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**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**FORUM**  
Randy W. Berry



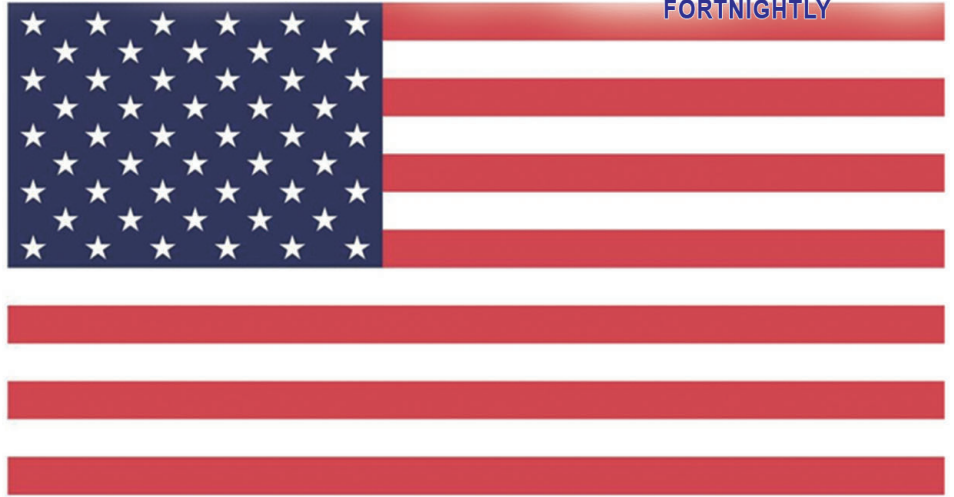
**VIEWPOINT**  
Hou Yangji

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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May.- 06, 2022

FORTNIGHTLY



## USA-Nepal NEPAL-U.S. RELATIONS At 75

### INSIDE



**PROFILE**  
SIRJANA SINGH

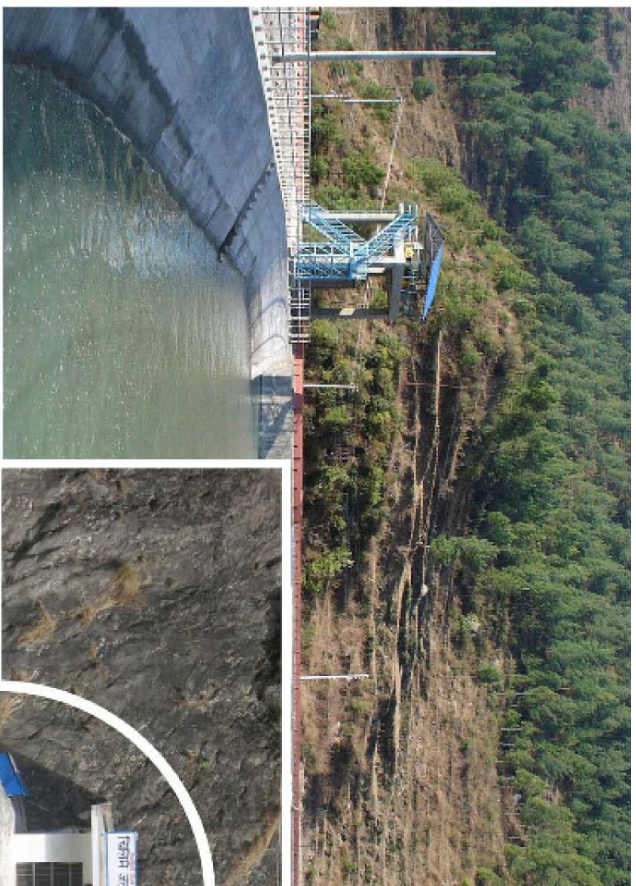


**E-COOKING**  
REDUCE LPGS

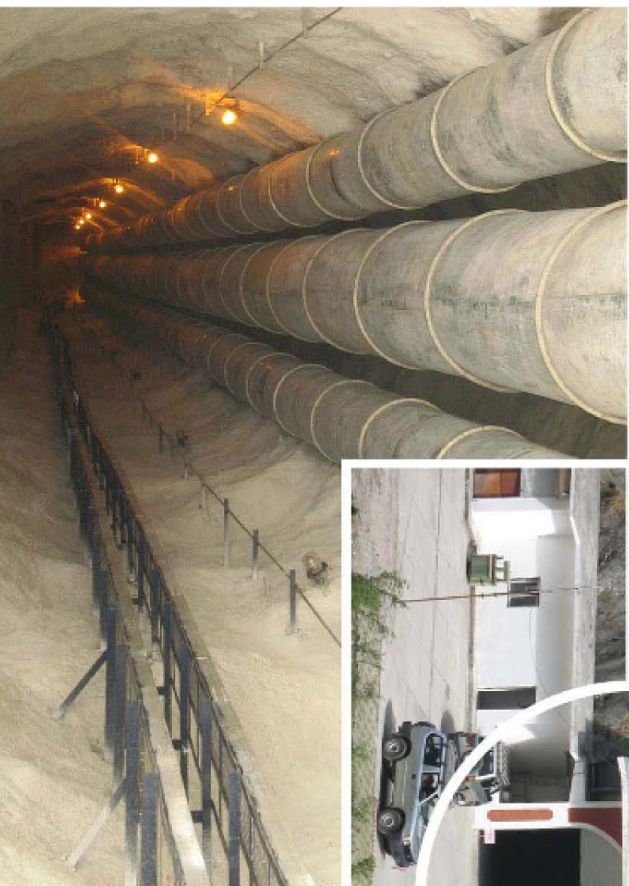


**CONSTITUIONAL BODIES**  
EVERYWHERE & NOWHERE





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## Notes From The Editor



For Nepal, establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States was highly significant as it was the second country to recognize Nepal as an independent country. United States is the first country to provide technical and financial support to Nepal. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in April 25, 1947, United States has been consistently providing assistance to Nepal in various sectors. Seventy-five years ago, Nepal was under Rana autocratic rule, with a total lack of physical infrastructure, such as roads, telecommunications, hospitals and schools and there were very few development activities. When USOM (formerly USAID) came to Nepal with development assistance in 1951, there were very skilled professionals capable of directing and formulating the policies. There was a lack of administrative mechanism in the changed context. Approximately, 98 percent of Nepal's eight million population were illiterate and only 300 college graduates. Infant mortality and maternal mortality was high and the entire plain was infested by Malaria. Nepal has made a big progress in 75 years in health, education, basic infrastructure and institution building. The credit of this entire change goes to the early assistance provided by USAID.

Statements given by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and US secretary Antony Blinken to mark 75 years of Nepal-US diplomatic ties are encouraging. US secretary Blinken's statement assures Nepalese that United States continues to stand for independent, developed and prosperous Nepal. We would like government and people of United States supporting Nepal's independence providing assistance at all times of its need. As the event is so important, we have decided to cover 75 years of diplomatic relations as our cover story for this week. Besides, we also cover the local election as our second main story.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

# CONTENT

## HERITAGE

Aarjan Dhakhwa 3

## NEWSNOTES

4

## BUSINESS BRIEF

8

## OPINION

Dipak Gyawali 10

## PROFILE

Sirjana Singh 15

## VIEWPOINT

Hou Yanqi 25

## CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

Everywhere & Nowhere 30

## E-COOKING

Reduce LPGs 34



COVERSTORY: NEPAL-U.S. RELATIONS: At 75

18



LOCAL POLLS: EC Sets Goals

12



POWER CRISIS: Short Term

27



# Patan's Bhimsen Temple Revived With Local Participation



BY: AARJAN DHAKHWA

Patan Durbar Square has already restored and some are in the progress. With the local initiatives and local participation, Bhimsen Temple of Patan has proved a successful model of local initiative.

Patan Durbar Square's historical architecture has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1979. This is deeply linked with today's urban lifestyle, public liturgical traditions spaces, and Newari culture's living traditions. The earthquake on April 25, 2015 made these monuments crumble and fall apart. The baneful event caused damages which were cultural importance to the Nepali and Newari heritage.

Amongst many religious sites, Bhimsen temple was one of those historical architectures which were damaged by the massive earthquake. The upper stairwell's wooden structures were mostly destroyed of the temple. On January 21, 2019, the reconstruction work began after a three-year hiatus.

After no one else shown interest in rebuilding the destroyed temple, locals banded together to gather funds under the motto "Let us build our history on our own." The Indian government had promised to rebuild the temple, but it was also canceled. As a result, the residents took it upon themselves to restore the campaign.

In accordance with the Venice Charter, restoration activities preserve historic materials and authentic records (1964). The instructions presented during the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments formed the foundation text of the International Conference on Monuments and Sites, and have influenced conservation efforts across the world. Restoration, according to the charter, "must end at the point when guesswork starts, and in this instance, any supplementary work... must bore a contemporaneous mark" (ICOMOS 1965, Article 9).

This Eurocentric viewpoint favors an "original" above a reproduction and stems from a concern of tampering with any monument's artistic or historical evidence.

Bhimsen temple's renovation is expected to cost roughly Rs 50 million. According to the Temple Renovation Concern Committee, the Lalitpur Municipal Corporation contributed Rs 10 million, Nepal Investment Bank Ltd 10 million, Everest Bank Chairman BK Shrestha contributed Rs 10 million, Himalayan bank contributed 5 million and Investment Bank contributed Rs 10 million to the temple's reconstruction. Members of Parliament and provincial legislators have also pledged their help through their constituency development funds. The local business community and residents also contributed to the temple's repair. Similarly, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust was in charge of the temple's technical repair.



The temple, which is located in the northern part of Patan Durbar Square and has three stories, is dedicated to Bhim, one of the five Pandavas brothers who are the main protagonists in the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

The historical site dated back to 1680, built by Srinivasa Malla located in the northern part of Patan durbar Square. The three-story temple is dedicated to bheema, one of the five Pandavas from the Mahabharata who was recognized for his courage and power.

