for this. Coming May 13, we will hold the elections in single phase. Voter will elect around 41 thousand local representatives. Everyone who reached 18 years before the day of elections will be given the right to vote.

#### Voter Friendly Ballot

We are also working to reduce the cancellation of ballots. We are printing the ballot looking at the ground reality to make it voters friendly. We all are accountable to the sovereign voters. Thus our actions and deed must be directed to pave voters to vote and select their own representatives.

#### Limiting Vehicles and Campaign Materials

As per the elections code of conduct, candidates will not be allowed to use large numbers of vehicles. The candidates will have to abide by the code of conduct. We will strictly monitor the implementation of the code of conduct.



# Federalism And Policing: Challenges And Opportunities



BY: SHOBHAKAR BUDHATHOKI

Policing is known as a local phenomenon and should be established as a public entity to serve ordinary people with their partnership and collaboration. Good policing is considered a police service that abides by the principles of responsibility, transparency, accessibility, and accountability. In another word, the police organization should be constituted as a people-centric rather than a power-centric institution that aims to fulfill public aspirations. The centralized police system is mostly observed towards serving the people in power and access to resources. The policing services are found efficient and effective in democratic societies if it is decentralized, locally owned and promoted. The main objectives of the policy should be identified as universal standards of policing that include maintenance of law and order, assurance of rule of law, protection of human rights, security of public properties, and prevention of crime and its investigation.

Effective and efficient policing establishes the foundation of a successful democratic system and demonstrates the state's legitimate presence in the community. It also promotes the culture of a lawful society. The pillars of functional democracy become unstable without efficient and professional police organization. In a democracy, the role of the police is extremely important to safeguard the interest of the government with due respect to the dignity of the people and due process of state mechanisms. Therefore, it is an official public institution, which is founded to serve the common people, and provide support to the government while fulfilling public aspirations. It means that civilian police should be developed as an organization, which understands local norms and values, as well as the culture, language and traditions of local populations. Such police organizations should incorporate universal principles of policing without compromise, but they should be integrated in local perspectives. In Nepal, Nepal Police (federal) should be established to meet principles of national standards incorporating international standards. However, the Provincial Police should inherit the spirit of the 2015 Federal Constitution, and represent the voices of the people of the province.

resent the voices of the people of the province.

With the announcement of the 2015 Federal Constitution of Nepal, the country has entered to federal system from a unitarian one. The constitution envisions three tiers of government, which include federal, provincial and local governments. It also outlines that the new forms of governance should function at all levels under the mandates of cooperation, collaboration and coexistence. Article 232(1) of the Constitution states that “the relations between the Federation, States, and Local level shall be based on the principles of cooperation, co-existence and coordination.” It is

**Federalism has created an opportunity to reform public institutions, including Nepal Police. The smooth federalization of Nepal Police indicates the country moving toward successful federalism.**

believed that the institutionalization of federalism will not be complete without establishing functional provincial police institutions within the principles of democratic and pro-public policing.

Similarly, Article (268) of the Federal Constitution outlines the existence of four security agencies in the country, which include: the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and National Intelligence Department. Among four security agencies, only Nepal Police will be restructured as per the Constitution and

will have a separate organization at both federal and provincial levels with sharing of power and authorities as part of the state restructuring process. Of course, Nepal Police and Provincial Police are not an independent organization, which complements each other, but they are entitled to perform their duties within their jurisdictions as authorized by the Constitution, and other relevant laws. As per Schedule (6) of the Constitution, the Provincial Police is authorized to maintain law and order as the exclusive power of provincial governments. While implementing the Constitution the federal government has already adopted two federal laws in 2020 that facilitate the transformation of existing unitarian police organizations into a provincial structure. These laws are related to operation, supervision and coordination in terms of Nepal Police and Provincial Police activities, and the adjustment of police officials in the Nepal Police and Provincial Police as well as outlines jurisdictions of Nepal Police and Provincials, including categorizing crimes to

be investigated by the Nepal Police and Provincial Police. These laws include a) The Act to Manage Operation, Supervision and Coordination Task by the Nepal Police and Provincial Police and b) The Act for the Adjustment of Police Officials in Nepal and Provincial Police.

Even though the Constitution aims to restructure police organization in a federal structure, the federal government has intentionally delayed the adjustment process of the Nepal Police and Provincial Police due to its unwillingness to transfer power to the provincial governments. The reluctance of the federal government to establish a Provincial Police has caused a severe impact to institutionalize federalism at local levels. Despite the federal government's unenthusiasm, the provincial governments have already prepared basic institutional mechanisms and created the foundations for functional provincial police organizations as soon as the federal government makes a decision to initiate the adjustment process.

So far A total of four provinces, including Province 1, Madhesh, Bagmati and Gandaki have adopted the Provincial Police Act from the Provincial Assembly. It is learned that the Lumbini Provincial Government has passed the Provincial Police Bill from its Council of Ministers, which is expected to be adopted in its upcoming session of the Provincial Assembly. The other two provinces, including Karnali and Sudur Pashchim, have produced a draft version of the Bill and looking right opportunity to adopt it from the Provincial Assembly.

Comprehending new dynamics of policing and incorporating the spirits of political changes poses numerous challenges in society. However, introducing the concept of democratic policing, as well as pro-public and human rights friendly policing can bring positive vibes to society while implementing federalism. It helps to achieve the goals of a state restructuring process. In comparison with other provinces that have adopted the Provincial Police Acts, the Gandaki Provincial Government has made remarkable progress in terms of meeting public expectations. It should be recognized as a forward-moving step as an initiative of the police reform process, which integrates new principles of policing applicable to an open society, and responsible governance. The main features of the Act include a) basic principles of police service that includes a commitment to democracy, rule of law and human rights, b) pro-public policing system such as Metropolitan, rural, neighborhood



and volunteer police system, c) human rights friendly policing and citizens' rights as an obligation of the police, d) independent oversight mechanisms to be represented by the eminent persons of the society, and e) an inclusive training committee represented by the intellectuals and professionals. These efforts of the Gandaki Provincial Government are commendable and help to broaden the horizon of police services in a changed context, and are taken as an example to replicate in other provinces. In addition, the high levels of commitment to modern forms of policing, including accountable, transparent, responsible and pro-public police institutions are expected to be introduced in other provinces, including Lumbini, Karnali and Sudur Pashchim.

Federalism has created an opportunity to reform public institutions, including Nepal Police. The smooth

federalization of Nepal Police indicates the country moving toward successful federalism. It is a public institution and is highly dedicated to supporting the government in the implementation of its policies and programs while implementing. Therefore, it is essential to shift its policies and strategies, which are friendly and accessible to common

people. Without pro-people policing, it is almost impossible to achieve the goals of the police to ensure security and rule of law in the country. It means that the policing philosophy should be transferred from conventional to modern police services that incorporate friendly to democratic values, human rights, and access to justice while protecting the interest of the country. In this regard, the policing strategies in Nepal must be restructured and reformed as per the spirit of the Constitution, changing the dynamics of society and public expectations. The establishment of functional provincial police provides a positive message of federalism and the state restructuring process.