He is revered as the deity of trade and commerce in Newar culture. There are various temples dedicated to Bhimsen in Nepal, but the one in Patan Durbar Square attracts the most visitors because of the temple's drawings and woodwork depicting Bhimsen as a man of tremendous strength smashing an elephant with his knee or lifting a horse into the air

## NEWSNOTES

### Japan Govt Confers Kedar Bhakta Mathema the Order Of The Rising Sun



2022 Spring Conferment of Japanese Decorations on Foreign Nationals Honoring Kedar Bhakta Mathema

The Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2022 Spring Imperial Decorations naming Kedar Bhakta Mathema as one of the recipients. Kedar Bhak-

ta Mathema, former Ambassador of Nepal to Japan, was awarded the Order of Japan (the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star) among foreign nationals conferred the 2022 Spring Imperial Decorations by the Government of Japan.

Mathema was recognized for his contribution to strengthening bilateral relations and promoting friendship between Japan and Nepal as the Ambassador of Nepal to Japan.

During his tenure from 1996 to 2003, Mathema accomplished many high-level exchanges including the visits to Japan by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (1998) and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (2001).

He also made a conspicuous contribution to the establishment of the Honorary Consulate of Nepal in Fukuoka (2001), and promotion of cultural and academic exchanges between two countries.

PM Koirala was the first democratically elected Nepali leader who visited Japan after the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between Japan and Nepal. On the heels of his visit, Yoshiro Mori, then Prime Minister of Japan, visited Kathmandu in 2000, as the first Japanese prime minister who officially visited Nepal.

The Embassy congratulates Mathema on the conferment. This year 2022 is the Japan-Southwest Asia Exchange Year and it marks 120th Anniversary of International Student Exchanges between Japan and Nepal. Japanese decorations are conferred upon foreigners twice a year, on April 29 and November 3, concurrently with the conferment of decorations and medals on Japanese nationals.

The Order of the Rising Sun is bestowed upon individuals of merit, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the nation or public. This award is also conferred upon foreign nationals who have made notable contributions to the promotion of relations between Japan, and other countries for excellence in politics and diplomacy, research and education, medicine and social welfare, economy and industry, and culture and sports.

### Nepal, Switzerland Exchange Views On Common Interest

Nepal and Switzerland exchanged views on mat-

ters of common interest, including the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, regional cooperation, cooperation within the multilateral frameworks and global issues such as climate change, migration, and human rights.

The views were exchanged during the third edition of Nepal-Switzerland bilateral consultations held in Kathmandu. Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal made opening remarks in the meeting, which was co-chaired by Nirmal Raj Kafle, Joint Secretary, Europe-Americas Division of the Ministry and Andreas Raphael Nageli, Assistance State Secretary for Asia-Pacific in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

The discussions also covered Nepal's graduation from the least developed country status in 2026, Covid-19 related support as well as meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. The two sides reviewed all aspects of bilateral relations and discussed the possibilities of enhancing engagement in the areas of trade, investment and tourism.

The Nepali side thanked the Swiss government for the longstanding cooperation to Nepal as a priority country and stated that such cooperation will be vital in moving the country forward along the path of economic recovery, green growth and sustainable graduation from the LDC status. The Swiss side expressed readiness to work with Nepal in further strengthening bilateral relations for the benefit of both countries. The Swiss side also stated that its development cooperation will continue in Nepal through the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2023-26.



### Global Prize Named After Professor Subedi At University In England

A Global Annual Prize named after Professor Surya P. Subedi QC has been established at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) of the University of Hull, England. The Prize is designed to promote the advancement of scholarship in the study of modern forms of slavery, emancipation and the protection of human dignity for the benefit of the public.

The Prize will open to any graduate in law, politics, social science, and humanities





from around the world regardless of their nationality. The award will focus on enhancing the employability and profile of early-career academics and will therefore be restricted to candidates below the age of 40 at the time of submission.

Professor Subedi said that he was honoured and delighted that the Prize in his name was established at the Wilberforce Institute, which is named after a famous national figure William Wilberforce of Great Britain who led the campaign for the abolition of slavery. The campaign led to the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, which abolished slavery in most of the British Empire.

Professor Trevor Burnard, Director of the University of Hull's Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation said: "Professor Subedi is a world-renowned scholar and a champion of human rights. Through his work as a barrister, and numerous high-level positions in governments and national and international organizations, he works incredibly hard to make a difference to the real life of people around the world."

Professor Subedi obtained his LLM with Distinction at the University of Hull in 1988 and returned to Hull to join its law faculty as a lecturer in 1993 after completing his DPhil (PhD) at Oxford. He became Professor of Law at Hull in 1999. He was awarded the highest accolade – the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa - by Hull University in 2020 in recognition of his accomplishments in the fields of international law and human rights.

### US Looks Forwards To More Decades Of Friendship With Nepal: US Secretary Blinken

In his message, US Secretary Antony Blinken said the US looks forward to many more decades of friendship.



In his tweet given to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> year of Nepal-US diplomatic ties, he said, today we mark 75 years of U.S. Nepal diplomatic relations. Nepal has seen incredible changes in the government, economic devel-

opment, and international engagements. We are proud of our accomplishments as partners, and look forward to many more decades of friendship. USNepal75.

Responding to secretary Blinken in tweet Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted, "Thank you, Your Excellency @SecBlinken. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Nepal-US diplomatic relations, Nepal reaffirms its commitment to further enriching the longstanding friendship and cooperation between our two countries."

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba said that celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> year of Nepal-U.S. Diplomatic ties

provides opportunities for further expanding and enriching our partnership..

He tweeted "Celebration of the 75th year of Nepal-U.S. diplomatic ties provides opportunity for further expanding and enriching our partnerships in all productive sectors. We look forward to more high-level engagements and economic partnership in the days to come," said Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba

### French Ambassador Calls On CoAS General Sharma

French ambassador to Nepal Gilles Bourbao paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff General Prabhuram Sharma at Nepal Army Headquarter. During the meeting, Brigadier General Geoffroy de Larouzière of French Army and other officials were also present.



COAS General Sharma and French Delegation discussed the issues related to bilateral matter and issues related to mutual interest.

### Ma Ta ChhuTayar App Released

Thulo.Com and Enterprise for Management, Economic Reform and Gender Equality (EMERGE) launched a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Mobile Application named "Ma Ta ChhuTayar" at the Grand finale event of the Private Sector Innovation Challenge. Tammie Harris, Chief of Party, Tayar Nepal did the honor of formally launching the app at the event. The app is supported by USAID's Tayar Nepal- Improved Disaster Risk Management Project and is a part of the Udhyami Utthan Campaign which is a joint initiative of Thulo.Com and EMERGE.

To provide awareness about DRRM, this dedicated app is targeted at businesses (especially women-led) and consumers to enhance their disaster resilience through preparedness and get help at the time of actual disasters.

The app provides disaster-related information (in the form of text, links, videos, images, and audio). It is segregated based on the types and stages of disasters to make the information clearer. We have envisioned this app to be more of an interactive platform that can guide users in case they encounter a disaster. Based on the disaster type the user has encountered, the app will provide rel-



## NEWSNOTES

evant information and instruction to get help. Also, if there is an impending disaster, the app can alert the users and suggest relevant actions that are needed to be taken. The app can be personalized, which means each user has their version of the app which will cater to the information and actions based on its location.

Other app features include access to the weather forecast, reporting disasters, receiving disaster alerts, access to events information, access to disaster management supply stores, and suppliers' contact detail

Moreover, the App has features targeted at people with visual impairment, such as customizing the font size, switching between dark mode and light mode, and using bright colors.

Raja Ram Nepal, CEO, Thulo.Com shares, "The technicalities of the app are developed in such a way that users can customize the app based on their preferred province and municipality. Most of the contents of the app are categorized location-wise, which makes customization easier. For instance, a user in Sudurpaschim province can have access to disaster focal persons' contact details of Sudurpaschim only, provided the user chooses Sudurpaschim as her/his location. We believe the app will be useful to prepare for and manage the hazards that are common in the context of Nepal."

### US Congressional Delegation In Nepal

US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry welcomed a US Congressional delegation led by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and the delegation members who arrived in



Kathmandu on a three-day visit to Nepal.

"In the week we celebrate 75 years of official U.S.-Nepal diplomatic ties, it's an absolute honor to welcome the U.S. Congressional

delegation led by Kirsten Gillibrand and includes Senators Sheldon Whitehouse, Cory Booker, Mark Kelly, & Representative Mondaire Jones to Kathmandu," tweets ambassador Berry.

The delegation includes Senators Sheldon Whitehouse, Cory Booker, Mark Kelly, and Representative Mondaire Jones.

"Their visit is a testament that Nepal is an important partner to the United States due to our shared democratic values, people-to-people ties, and 75 years of diplomatic partnership," said the US Embassy in Kathmandu.

The visit is taking place on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of Nepal-US diplomatic

ties. The visit will focus on the discussions about Russia's invasion on Ukraine and other issues of regional and global concerns.

Nepal opposes Russian invasion of Ukraine and backs UN resolution condemning Russian.

### Japanese Technical Cooperation Programs: Training Nepali Govt Specialists For Future

The Embassy of Japan in Nepal issued a Note Verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal to extend the Technical Cooperation Programs for Fiscal Year 2022.

The technical cooperation program, which have been extended to Nepal annually since 2003, has been supporting Nepali governmental officials to obtain Japan's knowledge, technology and experience by providing them training opportunities in Japan and by sending Japanese advisors to the Nepali government for Nepal's socio-economic development.

Technical Cooperation Programs for FY 2022 will be implemented by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) in various fields: namely, more than 50 training courses for medical/health care, governance, private sector development, water supply management, road maintenance, agriculture, education, disaster prevention, climate change, urban transportation and airport development. In addition, eight experts who work as the advisors in the Nepali government organizations will be dispatched.

The Programs will be beneficial for further development of Nepali society and the prosperity of the Nepali people. The Technical Cooperation Programs for FY2022 include the public health improvement project to prevent infectious diseases, such as the COVID-19 and the project to strengthen resilience to the natural disasters, such as floods that hit Nepal every year.



### WHO Director-General Hails Nepal's Fight Against Covid-19 Pandemic

Visiting Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has appreciated the Nepal government's national campaign against COVID-19, saying that it was effective manage-





ment, reports RSS.

He praised Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for such effective works that most of the eligible people were vaccinated against coronavirus with smooth management.

During the courtesy call he paid on PM Deuba, visiting Director-General Dr Tedros viewed Nepal government's strategy for control and prevention of COVID-19 as effective, according to PM's press coordinator, Govinda Pariyar.

On the occasion, Dr Tedros also extended thanks to the Nepal government for launching the vaccination against typhoid among children- the first in South Asia. Another compliment made by him was Nepal's progress on various health indicators, including a child and maternal mortality over a short span of time.

### WHO Director Calls On Nepal's Leaders

Dr.Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), on his official visit to Nepal, called on President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.



President commended the leadership of WHO during the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular towards ensuring vaccine equity through COVAX Facility. President also expressed appreciation for the role WHO has been playing

in strengthening the health system in Nepal. Dr. Tedros lauded Nepal's achievement in reducing maternal and child mortality and for being a pioneer in a number of health initiatives including a nationwide new vaccine campaign against Typhoid in the routine immunization program, the first of its kind in South East Asia Region of WHO.

Earlier, Dr. Tedros accompanied by Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO southeast Asia Regional Office(SEARO) and other members of his delegation called on Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. While emphasizing the cooperation of WHO in further bolstering health services in Nepal, the Prime Minister praised the effective leadership of WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed his hope for more collaboration between Nepal and WHO in days to come.

WHO-DG highlighted the Government of Nepal's achievement in the health sector including through allocation of a good amount of budget for health services. He also applauded free basic health services as fundamental rights

guaranteed to the citizens by the Constitution of Nepal.

Dr.Tedros also called on Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Naryan Khadka. FM Dr. Khadka especially appreciated the leadership of WHO during the Covid-19 pandemic and expressed thanks for vaccine support to Nepal.

### ADB And IIDS Jointly Disseminate GESI Diagnostic Study In Nepal

ADB and Institute for Integrated Development Studies - IIDS jointly organized a dissemination session on Nepal GESI Diagnostic Study of Selected Sectors in Nepal.

Urban Development Minister Ram Kumari Jhakri, ADB's Director General for South Asia Kenichi Yokoyama; and Member of the National Planning Commission Saloni Singh were key speakers at the event on April 20.

Minister Jhakri appreciated the detailed content and sector focus of the study and its call for greater focus on transformative approaches targeting women and disadvantaged groups.

DG Yokoyama provided a brief overview of ADB's journey in expanding the focus from gender equality to gender equality and social inclusion, as reflected in the broader focus of the study. He praised the valuable collaboration and partnership with the Government of Nepal especially during the implementation of the Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project.

Francesco Tornieri, Principal Social Development Specialist (Gender and Development) introduced the study and emphasized the iterative and consultative process followed in the finalization of the study, which voices issues and concerns raised by women, excluded and vulnerable groups, advocacy and identity-based civil society organizations in Nepal. Ms. Chhaya Jha made a presentation on the study.

ADB's Country for Nepal Arnaud Cauchois gave closing remarks and a vote of thanks emphasizing that the findings and recommendations of the diagnostic have been reflected in the

Country Partnership Strategy Nepal (2020-2024) and will be reflected in the design of ADB-financed projects, grants and technical assistance. He highlighted the pandemic has reminded us that progress on GESI cannot be taken for granted and much more needs to be done as we seek more sustainable, gender and socially inclusive, and climate-resilient development.



## BUSINESS BRIEF

### Governor Adhikari Joins Office

Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank Maha Prasad Adhikari has joined office following a short stay order issued by the apex court. He was welcomed by NRB officials as he resumed his duties.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had issued a short-term stay order against the suspension of Governor Adhikari.

The apex court also issued a show cause notice to the government and asked both sides to present their arguments in the next hearing for the court to decide whether or not the interim order should be issued against the suspension of Adhikari.

Adhikari had filed a writ petition at the SC demanding his reinstatement and had challenged the government's decision to form a three-member committee to initiate a probe against him.

The Nepal Rastra Bank Act stipulates that the governor or any official of the NRB shall be automatically suspended once the government launches an investigation against them.

He was suspended by Ministry of Finance earlier. After a hearing, a single bench led by Hari Phuyal issued an interim order to restore him citing that the reason given by the government to suspend governor Adhikari was inadequate.

Minister for Finance Janardan Sharma was facing all-round pressure to resign after Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari returned to his work following Supreme Court's stay order on his suspension.

### Threat To Shut Down Industries Is Inappropriate: Finance Secretary Marasini

Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini has expressed dissatisfaction over private sector's warning at times to shut down the industries and businesses, and hand over the keys to the government.

"When there is a small challenge, private sector entrepreneurs announce shutting down their industrial establishments and businesses, this will not help. Government is not there to manage their business," he said while speaking at a program organized by Management Association of Nepal (MAN) to offer suggestions for the budget of the next fiscal year 2022/23.

According to Marasini, private sector organizations should not engage in creating a cartel but hold dialogue with the government to formulate business-friendly policies.

"Private sector should take risk, government should only provide policy support. The private businesses must not try to get the government support in every step and ask for incentives," he said.

Marasini maintained that the external sector pressure is created by the supply chain constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war and increased produc-

tion and transportation cost.

However, he said that foreign currency reserve is above pre-COVID time, there is no extreme volatility so we need not panic.

According to him, the government is going to introduce more austerity measures to further control imports.

"Meanwhile, number of Nepali workers going for foreign employment has been increasing in the recent months which will provide a foreign currency cushion in the coming months with increased remittance," he said. "However, we need to be watchful for the next 4-5 months, but there is not a crisis."

Marasini informed that the international development partners and multilateral donors have shown a great support to Nepal, and even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided credit facility to it with less harsher conditions.

Stating that the private sector would be taken side by side in policy making, planning and business-environment creation, Marasini

pledged continued government support for the revival of the sectors severely hit by the pandemic and still struggling to get back to normalcy.

He said that Nepal had higher share of capital allocation in total budget compared to India, Nepal has 23 per cent and India 19 per cent.

"We have the trend of scattering budget to the projects without proper preparedness which should be corrected," he said.



### Tourism Promotion Fair In New York

The Consulate General of Nepal in New York hosted a tourism promotion event 'Nepal-The Wonderland of Natural, Cultural and Spiritual Beauty' in collaboration with the Pacific Asia Travel Association, New York Chapter.

The program coincided with the celebration week of 75th anniversary of the establishment of Nepal-US diplomatic relations and provided an opportunity to the Consulate to work in collaboration with the professional tourism body to showcase the importance of tourism connectivity between Nepal and USA and promote Nepal's tourism in New York, the Consulate General informed in a statement.

The program gave a platform to showcase Nepal's tourism potential and major attractions.

Acting Consul General Bishnu Gautam talked about the major tourism features and attractions of Nepal, recently added tourism infrastructure, facilities and new travel facilitation measures taken by Nepal.

Jeannatte M. Juricic, Regional Director of US State Department of Office of Foreign Missions, Regional Office New York joined the event in solidarity to promote Nepal-US ties and tourism connectivity.



Ambassador Amrit Bahadur Rai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN in New York, shared Nepal's perspective on international tourism and the unique potentialities of Nepal to become an international tourism hub of adventure tourism, recreation, cultural and spiritual learning and yoga and meditation, among others.

### **WVIN-Nepal Hands Over Kitab Bazar Platform To Togglecorp**

World Vision International Nepal (WVIN) and Togglecorp Solutions Pvt. Ltd signed an agreement to hand over Kitab Bazar, an online digital platform, which envisions a resilient education system and aims to strengthen the book supply chain of Nepal via bridging the gap between community schools and publication houses, emphasizing on the importance of technology through the private partnership model (PPP).

Established with a mission to create software products that focuses

on enhancing user experience through systems that use and adapt to the latest technologies through constant research and development, Togglecorp Solutions Pvt. Ltd will support operation.

With an intention to share the resources and deliver public service at a better value through KITAB Bazar, the platform was handed over to a private sector through the event.

Promoting the idea of PPP model in the education sector, through this event, we hope to build synergies amongst the stakeholders working together for a common goal "Education for all".

Through PPP, we hope to ease access to finance, technology, people and skills, share the burden of risk and create investment opportunities. With a literal meaning - "book market", KITAB Bazar aims to transform the book market of today through the simplest form of ICT inclusion in the education sector

The platform has been a way to ensure digital equity amongst most community schools in Nepal through a technology-improved solution for education supply chain management all over the country. In 2018, KITAB Bazar was implemented through a project named KITAB (Knowledge Improvement through Access of Books) by World Vision International Nepal (WVI Nepal) with the financial support of World Bank and technical support from World Vision Australia (WVA).

The Project was devised to strengthen the education system with an aim to transform the book market through the

use of technology enabled market solution named "KITAB Bazar" and assist Nepali children, especially from grades 1 to 3 in easy access of supplementary reading materials.

The project also aligns



with one of the PMEC (Priority Enabling Minimum Conditions) standards – establishing book corners as mentioned in the National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) of Government's School Sector Development Program (2073 B.S.-2080 B.S).

### **MCC Supports New Labs At Department Of Roads**

Representatives from Department of Roads, Millennium Challenge Account Nepal Development Board (MCA-Nepal) and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) jointly inaugurated laboratories at the Department of Roads (DoR), a key partner in MCA-Nepal's effort to sustain the quality of roads and help the Government of Nepal address long-term maintenance needs.

The construction of the labs and installation of lab equipment by MCA-Nepal is an important milestone funded by the MCC-Nepal Compact.



Shi -

va Hari Sapkota, Director General at DoR, Khadga Bahadur Bisht, Executive Director at MCA-Nepal and Jonathan Brooks, Deputy Vice-President of Europe, Asia, Pacific and Latin America at MCC, jointly inaugurated the labs.