*The Author Budhathoki, a well-known expert on peacebuilding, human rights and public security, is currently associated with the Niti Foundation as Human Rights and Public Security Expert. He can be reached at [peace.sb@gmail.com](mailto:peace.sb@gmail.com)*



## INTERVIEW

# "We Need Each Other To Revive Tourism"

*Nepal's tourism industry has been facing the most difficult time in the history due to the effect of Covid-19. However, the government is yet to come up with a recovery package. BINAYAK SHAH, the senior vice president of Hotel Association Nepal, spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on the issues related to the state of tourism and hotel industry in Nepal. Having been involved for over 30 years in the construction of Nepali Pavilion in Expo, Shah also spoke on ongoing Expo 200 Dubai, UAE and Nepal's participation in it. Excerpts of the interview:*

### How do you view the Expo in UAE?

In terms of the construction site of UAE's Expo, out of 36 thousand workers involved in it, 12000 are Nepal related. Interestingly, the name of all the workers written in the replica are pasted in the building. United Arab Emirates government normally charges 2600 dirham as royalty to the workers from other countries. However, UAE's companies pay just 250 dirham while hiring Nepali. UAE government has been offering such generous support to Nepali workers. Had Nepal's President and Prime Minister attended Nepal Day and highlighted these generous supports given by UAE, it would have done a great service in Nepal's interest. Even the foreign minister did not find time to visit UAE Expo started in October and close to shut down next week.

### Why did the PM did not visit?

Although Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was scheduled to attend Nepal Day, the plan did not materialize because of national conventions and elections of Nepali Congress. With his busy schedule, the foreign minister also did not find time. Then the responsibility shifted to secretary. However, the joint secretary took part on Nepal Day. At a time when Nepal desperately needs foreign investment and promotion of tourism, Nepal's political leadership needs to cash in on such a global event. Unfortunately, Nepal's political leadership is yet to see the economy as a priority. Nepal Day was highly important for the country to promote it as a tourist and investment destination in the global market. We have missed it. March 3 was Nepal's Day. Ambassador of Nepal attended as the chief guest.

Based in Paris, Bureau of International Exposition (BIE) has been organizing the Expo every five years since 1851 in different themes to depict human progress and to show what humankind will do in the future. Nepal has been continuously participating in the expo since 1970. Our private company ITG has been appointed by the government to construct and manage Nepal's pavilion in Expo.

This year's theme was Connect potentials for sustainable growth. Showcasing the vast opportunities arose from Nepal's unique location between India and China, the two fastest growing super economies in the world.

There are 500000 Nepalese working in UAE. Nepalese have a good reputation in UAE. Expo helps to enhance the image of the country. There are 198 pavilions from different countries. UAE has highly appreciated the contributions of Nepalese people in the construction of UAE. This is my 12<sup>th</sup> expo.

COVID-19 Pandemic has affected the Expo as large

numbers of investors are still in a watch and see state. However, the host UAE has made all possible efforts to bring major investors in the UAE. Expo helps to introduce the country profile of Nepal. This kind of expo also gives opportunities for a country like Nepal to showcase its potentials. Situated between two major economic powers with huge potential for hydropower development and natural heritage like Himalayas, cultural heritage to attract the tourist, Nepal is a sellable destination for the investors.

### What did Nepal project in Expo in the last six months?

Expo is a global forum. Along with family, diplomats, businessmen, intellectuals and investors also visit the expo. As mentioned earlier, expo provides immense opportunity for the country like Nepal to showcase its potential areas for investment. In expo, 192 countries and 50 international organizations like United Nations are participating with their own pavilion. As every country is presenting their own progress, there is a feeling of competition. Making pavilion is very important. Our presentation is quite good.

Situated between the two countries, Nepal has immense possibility to increase the investment in agriculture, tourism, mountain and hydropower. 25 million direct visitors and almost 25 percent others watched through social media. This has worldwide coverage. Due to the presentation of Nepal, the expo will encourage investors in Nepal in the long term. Many expats living in Dubai have already visited Nepal following the Expo. Good part is that currently there are seven flights a day between Dubai and Nepal. It is good to say that all the flights are packed. This also gives relief to Nepal. Despite the Covid-19, the flights are operating in full capacity. Nepal has a very good flight connectivity. As a company, we did our best. However, it should have been done at national level by the organization like Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal Investment Board, and Nepal Airlines. We did our best. Our planning was to build Kathmandu. However, we failed to construct it due to Covid-19 lockdown. This will give good benefits to Nepal.

### What is the state of Nepali tourism following the crisis in Ukraine?

Positive part is that the Covid-19 pandemic has globally subdued and many countries have already announced opening plans with relaxation in restrictions. The confidence of the people has increased following the administration of vaccine. It is good to say that 92 percent of eligible Nepalese have already secured vaccine against Covid-19. With this, Nepal's tourism has started to move. The immediate market is domestic tourism. At a time when the country has to wait for

a few more years to see revival of long-haul tourists, indication of gradual revival of domestic and regional tourism is good. However, this trend is not enough to recover the tourism industry in Nepal. Short haul tourists are from India, China and south East Asia. Our current focus should be based in internal tourism. At present, domestic holiday makers are travelling tourism destinations like Pokhara, Chitwan and other parts helping hotel industry for survival. Sizable domestic tourists are visiting hotels in Nagarkot, Dhulikehl, Pokhara and Chitwan in weekends supporting the hotel industry to survive.

Although a long haul tourism is yet to start, Nepal needs to start planning for future. All of us need tourism be-



cause this is the sector which provides necessary support for quick economic progress and prosperity. This provides immediate benefit to the people. There is stiff competition for tourism in regional market. The question now is how we manage the post-covid-19 situation. For example, Maldives and Azerbaijan have shown the way.

Good news for Nepal's tourism market is that Indian tourists are coming again. Even large segment of Indian tourists are coming through bus. Since Nepal is closer to Indian tourists, they will start to visit Nepal. However, this is not with Nepal's northern neighbor China which is yet to allow its citizens to travel outside the country. Here, Nepal should use its goodwill with China requesting them to open Nepal for their citizens. Nepalese government has already requested Chinese foreign minister to consider opening to Nepal. Since South East Asian countries are yet to open their door for Chinese and Indian tourists, Nepal can sell the destination. Similarly, Nepal also needs to sell its natural paradise destinations like trekking and mountaineering to lure more and more tourists.