These labs include an Asphalt Mix Design Lab, Superpave Asphalt Lab, Storage Lab and Saw Cutting and Core Drilling Equipment Lab which will play a crucial role in the compact's \$52.3 million Road Maintenance Project.

Shiva Hari Sapkota, Director General at DoR, expressed his pleasure to mobilize the MCC grant in upgrading the quality of roads in Nepal.

Jonathan Brooks, Deputy Vice-President of Europe, Asia, Pacific and Latin America at MCC, stated, "The MCC partnership with Nepal is already delivering for the people of Nepal. The inauguration of these state of the art labs marks an important step in the MCC-Nepal partnership projects and will help pave the way towards a more prosperous future."

Khadga Bahadur Bisht, Executive Director at MCA-Nepal, shared that these technologies being introduced will revolutionize road maintenance practice in Nepal.

The laboratory and equipment are important components of the technical cooperation in the Road Maintenance Project (RMP) under the Millennium Challenge Compact signed between Government of Nepal and Millennium Challenge Corporation on September 14, 2017.

MCA-Nepal will provide the DoR with Technical Assistance of about USD 3.65 million. The Technical Assistance will also support DoR in traffic and road deflection measurement campaign, technical trainings on new road construction technologies and contribute to improved project management activities.

# Water Scarcity: Nepal's Self-Induced Woe!



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

Self-induced hypnosis can lead one to wallow in an illusory world completely cut off from ground reality. Nowhere is this truer than in Nepal's water management. Starting roughly from Panchayat's second decade in the early 1970s, the refrain "Nepal is rich in water resources, second only to Brazil!" has infected the minds of all political leaders, senior bureaucrats and even journalists who have failed to maintain a healthy dose of skepticism. This myth (no Brazilian water scientist I have known has said they are *numero-uno*!) has distorted national, local and even international development policy and led to a planning blindness that has consistently failed to see real problems in the ground.

It all started back in the mid-1960s with Dr Hari Man Shrestha's PhD thesis at Moscow Energy Institute (incidentally a first technical PhD in Nepal and incidentally where I too a decade later ended up studying under the same grand old man of Soviet hydropower Prof Jaffar Omarovitch Seifulla) where he carried out the seminal ball-park estimate of Nepal's theoretical hydropower potential putting it at 83,000 MW. Translated into a per square kilometer index, and given both Nepal's steep terrain as well as heavy monsoon downpour, it does unsurprisingly turn out to be among the highest in world. So far so good. The problem began when this was translated into policy language in the context of the first OPEC oil shock of the early 1970s: akin to Arab Sheikhs with their petro-dollars, Nepali policy makers began to dream of wallowing in hydro-dollars by exporting hydroelectricity to India!

It has never occurred to them that India's strategic interest is in stored water for irrigation and not electricity; that even with electricity, it is seen as a strategic industrial input to be had at the lowest price possible, not a market resource capable of earning much profit at all. The other negative consequence has been the hegemony of hydropower in the Ministry of Water

Resources in its various avatars. Even its irrigation department has been unable to bring water management to the policy forefront. The irrigation policy of 2003 (introduced by me as water resources minister) spelled out the need to measure progress in irrigation by the volume of water provided to irrigate the fields of farmers and the amount of extra crops grown by the farmers because of it. Unfortunately, the construction-focused hydrocracy overturned that policy a decade later to business-as-usual, measuring irrigation progress in terms of the volume of construction contracts executed.

As the blistering pre-monsoon dry season approaches, obligatory pictures of water pots in front of dry standposts grace the front pages of national dailies, to disappear with the onset of the monsoon only to reappear a year later! Springs are drying across the Himalaya, Nepal included, making village life near impossible. There is a devastating negative cycle of water shortages, outmigration to labour markets in cities and the Gulf, decline in maintenance of local recharge structures, more water shortage and more outmigration with local agriculture decline and growing import of food and vegetables thrown into the mal-development mess.

There is a knee jerk reaction blaming climate change for this, reminiscent of THED (the now-debunked theory of Himalayan environmental degradation) where the "poor and fecund Nepali farmers are migrating uphill due to population pressure, cutting more trees in fragile hillslopes and causing more landslides and flooding in Bangladesh". For one, when faced with difficulties of surviving in hill hamlets, Nepali farmers do not go uphill cutting more trees but downhill to the cities in the plains to eke out a living as wage labourers. For another, policy measures such as community forestry and community electricity have seen more forest cover in Nepal in recent decades than ever before.

This is not to downplay the impending impact



of climate change which will in all probability exacerbate the problem in the decades ahead. On the contrary, blaming climate change allows easy escaping of responsibility for here-and-now mal-development drivers that have had more serious and significant impacts on springs and their drying out. Field-based research points not so much to climate change or attendant weather anomalies as to bad development practices (and earthquakes, although many but not all such springs have come back to life as groundwater reclaims its disturbed flow pattern) being the primary drivers of springs drying out.

The major culprit is rampant uncontrolled technology of deep well boring and excessive pumping in growing settlements in the lower regions. With no effort at groundwater recharge, indeed demise of traditional recharge structures such as recharge ponds including buffalo wallowing ones with decline in livestock keeping, water tables are going down at an alarming rate, leading to self-destructive competitive drilling. The proliferation of hilltop resorts and their resorting to deep drilling (east of Kathmandu in Kavre, one such hilltop resort has drilled 350 meters to pump water) is thus drying out all natural springs in between!

Other mal-development drivers behind the drying up of springs are: bulldozing badly designed roads in fragile hill slopes, thus destroying natural drainage channels and recharge pathways; outmigration resulting in giving up on hill agriculture and livestock keeping, including non-upkeep of terrace fields and buffalo wallowing ponds that aided recharge; use of PVC pipes and electric motors to over-pump traditional spring wells; and changing social mores that no longer consider water stored overnight in tanks as impure and not done, thus leading to overconsumption and thus misuse.

The country is currently in the throes of campaigning for elections to local bodies. Even though lack of livelihood feasibility in hill agriculture is leading to its further decline with springs drying – and these are serious local issues – baring few non-party independ-

ent candidates, sadly no major political party has this crisis and the need for spring recharge efforts on their campaign agenda. On the contrary, theirs is the Sarah Palin approach: “Drill, Baby, Drill!” for more deep tube wells.

It is with this context in mind that a two-day South Asian Drought Workshop was organized in Dhulikhel last week by Kathmandu Institute of Applied Sciences together with Nagoya, Sikkim, Khulna universities as well as other Nepali institutions. Extended periods of drought and water scarcity are a natural eco-hydro-meteorological reality for much of South Asia which is a semi-arid region with four months of monsoon floods and eight months of drought. A major portion of the discussions centered around the just completed research on drought monitoring by remote sensing,

a very useful technology limited, however, by the cost of getting high resolution data. It was nonetheless pointed out by Nagoya University emeritus professor Yashushi Yamaguchi that, while satellites can provide accurate measurements, they can neither predict drought nor provide input for policy making without



good interpretive models.

This important point on the interface between high science and society requires water scientists to step out of their comfort zone and interact with local governments to see if their science can solve the specific water management problems faced by local officials. This also points to the need for a balance between high “eagle’s eye” science with ground-truthing “toad’s eye” science to make for local policy relevance.

Given that climate change is a problem created by the energy sector with societies the world over feeling its impact through the water sector, addressing Nepal’s growing water scarcity at the local level requires a shift to local definition of the problems and the local relevance of proffered solutions. This is especially true in a socially and hydro-ecologically diverse country like Nepal.

## LOCAL POLLS

# EC Sets Goals

*As elections day is approaching, 144,000 candidates are vying for 35,221 posts all over the country*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**lthough two major political coalitions led by Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are fiercely contesting the local level elections slated for May 13, altogether 144,000 candidates are vying for 35,221 posts all over the country.

Political leaders of major political parties are in the nationwide tour to address the voters and convince them that they will change the livelihood and infrastructure in the local levels through their local

gress, Keshab Sthapit of CPN-UML and RPP leader Madan Das Shrestha are seen as major contenders. Among the independent candidates, Balen Shah is in the leading position.

The final competition for the mayoral position of KMC will be between NC candidate Singh and CPN-UML candidate Keshab Sthapit. Confining her to household affairs, with only part-time involvement in politics for a while, Singh's asset is her own individual identity.

## Sthapit In Me Too Controversy

CPN-UML's candidate Keshab Sthapit is also a man of actions having proven work records to change the unorganized Kathmandu city. In his first tenure as mayor, Sthapit had taken several steps to change Kathmandu.

However, he has recently landed in controversy over his statements against women. It looks that women will create a hurdle in his second attempt to win the election as mayor. Split of CPN-UML will also affect Sthapit. Although the number of UML rebels will be smaller, they can turn the results against him.

In the door to door campaign, NC candidate Sirjana Singh is wooing the voters through her seven point commitments, which include small but important doable works related to governance, day to day work, sanitation and drinking water, social welfare and urban infrastructure.

As his nature, UML's candidate Sthapit, who has landed in #MeToo controversy, is boasting many dream projects and populist agenda to transform the urban settlement of Kathmandu. Other disadvantages for Sthapit are that he has to take blame for wrongdoing of his party colleague Bidhya Sundar Shakya.

To his further disadvantage, EC has asked Kathmandu metropolitan city Mayor candidate Keshab Sthapit for a 24-hour clarification.

The EC has argued that St-



elected leaders. Led by Rajendra Lingden, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, is also competing with other parties.

Although the local elections will be held all over Nepal, all are showing interest in the elections of Kathmandu Metropolitan City where Sirjana Singh of Nepali Con-

Although Sirjana Singh is a daughter-in-law of late NC supremo Ganeshman Singh and Mangala Devi and spouse of Nepali Congress leader Prakash Man Singh, her main asset is humbleness and other elegant soft approach.



## ELECTION



Elections are being held for the posts of mayor / deputy mayor in the metropolitan cities, sub-metropolitan cities and municipalities, chairperson /deputy chairperson in the rural municipalities, ward chairperson and four members in each ward. Shaligram Sharma Paudel, spokesperson for the EC, said that they would publish detailed data within a few days. “You will get the detailed data of candidates within a few days,” he said.

Previous data showed that 3,470 candidates had registered their nominations for the post of mayor in 276 municipalities across the country while 2,134 had nominated their candidacy for the post of deputy-mayor.

Likewise, 3,376 candidates had registered their nominations for the post of rural municipality chiefs in 460 rural municipalities in the country whereas 2,392 candidates had claimed for the post of deputy chairpersons. Similarly, 34,803 candidates had registered their nominations for the post of ward chair, 25,924 for the post of women representatives, 23,341 for the post of Dalit women representatives and 54,312 for the post of members.

hapit’s expression at a program at a Dhumbarahi-based National College was against the election code of conduct.

Sthapit was found to have retorted to a lady who asked him about the ‘Me Too’ and the blame against him saying, “You are (a) nice lady, but your mouth is ugly.” “Shall I get it published that this sister is involved in prostitution?”

### Sirjana In Pace

Along with the backing of two major communist parties, Sirjana Singh is the only one woman mayoral candidate of a Metropolitan City out of seven.

Although NC used to lose the elections because of factionalism, NC looks united this time behind Sirjana. NC leaders Bhimsen Das Pradhan and Tirthaman Dangol’s silence over her candidacy can harm her. If they just maintain neutrality, Singh will have good chances to defeat UML candidate Sthapit.

### Voters Trend

Unlike in the last elections, there seems to be less enthusiasm among the voters. Political parties are making efforts to woo the voters showing their programs and policies.

The Election Commission

Nepal (EC) has stated that more than 144,000 candidates are in the race for several vacant posts in 753 local levels across the country in the local election of May 13.

Although 153,220 candidates have registered their nominations at the Offices of the Returning Election Officers, 8,000 of them have withdrawn their candidacies. However, the EC is yet to publish exact data of the final candidates and those who withdrew their nominations.

There are six metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities and their 6,743 wards across the nation.



## ELECTION

Meanwhile, the EC had informed that only 17 districts were left to transport the ballot papers. As many as 91.11 million ballot papers have been transported to 49 districts till April 30. The ballot papers have not reached eight districts in Madhes Province, Morang in Province 1, Rasuwa, Chitwan, Lalitpur, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur in Bagmati Province.

The ballot papers have reached all the districts of Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces, all the districts except for Morang in Province No. 1 and all the places except for Pokhara Metropolis of Gandaki and five districts of Bagmati province. Ballot papers have been transported to Manang and Mustang districts by helicopter.

Printing of ballot papers for Bhaktapur district and six metropolises has begun by adding election symbols in the previous design on the basis of the final list of the candidates, the EC said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has issued a stern warning not to engage in spreading misleading and character-assassinating contents targeting the political parties and candidates. The EC expressed concern over the posting of misinformation, disinformation and hate speeches on social media.

The EC has urged the peo-



ple not to post such misleading, character assassinating and insulting contents in social media.

### 20000 Observers

A total of 68 organizations have been permitted to mobilize 20 thousand observers for the local level election slated for May 13, according to the Election Commission (EC), Nepal.

Kamal Bhattarai, assistant secretary at the foreign section of the EC, informed that the organizations seeking to observe the local poll have submitted details about the number of observers. "They have submitted the details of about 20 thousand observers to date and, as we are still receiving the details, the number of total observers may increase."

He said the exact number of observers will be confirmed after the distribution of the identity cards for them.

He said that the Nepal Observation Committee has

completed all its preparation with regard to election observation for ensuring a fair, free and impartial conduction of the poll.

The Committee has appointed and mobilized 40 observers for every district in 40 districts for the long term while it will mobilize 400 observers for the short term in all 77 districts.

### Ten Candidates Elected Unopposed

As other candidates are in the elections campaign, ten candidates have been elected unopposed in local-level election in Taplejung. They have been elected unopposed after candidacy against them was not filed and some candidacies filed against some posts were withdrawn.

### Ballot Paper Are Reaching Districts

The ballot papers for the local level election slated for May 13 have been dispatched to many districts. All the ballot papers will reach the districts by May 9.

Kamal Gyawali, assistant secretary at the Election Commission (EC), Nepal, said that the ballot papers for the remaining 17 districts will be distributed soon.





SIRJANA SINGH

# Destined For Politics

*Having spent almost three and half decades running single-handedly Nepal's most respected and hot political house of Ganesh Man Singh, Sirjana Singh, spouse of Prakash Man Singh, is a good and knowledgeable political person. With the marriage of two grown-up sons taking the family affairs, Sirjana decides to use her political and managerial skills as a mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. At a time when many old Congress stalwarts were showing interest to contest the elections, the Nepali Congress, with the recommendation of the Kathmandu District Congress, has chosen the name of Sirjana Singh for the mayoral candidate of Kathmandu. Mired by so many mismanagements with lack of a visionary mayor, Nepali Congress rightly chose Sirjana Singh, for her humble, gentle and reconciliatory behavior, as a candidate to lead the country's capital. Low-profile and soft-spoken Singh can change the face of Kathmandu with her vision and planning*

By A CORRESPONDENT

In her Twitter account, Sirjana Singh has introduced herself as a Social Work, Advisor NWA, Homemaker, Mother of Prabhas & Bhaskar. Joining Twitter in 2015, she has been active on the platform defending liberal democracy and Nepali Congress.

As it is said a humble person does not flaunt their wealth, status, accomplishment, or anything else they may have. They are modest and often embarrassed by the praise. Instead of being proud of being themselves, a humble person will be happy for others who deserve credit.

Giving a short introduction on social media, Sirjana Singh, who is an active political worker, daughter in law of Nepal's widely respected revolutionary family, shows her humble character. She knows the ins and outs of politics but she remains silent about it. An active social worker affiliated with dozens of social organizations and humanitarian, she is just happy with a brief introduction.

Chanakya says a simple person does not boast about himself and herself because the person believes that people themselves understand who he or she may be.

Although she is chosen as a mayoral candidate for Kathmandu Metropolitan City by Nepali Congress, her reaction is simple and humble. She has not used any words to hurt her political opponents and rivals. This is a peculiar quality of Sirjana Singh. She is not a reactive politician and this is a rare quality in current

politics. With a very little debate in the meeting, Sirjana Singh's name is chosen unanimously.

Her response and reaction are understandable. Till yesterday, she was one of the candidates and others have the right to comment on her. Now, she is a candidate for the Nepali Congress and she needs support from all factions and groups.

Winning the mayoral position in

Kathmandu Metropolitan is politically very important for Nepali Congress and this victory gives a big message to Nepali Congress in the forthcoming two elections.

For voters, Sirjana Singh as a new face also has a lot of reason to rejoice. Not holding any elected political position, Singh is the right choice. However, Singh has to woo young congress leaders like Gagan Thapa and





Dr. Shekhar Koirala to unite the party.

Nepali Congress leader late Krishna Prasad Bhattarai often projected that Sirjana Singh would be a good manager for the political party showing her performance as a good house manager of Ganesh Man Singh. Whenever late Bhattarai visited Ganeshman Singh's house, he often had a word for her.

Although the name of Sirjana Singh remains familiar with the ranks and files of the Nepali Congress, her name appeared in national headlines after the ruling coalition decided to field the candidacy of Nepali Congress (NC) leader Sirjana Singh for the post of Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC).

The Central Parliamentary Committee selects candidates from the names recommended by the Metropolis Working Committee. Singh, who has not been active in politics for a long time, is said to be interested in the position of mayor.

Actively taking part in all the political moments launched by Nepali Congress since 2033 to establish an open, liberal demo-

cratic system in Nepal, Sirjana Singh has a bit modified role after her marriage.

### Sirjana Singh: Short Introduction

Following marriage, Sirjana took the dual responsibility as a homemaker taking all direct responsibility for the household chores completely freeing her mother-in-law Mangla Devi Singh for politics.

After her marriage, her family members including her husband Prakash Man Singh were sent to prison along with her father-in-law late Ganesh Man Singh and mother-in-law late Mangla Devi Singh.

She had to take the burden of raising children, managing the house and the politics of the family while all family members were sent to prison.

As an eyewitness of all the political struggles of Nepal, Sirjana Singh knows ins and outs of Nepali politics and political players. However, she has dedicated her entire time to the family, managing the house of Nepal's renowned political family.

Daughter of Kisan Babu Shrestha and mother Dirgha Kumari Shrestha, Sirjan has two sons Prabhat Man Singh and Bhasker Man Singh and two daughter-in-laws.

Whether in the national referendum of 2036 or the United People's Movements of 2046 and 2062-063, Sirjana Singh took part actively. From her teen years, Singh has been active in politics. However, her role had changed a little after her marriage.

### Career In Politics and Social Work

Along with working in politics, she has been active in social and humanitarian work. During the Covid-19 pandemic and the great earthquake in 2015, Sirjana Singh established her name in the localities of Kathmandu.

Her name was widely circulated recently following the decision of the Nepal Women Association Kathmandu District recommending her name for the post of mayor of Kathmandu.

Born and grown up in Gorkha District in a family of liberal democrats, Sirjana was active in student politics through Nepal Students

Union when she married the son of late Ganesh Man Singh in 2042, a most difficult time in the history of Nepali Congress. She was born in 2019, Bhadra.

She has completed B.Com in 2041 from Shanker Dev Campus and certificate in Nursing from Mahabaudha Nursing Campus. She took a membership of Nepali Congress in 2033 at the age of 14.

Singh, who was secretary of Nepal Student Union Mahabaudha Nursing Campus (2035-2038), actively took part in the referendum of 1979 campaign in favor of multiparty democracy as a member of then disbanded Nepali Congress.