**Government, Ministers and politicians always say tourism sector is a second best foreign currency earning center employing largest numbers of people. However, the same government and political leaders also press the hoteliers to pay full salary for employees even during the period of closure of hotels. Is not it contradictory? If so, how will tourism industry survive?**

Definitely, there are so many contradictions. We are compelled to pay salary even during the period of closure. Besides, we have to pay our bank installment, electricity, taxes and water bill. Despite expressing optimistic views, there is a very hard time for survival. Government and policy makers are showing apathy towards the recovery and revival of hotel industry. With lapses of period of ordinance, CCMC is no more legally existing. However, visitors are compelled to fill CCMC forms developed during the peak time of pandemic. This has been adding hassles only. Although no one needs to present the CCMC at TIA, the airlines do not allow passengers without the code because CCMC is still mandatory in travel advisory of Nepal government. We have been paying taxes, bank's installment as normal period. If you see the government policy and programs, they have not realized the current unprecedented time. The government has announced one month free visa to the tourists. However, the government is yet to prepare procedures and change the regulations.

In his recent interview, president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shekhar Golchha has made it clear that the business sector is at the verge of ruin. Suggesting to finance minister, he said that the sector will collapse in case of failure to provide tax and other incentive to them. His statement also spoke volumes. The time has come to give priority to economy and business.

Between 15-20 percent of small and medium scale hotels have already shut down due to the crisis. Many others are watching the next moves of the government. Look at Thamel, almost all hotels are shut down. Many Chinese investors who invested their money in Thamel left Nepal. Those who are living in Nepal also are losing their confidence. How to revive the hotel industry when even some branded hotels are shut down? In the current situation, one has to lose a huge money in operation. It is better to shut down to avoid accretive cost. It will reduce the loss.

This is a global problem and it needs to move all the parties together. The government, business community and the employees need to go together. We need each other's support to revive our industry.



# Heritage Revitalization: A Case Of Pilachhen



BY: SREEJAN SHRESTHA

Patan is the third-largest city in Nepal, situated in the southern-central section of the Kathmandu Valley. Patan city is known for its rich culture, tradition, arts and crafts. Initially Patan is a Buddhist city that was created in the third century and has a formal layout based on the Dharma Chakra and the Buddhist wheel of righteousness. Pilachhen is one of Patan’s toles. Pilachhen is said to have been founded at the same time as Patan.

About 2 kilometers east of Pulchowk is the Pilachhen hamlet. Pilachhen is claimed to be named after the “Laakhey” known as “Pila” who used to dwell there, and “Chhen” is the home of this Laakhey. According to Newar’s believe, Laakhey is portrayed as deadly red wild face, big teeth, and unmanaged long thick hair, who is said to be the protector of the people in the Kathmandu Valley.

Pilachhen is a one-of-a-kind Newar settlement with its own culture, tradition and history. Pilachhen’s population is quite homogeneous, with Newars accounting for 100% of the population and Maharjans making up the single ethnic community group with roughly 108 homes.

Pilachhen has both tangible and intangible heritage sites such as Bhimchandra and Hemchandra Mahabihar, Pilachhen Manka Guthi, Ganesh temple, Pilachhen Manka and Sana Guthis, Falchas (Patis), Indra Jatra, Machhindranath Jatra, Ghantakaran Jatra, Khyak Nach, and others. Pilachhen’s concrete and intangible heritages are inextricably intertwined, making the hamlet extremely rich in history and culture.

## Tangible Heritage

Pilachhen is home to several tangible heritage sites, including archeological, artefacts, and monuments that are significant to a community. These are the constructions that mimic Newar architecture.

**Ganesh Mandir:** The Ganesh Mandir (temple) at Lachhi tole is unique in its own right. It depicts Ganesh in a dance stance as an idol. In the Kathmandu Valley, it is the only one of its kind. If you worship the dancing Ganesh, it is said that you would be blessed with a son. It is venerated on a regular basis and is most popular during Indra Jatra, when the Golden Mukut (Crown) is on exhibit. Its origin date is said to have been in 832 B.S.

**Falcha (Pati):** Falchas are traditional public places, mainly used by elder people. The two Falchas in Pilachhen, Lachhi tole, are Tadha Flachi and Chidha Falcha. Every day, people come to the Falchas to recite Bhajans

and devotional hymns. These Falchas are regularly visited by the local people either to recite Bhajans or simply take some rest.

The Bhajans sung in Tadha Falcha are chanted throughout the year except for the month of Asar (June-July). Majority of people in Pilachhen are farmers so the Falcha is closed during that month such that the farmers could focus on plantation during the month of Asar (June-July).

Every day in Chidha Flacha, Namsangati is chanted, which continues throughout the year (365 days) and it stops on the day when someone dies. In the Falchas, young generations are taught Namsangati. “Bhajans” are also chanted when someone is going through difficult times in their life.

**Guthi Buildings:** The Pilachhen Manka Guthi is a Guthi building in Pakha Keba. The “Dyo” in the Guthi Building is venerated during Dashain festival. The Guthi buildings are used during the special events for Guthi members.

Lachhe is home to the Pilachhen Sana Guthi. It is utilized by the residents of the neighborhood for special feasts on special occasions. It is also utilized for ceremonies when members of the community pass away.

**Bahal:** In Pilachhen, there are two well-known Bihars, Bhimchandra and Hemchandra Mahabihar, both of which are located in Bacha.

## Intangible Heritage

Non-physical behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and folklore that are part of a community’s legacy are known as intangible heritages. Pilachhen has its own set of beliefs and customs that are exclusive to Pilachhen and cannot be found anyplace else in the Kathmandu Valley.

In Pilachhen, there are a variety of Jatras and festivals take place throughout the year. Pilachhen’s Jatras and festivals include Indra Jatra, Machhindranath Jatra, Ghantakaran, and Dashain. The locals of Pilachhen still follow the traditional way of celebrating these festivals and are still authentic unlike the ones performed by people elsewhere in the Valley.

Every year, a puppet play called





“Khyak Nach” is shown during Indra Jatra in Pilachhen. The performance takes place at Pilachhen Manka Guthi’s residence and is displayed through its window. A ritual ceremony is performed in front of the Ganesh Mandir before the puppet show starts.

Although the Khyak Nach is exclusive to Pilachhen, it has been imitated outside of Pilachhen in Patan in recent days. The Khyak Nach is a very old custom, and it has been a major source of entertainment to the people of Pilachhen since many centuries. The origin is not known to people. However, speculations is that it started during the Rana Dynasty since the puppet show mostly involves the dancing of the puppet with no dialogue which is quite like how the Rana’s treated the civilians when they used to rule the country.

The tole Secretary of Manka Guthi, Pilachhen Mr. Ratan Maharjan, 58 expresses his desire to share the culture of Pilachhen to the world. Rather than promoting the physical aspects like the tangible heritages, Mr Maharjan wishes to share the intangible heritages instead. “We want to show tourists our culture and tradition not buildings” he says. The people of Pilachhen host a number of rituals and ceremonies around the year like rice feeding ceremony for new-born babies, “Ketapuja” (performed before the boy becomes a teenager), “Ehee” (pre-adolescent girls are married to the Bel, which is a kind of fruit) and “Baara” (performed for a girl between 12-14 years old before menstruation).

**2015 Earthquake**

Pilchhen too, was unable to avoid the 2015 Earthquake. During the earthquake, it was estimated that more than 70% of the homes and other structures with magnificent Newar architecture were destroyed, severely affecting both the physical and intangible heritages in Pilachhen.

It was a big challenge, especially in a site like Pilachhen, to restore the demolished architecture without destroying traditional and aesthetic look. Late Mr. Ramesh Maharjan, Chairperson of Maya foundation initiated and put lots of efforts to re-build Pilachhen without destroying traditional and aesthetic look in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake. Mr Maharjan’s initiative played an instrumental role to re-build Pilachhen, bringing back to its previous state while preserving Newar tradition and culture. Unfortunately, untimely and unexpected demise of Mr. Maharjan was a big setback for Pilachhen to complete its re-construction activities as planned.

In addition, European Union’s SWITCH-Asia-funded Sustainable Tourism and Green Growth for Heritage Settlements of Kathmandu Valley (Parya Sampada) project, implemented by UN Habitat, is working to restore the area’s original aesthetic appearance by preparing a heritage settlement recovery plan, revitalizing Pilachhen pond, constructing Pilachhen Falcha, assisting with home design, developing a tourism development plan, and providing various skill development training, including music. The project’s efforts have made a substantial contribution to revive Pilachhen’s both tangible and intangible heritages, which carry cultural and historical values as well as play an important role to preserve ancestral lifestyles and lives of Newar settlement community in Pilachhen, ultimately, contributing to promote tourism industry of Lalitpur municipality.

**Tourism**

Pilachhen hosts a number of well-designed and attractive tangible heritage sites along with a culture that consists of customs, tradition, festivals and other intangible heritages, which have huge potential to attract both internal and international tourists.

People of Pilachhen had hopes of turning Pilachhen to a tourist hub like all three respective Durbar Squares in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. However, the goal is yet to achieve. Mr Dipesh Maharjan, 42 from Pilachhen says that after the reconstruction there has been progress made in the town, but the lack of tourists is still disappointing. People of Pilachhen are trying to push home-stay accommodation to attract more tourist but the progress is not so impressive.

Mr. Rabi Maharjan, 40 year old, Secretary of Pilachhen Guthi adds that Pilachhen has a huge potential to attract tourists, but they need to overcome certain barriers. There is a lack of business policy in Pilachhen. Even though the local businesses have seen a lot of progress since the reconstruction, people still need to learn proper business management. There is lack of communication between people and the tourist. One of the key problems is a language barrier and sharing.

**Way Forward**

People of Pilachhen are proud of their identity. They are well aware of the potential that their culture holds. They are very much keen to promote tourism in Pilachhen, and aware that they need to enhance more skills such as entrepreneurship and business management, language skills, technical improvement, in order to capture the benefits of Pilachhen’s culture and traditions.

Most importantly, all the efforts and supports provided by various entities need to be sustained jointly by people of Pilachhen, preserving both tangible and intangible heritage in order to attract tourists, which are a means for their economic growth.

*Sreejan Shrestha is an Intern at UN-Habitat*



## EU AMBASSADORS

# Visit To Remote Nepal

*Ambassadors from European Union, along with Ambassador of European Union to Nepal, Nona Deprez visited remote parts of Karnali province*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every ambassador wishes to see the state of the project run under their support and cooperation. To visit the project sites and hold interactions with people, ambassadors need to travel to bumpy and difficult terrains.

Although diplomats have to pass bumpy and dirty roads to reach the project sites, once they reach there, they see the unbelievable love and affection of the rural people. Diplomats traveling in the Karnali and Lumbini provinces found the same.

European Union and member countries like Germany, France and Finland have invested huge resources to uplift the life of people living in the remote parts of Karnali and Lumbini provinces.

Their supports include areas of drinking water, livelihood, civil society, conflict victims and gender. Four visiting ambassadors were from European Union.

EU Ambassador Nona Deprez together with French Ambassador Gilles Bourbao and German Ambassador Thomas Prinz visited Dullu Municipality in Dailekh district on 22 March.

They were happy to see the results of the project activities linked to green economy, green jobs and efforts to bring about sustainable development.

The local leadership – mayor and deputy mayor highlighted that the palika was witnessing a gradual transformation into a green, resilient and inclusive development model—a major learning that comes from the three EU funded projects GRAPES, UTTHAN and WAVE.

The Ambassadors visited ward number 4 and got to observe the production of vegetables and crops with the help of lift irrigation that has brought economic benefits to the local communities.

Ambassador Deprez appreciated the outcomes of the projects and stressed on the need to replicate them in other areas to push ahead with the agenda of green economic recovery.

Representation was from EU

International Partnership's European External Action Service - EEAS German Embassy Kathmandu French Embassy in Nepal - Ambassador de France au Nepal Suomen suurlähetystö Kathmandu - Fenlands ambassador Kathmandu.

EU Ambassador to Nepal Nona Deprez in her tweet wrote about her meeting sharing the photos. Some of her tweets showed her commitments and dedication to the projects supported by EU.

Tweets Follow

“Finally on the road again! On our way to Karnali Province!” wrote Nona Deprez. From here her long journey from hot plain of Karnali and Lumbini province to cold place of Karnali Province began.

Along with visiting in Group, ambassador of European Union to Nepal Nona Deprez also visited other projects in Karnali and Lumbini Provinces alone.

In Surkhet, her visit featured strong commitment, close cooperation and dialogue amongst all those combating Gender Based Violence: hospital & OCMC staff, police, local & prov authorities, attorney general office, female community health volunteers, community psychosocial workers, shelter services.

“I am awe of the great service provided by the One Stop Crisis Management Centre for victims of gender based violence in Narayan municipality Karnali with the full support of the community psychosocial workers and municipality @UNFPANepal,” tweeted European Ambassador to Nepal Nona Deprez.

“Women farmers in Birendranagar-09 tell us how adopting climate resilient agricultural practices has improved their lives through inter-cropping, using grey water and organic fertilizer,” tweets ambassador @VSONepal #PRAYAS.

We are thankful to their Ex-



cellency from EU, Germany, France & Finland for your visit to Karnali Province which includes visit to #VSO led consortium project #PRAYAS interventions.

While in Karnali: best sel roti in Guranse, Dailekh; best meal of the trip in home stay in Barahatal, Surkhet

Colleagues from Karnali Ministry of Land management, agriculture and cooperatives shared their vision for Organic Karnali: strong alignment with #EUFarmtoForkStrategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. #TeamEurope #strongertogether

Frank and rich exchanges at Free Media Network in Butwal with journalists, civil society, provincial members of parliament, municipality, security forces, bar association, district admin and business on media and local elections

Visited ‘Samman Griha’ - Respect house in Nepalgunj funded through Global Fund to combat TB, Malaria and HiV AiDS. The house is run by Western Star- a branch of @BDSNEPAL - the organization for and from LGBTIQ communities With @GerAmbKTM and @FranceInNepal

So great to see progress brought by water thanks to community and municipality engagement in Bhairabi RM, Dailekh with the support of #rvwrmp @finlandinnepal #WorldWaterDay2022

“From me to WE”: bonding and mentoring at 4 days residential leadership workshop for women conflict victims/survivors @thestorykitchen.