Furthermore, she defeated Pampha Bhusal in the student union elections in 2042 for the post of treasurer of Shanker Dev Campus. She was sent to Hanuman Dhoka prison in 2037 for actively taking part in collecting donations for the treatment of B.P Koirala.

She also worked as a member of the Nepal Student Union Dang Convention in 2037. Sirjana Singh proves not only a suc-



Successful political activist, mother, daughter and daughter-in-law but she also has also been playing an active role as a humanitarian worker in the national disasters of earthquake 2015 and Covid-19.

She supported rescue and relief work in earthquakes as an active worker. Similarly, she helped people during the Covid-19 pandemic taking relief parts. Sirjana Singh worked actively as a member of the Nepal Red Cross Society Kathmandu District and Jaycees. She also served as a board of directors of JP School and Radha Krishna Temple Bhimsen Sthan.

### Politics and Home

Despite concentrating her energy and dedication to the home, the humble and gentle Sirjana Singh has taken part in all political movements spending her valuable time as a political prisoner with her family.

Although some Nepali Congress stalwarts from Kathmandu oppose her nominations personally, no one can question her integrity and ideological commitments.

It is natural in a democratic party to have differences of opinion. Given her contributions and role in politics and her skills in management, Sirjana Singh can make a difference in managing Kathmandu City. Thus, she is a deserving candidate to lead KMC. Sirjana Singh is destined for politics, she has taken an interest to restart her career just recently. She was first appointed to Nepali Congress in her teen age in her early days.

### Challenges For Sirjana

As she is nominated a mayoral candidate, her foremost priority will be to focus on the agenda. Frustrated by populist words and mismanagement or urbanization of Kathmandu, Singh has to present her workable agenda to the public.

Another challenge for her is to bring all of his rivals and friends together unitedly. As a humble lady, she can do it. Whatever her po-

litical background may be, Nepali Congress leaders have put faith in her as a candidate to win the elections.

### Sirjana Announces Seven Commitments

Known for her simplicity and humbleness, Sirjana Singh, Nepali Congress mayoral candidate of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, has announced her seven commitments in a low profile program without flowery words and tall and populist commitments to fool the voters.

On behalf of the ruling coalition, the election manifesto of the Nepali Congress candidate Sirjana Singh for the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) mayor has been unveiled. In a program organized in Kathmandu, Singh made public her election manifesto.

She expressed her commitment based on key points including service and good governance, health, education and social security, a clean and sustainable environment, safe city, culture, heritage and security, strong and advanced infrastructure and strong youth, self-reliant women, and creative metropolis.

#### 1 Service and good governance

She declares that she will administer the KMC within rules, and regulations. Corruption-free, efficient service delivery establishes KMC as the best metropolitan. Work to achieve the target in close collaboration with Federal and Provincial governments, other metropolitans, the private sector, non-covenantal organizations and the community.

#### 2 Health, education, and social security

Improvement of the quality of education and learning, I commit to making them accessible to all. In developing the Metropolitan health system, all the wards should have urban health promotion centers with the facilities like prevention, testing, curative and rehabilitation and operate municipal hospitals with specialist services. I express my commitment to bringing special social protection programs to address senior citizens, persons with disability, people below the poverty line and other marginalized communities.

#### 3 Clean, sustainable environment.

I will make KMC zero waste metropolitan. For the drinkable water, and clean air, I will create necessary legal and institutional and infrastructure. I will work to rehabilitate, protect and expand public open spaces, parks, forests, Hiti, well, ponds, Baha, Falcha.

#### 4 Safe City

I will take the necessary steps to make the city safe and walk without fear for women, children, senior citizens, people with disability and all others. I will make Kathmandu capable of disaster resilience.

#### 5 Culture, Heritage and civilization

I will work to promote and protect indigenous knowledge, language, festivals, music, instruments, fairs, professions, and books with ownership of the community and connect KMC culture with tourism. Protecting and promoting Guthi System, I will work for sustainable development.

#### 6 Strong and developed Infrastructure

Building infrastructures for easy walking, I will develop KMC as pedestrians friendly. I will promote indigenous knowledge, technology and materials for the construction of infrastructure in the city. I am committed to enhancing the institutional capacity of KMC to start the renovation, maintenance, construction and expansion of all infrastructure owned by KMC and complete in time with quality.

#### 7 Capacitated youth, independent Women and creative KMC residents

I will take the necessary initiative to provide opportunities to the young, empowerment of women and enhancement of creative capacity. I will facilitate for necessary management for the development of entrepreneurship.



## NEPAL-U.S. RELATIONS

# At 75

*Although Nepal and the United States are geographically far away, their relations at state to state and people to people levels are close and intimate. The material and technical support provided by the U.S. Government contributed enormously to build infrastructure and establish democratic institutions at grassroots level. People to people relations are so deep and strong that they have been fostered and strengthened by scholars, diplomats, Peace Corps Volunteers, travelers and individuals. As Nepal-U.S. relations enter 75 years, the foundation of friendship between the two countries stands now as unshakable*

By KESHAB POUDEL

“This year marks the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the United States and Nepal. Throughout these 75 years – and through the decades of change that have occurred in both of our countries – the United States and Nepal have stood with one another,” said Randy Berry, the US Ambassador to Nepal in his statement issued on the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Nepal.

In a statement issued on the occasion of the Constitution Day of Nepal last year, the US Secretary Antony Blinken congratulated the Government and the people of Nepal on behalf the US government and people, recalling the collaboration between the two countries in the past years in facing up the common challenges.

US Secretary Blinken has also recently said the 75-year friendly relations between the United States of America and Nepal have been made stronger by the peo-

ple to people cordiality.

In his statement, he said, “Today we mark 75 years of U.S. Nepal diplomatic relations. Nepal has seen incredible changes in the government, economic development, and international engagements. We are proud of our accomplishments as partners, and look forward to many more decades of friendship, USNepal75.

Responding to secretary Blinken in tweet Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, “Thank you, Your Excellency @SecBlinken. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Nepal-US diplomatic relations, Nepal reaffirms its commitment to further enriching the longstanding friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

He has also stated that the two countries worked together in the fight against the corona virus pandemic and climate change. Blinken has also extended best wishes to all the Nepalis on this occasion.

These statements rightly portray

the existing warm relations between the two countries including at people to people level. Just last week, while welcoming US Congressional delegation Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and foreign minister Dr. Narayan Khadka echoed the importance of Nepal’s relations with United States.

“Celebration of the 75th year of Nepal-U.S. diplomatic ties provides opportunity for further expanding and enriching our partnerships in all productive sectors. We look forward to more high-level engagements and economic partnership in the days to come,” tweets Prime Minister Deuba.

Likewise, the recent US Congressional high level visits have served to further cement the bilateral relations between Nepal and the US. Prominent visits to Nepal from the US include high dignitaries of various government agencies including the recent visit by Congressional delegation.

“The visit by the U.S. Congressional delegates was a great success and





included conversations on issues such as human rights, the climate crisis, and democracy. We'll continue to build on these discussions moving forward as the U.S. – Nepal relationship continues to strengthen," writes US Embassy in its Facebook Page.

As Nepal-US celebrate 75 years of official U.S.-Nepal diplomatic ties, the U.S. Congressional delegation led by Kirsten Gillibrand, including Senators Sheldon Whitehouse, Cory Booker, Mark Kelly, & Representative Mondaire Jones, to Kathmandu visited Nepal.

"The Congressional delegation led by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand met with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba as part of their 3-day visit to Nepal. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse, Cory Booker, Representative Mondaire Jones, and Ambassador Randy Berry joined the meeting and reflected on the broad U.S. – Nepal relationship. They discussed ways to further bolster ties, including by addressing the climate crisis and strengthening democratic resilience," tweets ambassador Berry.

"The Congressional delegation led by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand met

with @PM\_nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba as part of their 3-day visit to Nepal. They discussed ways to further bolster ties, including by addressing the climate crisis & strengthening democratic resilience. #USNepal75," tweets ambassador Randy Berry.

Earlier Deputy Assistant Secretary Kelly Keiderling also visited Nepal. During her second visit, she met young Nepali leaders and influencers, including International Women of Courage Award winner Bhumika Shrestha, technopreneurs from Leapfrog Technologies, alumni of U.S. government exchange programs, and representatives from the Nepal-America Chamber of Commerce.

She also travelled to Lumbini to experience its rich history and met with local business, student, and civil society communities, seeking to advance U.S. - Nepali friendship outside of the Kathmandu Valley. Deputy Assistant Secretary met with Buddhist monks and nuns learning English, women tourism entrepreneurs, and students at Lumbini Buddhist University.

#### **Nepal's Priority**

Over the last seven and half decades, Nepal's political system has changed from autocratic Rana regime to constitutional monarchy and now Federal Republic. However, Nepalese state and leaders give high importance to relations with the United States.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in his last visit to UNFCCC Conference in Glasgow United Kingdom briefly interacted with the US President Joe Biden.

Nepal always gives equal importance to its relations with the United States. "Pleased to welcome US Congressional delegation led by Senator @SenGillibrand and exchange views on Nepal-US friendship and ways for enhancing multifaceted partnership involving governments, parliaments and people in general. Discussed global issues such as climate change," tweeted Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

"Foreign minister Dr. Narayan Khadka received US Congressional delegation led by @SenGillibrand. The two sides exchanged views on expanding cooperation in various areas, including economic development. Views were also shared on areas of



common interest at bilateral & multilateral levels,” tweeted Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Nepal has been receiving all kinds of support from the United States of America to its all round development. As a second country after England to back Nepal’s independence and sovereignty establishing diplomatic relations with Nepal, United States has been firmly supporting Nepal’s independence and sovereignty.

Realizing the importance of establishment of diplomatic relations with US for future generation, then prime minister Padma Samsher Rana directed Nepal’s mission head to New Delhi Daman Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana to contact with US Mission in New Delhi. Rana described in detail about moves taken to build the formal contact in his book *Nepal Rule and Misrule*.

As Nepal and United States are celebrating 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, Nepal’s relations with the United States of America are more important and valuable for Nepal’s development and protection of independence.