## CLEAN COOKING

# Hazy Drive

*Following the prices of petroleum products going up, affecting Nepal's foreign currency reserves, debates to replace the LPG by electricity has intensified at official levels. With the surplus generation of electricity back home, Nepal can make differences. However, Alternative Energy Promotion Center, Nepal's NGOs, INGOs and community based organizations have been working to promote clean cooking for long. In absence of proper information portal, the information has scattered. In collaboration with various international organizations and partnership with AEPC, Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) initiated the Global Launch of the Clean Cooking Explorer for Nepal recently. Bringing all information related to Clean Cooking in one portal, the Explorer helps to make informed decision*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Since her appointment as the Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Pampha Bhusal has been harping only one slogan: replace LPG from kitchen by clean electricity.

“Since Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has surplus electricity in its grid, the government is making every possible effort to replace LPG by supplying sustainable and quality clean electricity to Nepali households. We are also working to develop a modality to provide the subsidy to consumption of electricity and purchasing the cooking utensils to the poor and vulnerable population,” minister Bhusal told New Spotlight.

“The Government is deeply committed to achieving universal access to clean cooking by 2030. Thanks to tools like the Clean Cooking Explorer, there will be an evidence-based path to accelerating a national transition to clean cooking in Nepal.”

As minister Bhusal and other people are talking about the need to replace LPG by induction, rural people in Timal Village of Kavrepalanchwok district have already replaced their LPG stoves bringing electric devices and utensils. With the demand for the de-

vices increasing, Kalpana Lama, a volunteer working to make Timal smoke free Village, is facing tough choice. Lama said that the induction gives relief to the women. She holds the view that such campaign are successful not on slogan but on work.

She said that they distributed 600 induction last year with an aim to make Timal Smoke free. She has distributed 1000 induction on April 24.

Lama said spending optimum Rs. 640 is enough to cook food for month compared to almost Rs.1200 for LPG. To materialize the commitment expressed by Nepal government and minister Bhusal, various international organizations and Nepal's development partners have been providing financial support to government bodies like AEPC, local NGOs and community based organizations.

With the funding from endev



Nepal, a GIZ supported clean energy project has been providing resources in distributing the clean electric cooking stoves in Dhading and Kavrepalanchwok districts.

As part of the project, Ajumery Bikas Foundation, National Association of Community Electricity User Nepal and Radio Sagarmatha in collaboration with government has been implementing National Electric Cooking Campaign since last 3 years. The distribution of clean cooking devices in Timal is part of the campaign.

After launching of the Explorer, persons interested in clean cooking will find all the data bases and information now in Clean Cooker Explorer





for Nepal. This will help an informed decision making process.

**Distribution of Clean Cooking Devices**

In collaboration with various agencies, Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) has already launched a campaign to convert 50,000 households into clean cooking. AEPC also received fund from Green Climate Fund for clean cooking.

With this kind of program from AEPC and other non-governmental organizations, Minister Bhusal’s ambitions and determination to replace all LPG were understandable. Good news is also there in increasing the generation of electricity in Nepal. After years of electricity deficit, Nepal is going to have surplus of over 600 MW of electricity from coming monsoon.

With no buyer, NEA had to shut down the plants losing over Rs.300 million revenue last year from July to September. As some more projects are at the stage of generation, NEA will have more surplus electricity on its grid for up to five months till October. Under the leadership of Managing Director Kul Man Ghising, NEA is now working to improve the distribution lines across the country not to waste electricity in coming wet season.

At a time when there is not sign of receding the current global prices of petroleum products including Liquefied Petroleum Gas, diverting the surplus electricity to Nepalese kitchen can save Nepal’s foreign currency and

help NEA to increase revenue.

Because of infrastructural constraints and seasonal fluctuation in generation, it is not as easy to replace LPG as is said. However, this is the right time to effectively start replacement of LPG and traditional energy from cooking.

As NEA has already started to improve the

distribution systems and construction of storage projects, intensification of campaign by national and international level organizations to clean cooking push Nepal into a new stage. The Global Launch of the Clean Cooking Explorer for Nepal is one milestone.

**Why Clean Cooking Explorer?**

Access to clean cooking technology, such as electric and gas stoves, transforms lives by improving health, protecting the climate and the environment, empowering women, and helping consumers save time and money.

As the household air pollution generated whilst cooking indoors has serious, negative health impacts, with women and children disproportionately affected, the use of clean cooking reduces it.

**Launching Global Clean Cooking Explorer**

At a time when Nepal Government has prioritized energy access as a vital step to improve population welfare, economic prosperity, and energy sovereignty for the country, a consortium of national and international organizations launched the Clean Cooking Ex-

plorer for Nepal.

Organized by Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC), in partnership with the Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA), World Resources Institute, Nepal Open University, Kartoza, and KTH Royal Institute of Technology, member of National Planning Commission Dr. Surendra Lav Karna opened the Global Launch of the Clean Cooking Explorer for Nepal.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Karna has said that this is highly important for sharing the information regarding clean cooking in Nepal, He said that promoting clean cooking has many advantages for Nepal including how it helps to reduce the impact of climate change, save the life of people by reducing traditional energy and reduce Nepal’s foreign trade imbalance offering clean energy generated in Nepal.



Keeping in mind to fulfill SDG’s goal, Nepal government has announced the years 2018 to 2028 as the “Decade of Energy and Hydropower” to realize the dream of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.”

In line with this vision, Nepal Government has set ambitious clean cooking targets that include the adoption of electric cooking by 25% of households nationwide by 2030. The availability of relevant data and tools can play a significant role in promoting clean cooking throughout Nepal to achieve its clean cooking targets. Moreover, location-specific data allows the development of comprehensive and regional specific support and

decision-making with the integration of information related to supply and demand.

This integrated energy planning platform aims to provide stakeholders across public and private sectors with the data and tools needed to inform their strategies for a robust clean cooking transition. The platform integrates and analyzes geospatial datasets related to both the potential demand and supply of clean cooking technologies, enabling data-driven planning, coordination, and decision-making to support the uptake and adoption of clean cooking throughout the country. Learn more by visiting [CleanCookingExplorer.org](https://CleanCookingExplorer.org).

In her opening remarks, Karuna Bajracharya from Clean Cooking Alliance said that Global Launching of the clean cooking explorer for Nepal is important step to achieve the target to provide clean cooking to all Nepalis. She expressed happiness over the support given by the APEC to make this possible.

The Clean Cooking Explorer is the first of its kind online, open-source, and interactive geospatial data platform for accelerating clean cooking access in Nepal. The spatial platform integrates and supports analysis of geospatial datasets related to both the potential demand and supply of clean cooking services, allowing for data-driven planning, coordination, and decision-making to support the uptake and adoption of clean cooking. The tool will play an important role in helping the Government of Nepal achieve its ambitious clean cooking target, which include 25% of households using electric cooking by 2030.

Madhusudhan Adhikari, the Executive Director of the Alternative Energy Promotion Center, Dymphna van der Lans, Clean Cooking Alliance, also addressed the program through video remarks.

As the availability of relevant data and tools can play a significant role in promoting clean cooking throughout Nepal to achieve its clean cooking targets, the global launching is important.

The explorer, among others,

provides location-specific data which allows the development of comprehensive and regional specific support and decision-making with the integration of information related to supply and demand.

This integrated energy planning platform aims to provide stakeholders across public and private sectors with the data and tools needed to inform their strategies for a robust clean cooking transition. The platform integrates and analyzes geospatial datasets related to both the potential demand and supply of clean cooking technologies, enabling data-driven planning, coordination, and decision-making to support the uptake and adoption of

which will provide Nepal government with a clear direction regarding specific activities, associated targets, and time-frames.

The plan will provide a holistic guide on steps forward for the next five years to strengthen the supply of clean cooking, expand demand generating efforts, and support the Nepal government in executing a large-scale clean cooking effort in Nepal.

The plan will highlight the strengths of stakeholders and support work across sectoral boundaries to push for an integrated approach. CCA expects to complete the Country Action Plan in 2021, and is playing a central role in coordinating with the govern-



clean cooking throughout the country. One can learn more by visiting [CleanCookingExplorer.org](https://CleanCookingExplorer.org).

Addressing the program, vice chancellor of Open University Shilu Bajracharya said that working in collaboration with many organizations also help university in improving the research capability.

**CCA In Campaign**

Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) recognizes Nepal’s commitment to clean cooking as an important opportunity. The development of a clearly defined and evidence-based Country Action Plan will prioritize strategic activities essential to scaling up the adoption of clean cooking.

CCA is now supporting to formulate the Country Action Plan

ment of Nepal and in-country partners working on energy access.

As per the plan, the goal is to install 500,000 improved cooking stoves, primarily in rural areas, and an additional 200,000 household biogas plants and 500 large scale biogas plants by 2025 through various institutional, industrial and community. There is also plan that, by 2030, ensures that electric stoves are used as the primary mode of cooking in 25 per cent of households.

**Nepal’s Commitment**

Presenting its Nationally Determined Contributions under Paris Agreement, Nepal has already committed to reduce the carbon emissions by 2030 reducing the use of petroleum products.



## NATIONAL

It says 25 percent household will have electric stoves as a primary cooking application. Similarly, SDG says to reduce household cooking fuel wood by 30 percent and limits households cooking by LPG less than 40 percent

Similarly, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation projected to increase per capita electricity consumption 1500 kWh by 2030 with electric stove in every household. For this, this year's budget announces waiver of excise duty and reduction of custom duty on household cooking appliances.

To meet Nepal's target of universal access to clean cooking solutions by 2030, the government of Nepal plans to leverage the country's immense potential for hydroelectric generation.

### Broader Campaign

However, this needs a broader strategy to cover the mass population. As 2030 is approaching, some model programs need to be launched to promote clean cooking in mass.

"Let's start it from Nepal's 2700 police posts offering them subsidized cooking utensils and induction and electricity. Just launching it at the small scale level does not meet the required target. The campaign must go covering the large areas. For this, the campaign needs to go to Terai where government is implementing to supply electricity to all by 2025. Before going to palika level, it is better to start from organized units like Nepal Police because they can use off peaking to cook their foods," said Mohan Manandhar, an energy expert.

### Nepal's State of Energy

Nepal's energy use is primarily dominated by traditional sources of energy, mainly biomass for domestic purposes. Currently, 56 % of the population has regular access to electricity for lighting.

Nepal is planning to generate 12,000 MW of hydropower by 2030 and 2,100 MW of solar energy by 2030 with arrangements to distribute it



through the grid.

Similarly, additional 220 MW of electricity from bio-energy 50 MW of electricity from small and micro hydropower plants, increase the share of biogas up to 10% as energy for cooking in rural areas by 2030.

Despite a huge potential for renewable energies such as hydropower, solar power and wind energy, these resources have not been sustainably captured due to geographical, technical, political and economical reasons.

Nepal has continued to prioritize the generation and utilization of clean energy, particularly through hydro-electricity at a larger scale. For the last two decades, micro hydro, solar, biogas and improved cook stoves have found use at the rural scale and in line with the National Rural and Renewable Energy Program in the recent years.

Moreover, the recent fuel crisis since last three months has made it urgent to accord high priority to scale up production of renewable energy technologies in order to meet the energy demands of urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

### GCF Funding To AEPC

Global Climate Fund (GCF) has signed an agreement with Nepal's Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC) to help Nepal's ability to ex-

pand its renewable power and improve energy efficiency.

The signing of the Accreditation Master Agreement (AMA) allows GCF to begin providing funds to address mitigation and adaptation needs in Nepal, focusing on vulnerable communities. AEPC was accredited as a GCF climate action partner in February last year.

For now, the AEPC has already moved ahead with \$40 million project which will push for use of electricity and biogas as energy for cooking and switching to improved stoves.

Nepal Government comes out with a strategy to widely distribute clean cooking devices to replace LPG and use the surplus of hydro electricity from the coming session. With the support from the clean cooking alliance, climate fund and donor partners, Alternative Energy Promotion Center is working to distribute the clean cooking devices.

With the support and commitment from all stakeholders, Nepal is moving to achieve clean cooking by 2030. However, it is still early to say how it will go ahead to meet the ambitious goal.

### Nepal Is Moving To Clean Cooking

By Madhusudan Adhikari  
Global launching of the

clean cooking explorer is very important event for people working in clean cooking campaign.

Clean Cooking Explorer for Nepal is a new IT-based technology through which we can learn many things. I have to accept the fact that our preparedness is not that good till now. This is an era of internet technology and explorer is the internet-based IT related platform to share information about the clean cooking status and much needed information including working procedure, decision making and governance.

On the clean cooking issue, AEPC is a pioneer organization helping people through different ways to improve their cooking technology and to improve their access in clean energy.

We have been working in the improvement of mud based stoves and moved to improve stoves for long. Bio-gas is one of our pioneer work which we have been doing. With surplus of electricity, this is time for us to look at the electricity cooking. Use of domestically generated electricity will reduce the import of LPG and balance foreign currency reserve, save health and so many things. On top of that the most important thing reducing the carbon dioxide and black carbon emission to protect the environment.

This is just a small initiative looking to the small kitchen of the house where somebody burning wood and getting health problems and polluting the air. By spending a few thousand rupees in kitchen, we can see different aspects and different states. With the help of the person associated with the cooking, we can contribute to the society, to the environment and to the world.

All NGOs, INGOs and Nepal's development partners have been supporting AEPC. The government has also been committed to the clean cooking. Thus, we need to have proper support system for informed decision making. AEPC is hosting this explorer

and we will maintain it. I am also discussing with Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) and other partners to manage it. I would like to inform you that CCA is helping us in all these aspects. I am equally happy to say that Kathmandu University and Open University and TU who want to handle this, we are ready to transfer. If we put the right thing inside, it could be useful for all in data based decision making. As we are taking decisions based on various



other sources like experiences, they are not accurate. However, technology based data system can make our decision making more effective and efficient. Our experiences have shown that date based decision making are always good.