When Nepal and the United States of America established the diplomatic relations on 25 April 1947, then prime minister Padma Samsher Rana directed Nepal’s mission head in New Delhi Daman Samsher Rana to make all efforts to establish diplomatic relations with the United States of America pursuing that this relationship would be highly valuable in the future when the shape of South Asia changes.

Thus, Prime Minister Padma

Samsher Rana signed the agreement with the US making it as the second country, only after the UK, with which Nepal established diplomatic relations. Daman Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana mentioned the events in his book *Nepal Rule and Misrule*.

Then, Prime Minister Padma Samsher Rana remarked that establishment of diplomatic relations with U.S is ‘important’ for Nepal. As Nepal and U.S are celebrating 75 years of establishment of relations, it is still important. In his book, *Rule and Misrule*, Daman Samsher Jang Bahadur Rana described the period when Nepal established diplomatic relations with U.S and this was so important for Nepal’s relations.



After establishment of Nepalese Embassy in Washington D.C. on 3 February 1958, American Embassy in Kathmandu was opened on 6 August 1959. As the rela-

tions deepen, a number of Nepal’s honorary consuls have been appointed in various US cities.

“His Majesty wanted the USA to have a residential embassy in Kathmandu. Since the beginning of 1957, His Majesty had been pressing me to convince U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi. He used to say that as soon as Americans have their embassy in Kathmandu, Chinese will also have one in no time,” writes Rana.

“Nepal’s relationship with the USA started when Babbar Shumsher JB Rana led a mission to the USA and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in 1947. Following this Henry Grady was representative for two months in early 1948. Later in mid 1948 an American Mission led by Henderson arrived in Nepal and an exchange of Ambassadors between the two countries took place. Henderson, US Ambassador in India was concurrently credited to Nepal. Kaiser SJB Rana, the Representative to the Court of St. James in UK became also Nepal’s representative to the USA. Following this, USOM’s anti-Malarial Program in Nepal started in Nov. 1952 leading to the resettlement of many hill people in the Terai,” writes Hemang Dixit in his article in *New Spotlight*.

#### MCC and Nepal

After facing several years of delay and disruption through a fake campaign, Nepal ratified the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact (MCC) stalled for years.

After eleven years of its inception in Nepal, the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament has, at



last, ratified the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact.

With this development, the implementation of the 500 million dollar Compact will now proceed. The compact was endorsed by the ruling coalition parties amid obstructions by main opposition party, CPN-UML, in the lower House. Under this project, 500 kilometer long 400 kV transmission line and a section of road will be constructed.

By taking a strong political initiative, prime minister Sher Bahdur Deuba passed the MCC agreement with the U.S. preventing a major diplomatic disaster with Nepal's important friend.

At a time when Nepal's both the neighbors directly or indirectly stood against MCC agreement and Chinese officially expressed their displeasure and India through its other informal channel, prime minister Deuba very tactfully made efforts to neutralize their role giving them verbal assurances about their security concerns.

Henry Kissinger, a renowned American scholar of geo-politics, in his book *World Order* writes, "For centuries Nepal skillfully balanced its diplomatic postures between the ruling dynasties in China and those of India. As his predecessor, PM Deuba also plays same role.

#### USAID's Contributions

Over the decades, many things have changed globally. From self isolation, Nepal has opened its door to the outside world. From being the most backward country with less than one percent literacy, high level infant mortality and maternal mortality, no public transport, health posts, roads and other basic facilities, Nepal, though it is still in the process of complete transformation, is a state with all basic infrastructures.

By signing Point IV agreement for Technical Cooperation on January 23, 1951, the present USAID, originally known as the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) became the first bilateral donor financing Nepal's economic development programs.

Since the start of aid to Nepal, USAID's objective to support Nepal remains more or less same focusing its program aims to promote economic development for the prosperity of life of Nepali people. These entire programs are for the advancement of human freedom, secure growth of democratic way of life and development of international understanding and goodwill.

During the last 75 years, the nature of America's cooperation has also changed. From early days of Malaria eradication in Terai, roads, bridges and building basic infrastructure, the USAID has been

process through institutions building at all sectors and at all levels, United States stands as a pillar in the all round development of Nepal. U.S. has been providing financial and technical assistance to build administrative units, health, schools, agriculture, higher education and connectivity.

#### Diplomats Contributions

Since his arrival in Nepal in 2019, US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry, who also worked in Nepal as deputy chief of the mission earlier in his career, has been spending a lot of time to meeting people in rural and remote

parts of Nepal, learning about their livelihood and sharing views with them.

Ambassador Berry has travelled eastern, western and central parts of Nepal. On following his Twitter page, one can see how strongly he feels for inspiring Nepal's rural folks.

Ambassador Berry tweets from different regions showing his inner love for people, culture, festivals and natural paradise of Nepal.

#### Diplomats

come and go. For many American diplomats, nature, culture and simplicity of Nepalese rural folks have attracted so much. Former ambassadors Michael Malinowski, Nancy Powell and Peter Bodde served in Nepal from U.S Mission in different capacities and still maintain their relations even after retirement. Similarly, Alaina B. Teplitz, who is now the Assistant Secretary of State for Administration, had also intensively travelled Nepal.

Ambassador Scott Delisi who spent two years as an ambassador is now supporting people living in remote parts of Nepalese through a charity. Nepal and Nepalese people have always attracted them.

#### People to People

Along with state to state support, people to people support has also been so much closer and intimate. Ne-



supporting livelihood improvement, market integration with the rural community, disaster resilience and capacity building programs.

In her recent visit, Deputy Assistant Secretary Keiderling and USAID Nepal Mission Director Sepideh Kevans had met with women from the Tamang community, who are leading the movement toward commercial agriculture in Nepal.

USAID - US Agency for International Development partnered with Nepal's private sector to provide these women with new markets for their vegetables. As a result, the women have increased their incomes and improved their livelihoods while making healthy food more widely available to their community.

Providing all its generous support to Nepal's modernization pro-

## COVERSTORY

pal's modern history will be incomplete without contribution of people like LF Stiller, an American Jesuit who later took Nepali citizenship.

Former Peace Corps volunteer late Scoot Skinner, a resident of Vermont, came to Nepal in 1964 and never forgot the smile of people and mountains, visiting Nepal several times later with his family members till his death in 2021.

For common American Citizens, Nepal attracted so much that they even gave up American citizenship and became Nepali. There will be a long list of Americans who served in Nepal.

Born in the US in 1928, Fr. Ludwig F. Stiller came to Nepal in 1956 as a Jesuit at St Xavier School and became a Nepali. Stiller came a Jesuit but when he died in 2009 he became a prominent historian of Nepal. Without his contributions, Nepalese would have been poorer in their knowledge about the history of Nepal, particularly the era of nation building of King Prithvi Narayan Shah and the court massacre.

Stiller was not the only one of his kind. Other America born Jesuits, who came to Nepal to teach at schools, devoted their life for the betterment of Nepal. Another prominent scholar late Leo E. Rose revealed so many things about Nepal. His book *Strategy for Survival* is regarded as a masterpiece on Nepal. Like Stiller, there are many other Americans including Leo Rose and others who have made enormous contribu-

tions to Nepal.

Coming as a visitor, Judith Chase and her husband have been living in Nepal for quite a long time teaching Nepalese how to grow organic products. "US citizens love Nepal from their heart," said the Deputy Chief of the Mission Michael C. Gonzales in a recent program organized by Nepal USA Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Even world renowned American scholars like Samuel P. Huntington, Henry Kissinger, Francis G. Hutchins, teacher of late King Birendra, mentioned Nepal's position in their books. This indicates that Nepal is in the minds of American scholars.

Other scholars from United States, who have been contributing to political, anthropological and other

contemporary perspectives, have made great contributions to bring Nepal into international arena. Professor of Harvard University Francis G. Hutchins, former teacher of late King Birendra, wrote a book *Democratizing Monarchy*.

These are among a few renowned persons. There are hundreds of Americans who contributed to strengthen the relations between the two countries supporting Nepal's development efforts.

### Peace Corps

Nepal-U.S. relations are not only limited to the level of scholars, PEACE CORPS NEPAL has taken the relations to the inner depth of the rural parts of the society. Many Peace Corps volunteers, who served in Nepal working as unpaid ambassadors, have been lobbying for Nepal's cause. Many Peace Corps volunteers come and go, but some other Peace Corps volunteers have even stayed in Nepal as permanent residents.

Peace Corps commemorated the 55th anniversary of Peace Corps' arrival in Nepal last week. According to Peace Corps, over 3,750 American volunteers lived, worked and served in communities throughout Nepal since 1962.

Fifty-four Peace Corps Volunteers currently serve in Nepal, supporting food security in rural





communities in eight districts of the Western and Mid-Western Development Regions.

According to a Peace Corps Online, the Independent News Forum serving Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, many Peace Corps volunteers who worked in Nepal, returned later for time being to support Nepal's development efforts.

### **Support To Disaster Resilience Programs**

USAID is now a leading agency supporting Nepal's disaster resilience related programs. Along with capacity building of security agencies including Nepal Army and Nepal Armed Police, USAID has been supporting central government, provinces and local level, NGOs and community providing material and capacity building support.

Nepal received a huge support from the US following the April 25, 2015, earthquake in Nepal saving the life of hundreds of people. In a rescue operation, six US marines sacrificed their life in a helicopter crash. After the earthquake, United States committed to aiding in Nepal's recovery and reconstruction.

USAID is now supporting capacity building of National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), which is a leading national agency responsible for the disaster management.

### **U.S. Assistance For Transformation**



When US started its development assistance to Nepal in 1951, Terai was plagued by malaria, there were 800 primary students, many people had to walk several days to reach near road, and life expectancy was 28 years. According to Half-century of Development, the History of U.S. Assistance to Nepal, one out of 5 children born did not live to celebrate its first birthday.