Energy minister is very interested on the clean cooking campaign as she herself asking people to use clean cooking. She also directed Nepal Electricity Authority to improve the distribution system and agree to give incentive as well. CCA agree to work with us in the distribution of clean cooking stoves costing around 5 million dollars. This will be implemented from next year.

Government is also helping AEPC providing 400 to 500 million rupees for clean cooking campaign every year. Currently, we are also discussing

on how to offer subsidy to poor and marginalized communities. Supplying cooking stoves is not enough. We have also issues of disruption of supply and peaking issue. There is also issue of energy beyond the pick hour. AEPC held several rounds of discussions with NEA's MD Kul Man Ghising on the distribution of induction issue.

We all know that existing distribution system in rural areas will not supply electricity to charge induction.

Thus, strengthening the infrastructure is key in clean cooking agenda. NEA has assured us that NEA is ready to improve the distribution systems. Along with financing, availability of good quality stove, quality system and maintenance are also keys.

We have also initiated clean cooking support through our annual program and British Embassy supported program. Under this agreement, we have already signed five national cooperative banks to provide loan to people to purchase induction and utensils. they have already started distribution of loan across the country capacitating the user to

look into the operation and maintenance. The cooperatives are providing cheaper credit and easy access to electric cooking. We have targeted to provide electric cooking devices to 50,000 households this year. This is target and technical support will be provided to all potential beneficiaries. AEPC is doing best on its part to promote clean energy. It has its own limitations as well. I don't want to blame anyone for slow pace. So far as the government is concerned, it is ready to work with partner organization through AEPC to promote clean cooking. We are also using our resources to promote clean cooking through the climate fund.

*Adhikari is executive director of AEPC. Excerpts of his statement delivered at Global Launch of the Clean Cooking Explorer for Nepal last week.*



# A Trek To The Lesser Trodden Ruby Valley



The journey started last Thursday, on March 10, 2022. I was welcomed by Bhimshen Pandey at Devighat. His mother had passed away two years back. His sister is studying in Kathmandu. His Dad prepared two meals. The dinner and the next day's lunch. Bhimshen and I wandered around in the hills meanwhile. The next night we spent at Dhunche. We walked from Dhunche to Syabrubesi the next morning. Blooming Rhododendrons were a pleasant sight and promised a great trek in the coming days. We also got a truck ride for the last two kilometers. We were accompanied by Manish Jung Shah at Syabrubesi. We boarded the same bus in which Manish had reached Syabrubesi from Kathmandu. We got down at Gatlang and walked to Parbati Kunda. That's where we spent the night.

Manish and Bhimshen have interesting lineage. Manish would have been the reigning king of Nepal had his forefather King Rana Bahadur Shah not married his third wife with the promise that their son would be the king. Because of the politics within the royal family, the first heir to the throne missed his opportunities to serve Nepal and its people. His ancestors gradually lost the royal title and Manish has been an ordinary citizen of Nepal. Bhimshen Pandey too has an ancestor who contributed to the formation of Nepal. Kazi Kalu Pandey was a trusted Chief of Army Staff of Nepal. Trekking with them added flavor because of the importance their ancestors occupied in Nepal's history.

It took us thirteen hours to reach Somdang from Parbati Kunda. It wasn't an easy trek navigating thick snow. Several times we feared for our lives. We were navigating snow that was thigh high or even more. At several places there were snow-slides. Crossing them was a nightmare. It was our first experience walking in the snow and that too without proper gear. We were not sure how deep the snow would be until we placed our foot each time on them. However, the sight of the magnificent peaks was encouraging. Our energy never diminished because of the Yak Cheese we ate that we bought in Parbati Kunda in the morning. Nonetheless, it was a never-ending ordeal. We reached Somdang around eight-thirty in the evening. Tamang duo had come to meet us with a flask full of hot water two hours short of the destination after it got dark while we were climbing downhill to Somdang from Bhanjyang. We took a rest the next day. We were intimidated by the earlier day's trek and the trek that would follow. We had local

delicacies 'Dhindo' and 'Gundruk' that evening.

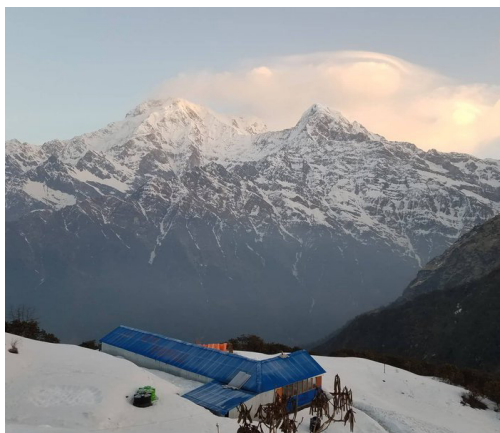
The next day was worse. We got lost in the jungle and didn't find our way back until almost sunset. Realizing the need for a guide we had hired Chuwang Tamang at Somdang to take us to Tipling. We had to cross Pangsang Pass at 3850m (approx.). That we did relatively comfortably in four hours. The view of Ganesh Mountain, Paldor Peak and Langtang with others often captivated our attention during the walk.

But the nightmarish ordeal started with two wrong decisions. In order to avoid the snow, we took a path that would lead us to nowhere. Even after realizing there was no path we continued instead of returning back to the main road.

With every step, we were getting further away from the road that would lead to Tipling. We were deep into the snow-covered forest without enough water to drink and only whatever food we had carried. We were following a track that would just vanish. Soon we ran out of water to drink. In desperation, we filled our water bottles with snow. But the snow would form ice instead of water. There was no respite.

With no road ahead of us, we were forced to create our own path in the forest that was covered with snow. We still had the option to return back to a Kharka, a shed and spend the night there. But we decided to cross a stream and were determined to find the road. Chuwang was continuously fretting that he had us in trouble. We used two legs, two hands and all the fingers in the steeps and to navigate the forest. Our stamina and willpower were tested at that moment. Manish was lagging behind. He got stuck in the snow and was barely clinging to a stem of a plant in a steep hill. He said that at that point he felt like a wounded soldier in a war who would tell his friends to proceed and let him die as he guarded while he momentarily lived in peace. It was scarier when we reached a cliff.

Chuwang came with the good news that he had found the road but we had to climb down a cliff. It looked like a cliff where Mountain Ghoral would look down from. Manish resigned. The sunset beyond the horizon was beautiful. That was the only pleasant thing at the moment. Nothing had worked for us that day. Was Chuwang really saying that we could climb down that cliff? He said he could. He was carrying our bags as well. He had been carrying three bags



including his all day long. Looking down I wasn't convinced I would be able to balance looking at the steepness. I would certainly not reach down in one piece.

We had no option. It was a point of no return. We couldn't go back. Going back was equally nightmarish. And there was nowhere to go. It was all jungle behind. However, there was hope in climbing down this steepness. We could see the road. But it wasn't very near. Chuwang had been like a snow leopard the entire day. Even our lionhearted Bhimshen Pandey was already intimidated by an unending jungle journey. If Chuwang could climb down the cliff there was no reason he couldn't. And if he could I could as well. And if I could Manish could as well. We were inspired by each other.

It wasn't difficult for our Himalayan Thar Chuwang to climb down the cliff with our bags. Bhimshen took an alternative path. He slipped twice but nothing serious happened. Many times I took help with my butt and spine as well. My pair of legs, two hands and ten fingers weren't enough for this downhill. I was off-balance. Cautiously we descended. More

so, the sun had set and it was getting dark. Manish was motivated by the possibility of sliding. But there was a risk of sliding for two to three hundred meters without stopping. However, he too managed well. By the time darkness overpowered light we were hopeful that the death game was over. Fortunately, we didn't roll to the stream down below into pieces but reached safe and sound.

But we were far from reaching Tipling. What was estimated to take a 6-7 hours journey would take us fourteen hours. I had started doubting Bhimshen Bhai's judgment. I had to tease my brains from then onwards. I had to start thinking independently. We took a relatively lesser hours' walk the next day to Chalis Gaun. We enjoyed the company of an ever-active and wonderful lady host. From Tipling the menacing snow-covered path was over. We enjoyed a friendly conversation over a warm afternoon sun in a relaxed environment.

The next day we headed to a hot spring at Tatopani. We had walked hard to enjoy a leisurely morning in the hot spring but were a little concerned with the cleanliness. Nonetheless, our muscles were relaxed in the warm pool. We did a bit to clean the hot spring but it wasn't easy where people were habitually least interested in maintaining cleanliness. After a man spat his cough in the pool we had to conclude our stay. It was also time because we also had spent a couple of hours



letting the soap contaminated water out and refilling the pool with fresh water. In short, it was time we left. A couple served us lunch. We tried nettle greens with rice and vegetables. Omelete was our all-time favorite. We didn't feel like spending the night there for a couple of reasons. The cleanliness of the rooms, the overwhelming number of people and Borang was just a couple of hours walk from there.

From Borang we were told we could find vehicles. We took a motor road to Borang along the Ankhu river. We also swam in a chilled tributary to the Ankhu river. There are a few hydropower projects being built in that area. I reached Borang well before sunset. Manish and Bhimshen reached at nightfall. After persuading Manish and Bhimshen, we had left Tatopani around 1 pm. We stayed at Lama Hotel in Borang. It was a comfortable stay. The simple dinner was delicious. During a light conversation with the locals, I got to know that Borang like Chalis Gaun was an ancient village. I am sure Tipling had its history as well. But we had reached Tipling tired and late into the night to make any meaningful conversation.

It hurt to know during the trek that many families had forsaken Buddhism and Hinduism and embraced Christianity. I don't have a prejudice for Christianity but I believe that the height and teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism that meditation gives peace cannot be belittled. Moreover, development is related to science and education and not religion. We were told that families have been lured with a better education at better Christian schools in Kathmandu.

Xavier Marg which crosses Pangsang Pass is also open for vehicles. Of course, a lot of Ruby was found while constructing the road. In fact, a young lad who studied at St. Xavier's School told us that the road was more serpentine because the precious ruby guided the dozer operator. Xavier Marg was built with the help of Xavier Network. The young graduate rightly boasted his contribution to constructing the road.

The ride from Borang to Dhadhing Besi cost us Rs. 1200 each. It was off-road. We were powdered by dust by the time we reached Dhadhing Besi six hours later. But the road passed through jungles. I couldn't help but imagine how beautiful the drive would be on a smooth road that navigated through the lush green forests.

Walking in the streets of Dhadhing Besi I did feel a bit out of place but it was nice to be back in civilization. The streets were smooth and there were things money could buy. From Dhadhing Besi Manish and I took a 'HIACE' to Kathmandu. It was less than a three hours drive. We had interesting conversations with fellow travelers during these three hours trips. It was nice to cozy up with the people after deriving mixed feelings after a nine-day trip to the Ruby Valley. With proper landmarks placed and inappropriate (we were told Baishak) season Ruby Valley has immense potential for tourism. In the meanwhile engaging a local guide would be wise if one intends to trek. People are friendly, warm and seasoned by experience.



## डढेलोबाट बचौ र बचाऔ ।

- सलार्ई, लार्ईटरजस्ता प्रज्वलनशील वस्तु बालबालिकाले भेट्ने ठाउँमा नराखौ,
- जंगलमा सलार्ई तथा लार्ईटरको प्रयोग नगरौ र गर्ने पर्ने भए सावधानीपूर्वक प्रयोग गरी राम्रोगरी निभाऔ,
- वन जंगलमा धुम्रपान नगरौं,
- हाम्रो सानो असावधानीले जंगलमात्र होईन आसपासका वस्ती समेत उजाड हुन सक्छन्,
- जन, धन र वनको संरक्षण गरौं,

सचेत बनौं, डढेलोबाट आफू पनि वचौ र अरुलाई पनि वचाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

# For News, Views, Comments & Perspectives

# LOG IN

# spotlightnepal.com

## Latest Magazine



VOL. 15, No. 15, March.25, 2022  
(Chaitra,11,2078) Publisher and Editor:  
Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register  
Number: DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 15, No. 14, March.04, 2022 (Falgun  
20,2078) Publisher and Editor: Keshab  
Prasad Poudel Online Register Number:  
DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 15, No. 13, Feb.18, 2022 (Falgun  
06,2078) Publisher and Editor: Keshab  
Prasad Poudel Online Register Number:  
DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 15, No. 12, Feb.04, 2022 (Magh  
21,2078) Publisher and Editor: Keshab  
Prasad Poudel Online Register Number:  
DOI 584/074-75

**NEW SPOTLIGHT**  
NEWS MAGAZINE

**Kathmandu, Ph.: +97 1 4530250**  
**Email: spotlightnepal@gmail.com**



# Why pay a fee? Get it done for FREE.

Introducing NIBL's Thaili, a zero transaction fee digital wallet.

**Zero**  
Transaction Fee



Transfer money, pay bills and do much more  
at zero transaction fees.

For anything and everything



DOWNLOAD the App now



(available soon for iOS users)



Here you go Sis! Your  
**BIRTHDAY SURPRISE!**

Rs. 5000 transferred to sister's account.



Rs. 5000 deposited in account.

Oh Dai! You're the best.  
**ABA TA PARTY!**



Features and services  
updated regularly



Available for  
Android users



iOS users get started on:  
[www.nibl.com.np/thaili](http://www.nibl.com.np/thaili)



Download and experience  
features and special offers



**GET 4% AND 2% DISCOUNT  
ON NTC AND NCELL TOPUP**

Customer SUPPORT  
01-4545481  
01-4512044  
01-4514561  
email us at: [thaili@nibl.com.np](mailto:thaili@nibl.com.np)