According to a website of USAID, USAID's efforts support Nepal's continued development into a self-reliant and resilient partner with the aim of bolstering the security and economic prosperity of both the United States and the region. USAID remains the leading international donor agency in health and education in Nepal, creating a healthier population through

strengthening Nepal Government's health systems and improving early grade reading skills for primary school students by delivering assistance to school systems nationwide.

"To improve Nepal's economic situation, the MCC signed, in 2017, a \$500 million Compact with Nepal to expand Nepal's electricity transmission infrastructure and improve its road maintenance regime. The Nepali government has committed another \$130 million for a program total of \$630 million. The Compact will build 300 kilometers (km) of high-voltage electric transmission lines, three substations, perform enhanced road maintenance on 305 km of strategic highways, and provide technical assistance to the national electric utility, the new electricity regulator, and the Department of Roads," writes website.

"United States is a major partner in Nepal's development. With a large number of Nepalese Diaspora living in the United States, the relations are very strong at people to people level. Nepal can get a lot of benefits from the US," said Dr. Shanker Sharma, Nepalese ambassador to India and former Nepalese ambassador to United States of America. "As Nepal and United States have been celebrating 75 years of establishment of diplo-



## COVERSTORY

matic relations, this is the time to make our relations stronger in coming years.”

Nepal Government is grateful to US government for its humanitarian assistance and partnership in Nepal’s development. Nepal and US had long, friendly and cordial relations,” said former Nepalese ambassador to United States Dr.Yubaraj Khatiwada.

### Bilateral relations

In the last 74 years, the relationship has taken on different characters mostly in response to the end of the Cold War, Nepal’s internal political changes, and at times to its changing relationship with the South Asian region, especially vis-a-vis India.

However, regardless of these factors, the relationship between Nepal and America is getting stronger particularly owing to the growing Nepalese Diaspora in the US and the growing US commitment in Nepal’s development. This friendship will continue to grow in the future.

“Nepal was one of the first countries in South Asia to receive U.S. aid. As in other countries, the U. S. used aid as an instrument of its foreign policy in Nepal in the Cold War period. The major foreign policy objectives of the United States in Nepal were a) to help Nepal maintain its independence and neutrality, b) to contain a possible threat of communism in Nepal, c) to support Nepal’s development efforts, and d) to enhance Nepal’s western orientation. According to a paper the fundamental objectives of the U. S. aid in Nepal in the Cold War period were to assess the major achievements of the U. S. aid objectives, and to draw conclusions on the future directions of its aid. It uses an analytical approach and secondary sources of information,” said Dr. Narayan Khadka in his published article.

For the last 75 years, many things have changed at the global level and country level. What has not changed is Nepal’s cordial and friendly relationship with the United States.

## U.S. – Nepal Relationship Is People-to-People Connections, Sovereignty, And Democratic Values



BY: RANDY W. BERRY

This year marks the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the United States and Nepal. Throughout these 75 years – and through the decades of change that have occurred in both of our countries – the United States and Nepal have stood with one another.

Americans know Nepal is as the people who make laudable advances in medicine and science, reach nearly impossible heights as mountaineers, honorably and bravely serve as UN peacekeepers, and enrich the world’s heritage through a vast diversity of arts and culture.

This week reminds us that the connection between Americans and Nepalis is and has been a connection that lasts for generations.

The United States’ historic support for Nepal’s health sector reflects the powerful results of our partnership. In the 1950s, malaria afflicted nearly 25 percent of the population. The U.S. government through USAID, supported the Malaria Control Program and by 1968, malaria cases dropped from more than 2 million to 2,468 cases nationwide.

In the last two years since the beginning of the pandemic, the United States has donated nearly 3.8 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Nepal to date, and given over \$124.8 million in COVID assistance.

Separately, in February of this year, the Government of Nepal ratified the Millennium Challenge

Corporation Nepal Compact. The re

sult of this Compact will help modernize Nepal’s energy and transportation sectors, assisting more than 23 million Nepalis.

Finally, the United States admires the rich history of Nepal. The Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation helps preserve cultural heritage around the world.

In nearly 20 years, this program has supported 25 cultural preservation projects in

Nepal, investing more than \$3.8 million. One result of this program includes Kathmandu’s beautiful Gaddi Baithak.



The foundation of this multi-generational U.S. – Nepal relationship is people-to-people connections, sovereignty, and democratic values. Today, we need each other more than ever to tackle difficult issues like addressing the climate crisis and protecting democracy in the face of rising authoritarianism. We look forward to doing this together, giving us the results that this friendship has given us for generations.

*Randy W. Berry is the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. Excerpts of the Statement delivered on the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Nepal.*



# China-Nepal Relationship Maintained Steady Growth



BY: HOU YANQI

At present, the COVID-19 pandemic drags on, geopolitical conflicts are resurging and the recovery of the economy remains sluggish and depressed. The peace, security and development in the world are facing grave challenges. Despite the complex international and regional situation, China-Nepal relationship, led and cared by the two heads of state, has maintained steady growth. The Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity between us has been deepening and yielding solid results.

State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Nepal from March 25 to 27 and had in-depth discussions and communications with Nepali leaders on implementing outcomes of President Xi Jinping's visit and promoting China-Nepal cooperation of various fields. This is the highest bilateral visit between China and Nepal since the outbreak of the Covid-19. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on Hon'ble President Bhandari, Hon'ble Prime Minister Deuba and had a very friendly and in-depth meeting with Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Khadka. During the meetings, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi clearly pointed out that China supports Nepal in blazing a development path suited to its national conditions; China supports Nepal in pursuing independent domestic and foreign policies; China supports Nepal in participating in BRI to a greater extent. The "Three Supports" has sent a very positive signal, which is China's friendly policy towards Nepal is for all Nepali people and political parties. The policy has maintained continuity and stability and will never change no matter how the political situation of Nepal changes. During the visit, the two sides signed 9 cooperation documents, including development assistant, infrastructure connectivity, energy and medical and health cooperation, which injected fresh impetus to the implementation of the outcomes of President Xi Jinping's visit and bilateral cooperation in various fields.

In recent years, the connotation and extension of China-Nepal's BRI cooperation have been continuously deepened and expanded. A multi-dimensional promotion pattern featuring "hard connection", "soft communication" and "heart exchange" and the all-round participation of the government, market and society is taking shape. The Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network has gradually moved from a blueprint to a reality. Since last year, the two sides have worked hard to overcome the huge difficulties caused by the pandemic and promoted the construction of BRI cooperation in various fields to achieve new progress.

First, anti-pandemic and health cooperation has various highlights. Until now, China has provided around 20 million vaccines through grant assistance, commercial purchase and other channels, making China the biggest supplier of Covid-19 vaccine to Nepal. Those vaccines have helped Nepal to fight against the pandemic and restored Nepali people's life and work back to nor-

mal. A few days ago, a batch of medical materials granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China including 5.7 million syringes and 9 X-rays have been handed over to the Nepali side through Kerung- Rasuwagadhi border point. China will continue to provide vaccines and material support according to the demand of the

Nepali side so as to help Nepal completely defeat the pandemic. Besides, with the aid from China, the second phase project of Civil Service Hospital has been completed, and the two sides have renewed the protocol on sending a China Medical Team to work in Nepal. Those cooperation are important parts of jointly building a community of health between China and Nepal.

Second, economic and trade cooperation scored steady progress. According to the Chinese side's statistics, the total volume of trade between China and Nepal increased 67% and reached 1.977 billion USD in 2021, of which Nepal's export to China increased 63%. Those data proved that the so-call "soft block" on Nepal is totally baseless. We noticed that now Nepal's economy has encountered some difficulties, mainly as a result of the slow recovery of global economy and the shock of the pandemic. Many other countries are facing the same problems. During the visit of State Councilor and Foreign Minister of Wang Yi, the two sides signed the Protocol on the Safety and Health Conditions for the Export of Haylage from Nepal to China and the Exchange of letters on duty-free treatment to be provided by China to goods of Nepali origin covering 98% tariff lines. Those are the efforts made by the Chinese side to increase Nepal's export to China and will help relieve Nepal's trade imbalance problem. We also welcome Nepal to attend China International Import Expo and actively promote the products that meet the demands of the Chinese market.

Third, the border-related cooperation has been conducted friendly and smooth manner. The Chinese side has made continuous effort to improve the capacity of one-way cargo transportation at the Kerung and Zhangmu border ports, and tried our best to ensure the supply of materials for production, living, anti-pandemic, elections and others to Nepal while fighting the pandemic on an ongoing basis. Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region has also actively provided material assistance to the people live in the mountainous areas of northern Nepal such as Humla district. The competent authorities of both sides have been in communication for many times. We hope the Nepali side could also improve the efficiency of loading and unloading, and further improve the conditions of customs clearance. The Chinese side attaches great importance to the desire of the Nepali side to resume export to China through land ports. The relevant authorities, neighboring provinces and border port authorities of the two sides are keeping communication and coordination in this regard. The two sides are also coordinating to hold consultation on border affairs at appropriate time through diplomatic channel, systematically summarizing and planning border-related affairs and cooperation between our two countries.



Fourth, the project cooperation achieved fruitful results. The China-aid Kathmandu Durbar High School, Civil Service Hospital, the Public School Recovery Project in Dolakha have been completed or finished their mid-term inspection and acceptance. A batch of projects that aim to improve people's livelihood such as Public School Recovery Project and Hospital Recovery Project in Sindhupalchok are about to start construction. The third phase of the Araniko Highway Maintenance Project has been completed successfully. Witnessed by Hon'ble Prime Minister Deuba, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the virtual completion ceremony of the the Pokhara International Airport project's major instruction and installation works together with Hon'ble Foreign

Minister Dr. Khadka. When the economy and society return to normal in Nepal, I believe that the cooperation between China and Nepal will speed up and improve efficiency. I also hope that the Nepali side could provide a fair and transparent business environment, fully protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese enterprises, and help to solve their practical problems.

Fifth, the connectivity cooperation enjoys broad prospects. The China-Nepal Cross-border Railway Project carries the good expectations of the two peoples. The two sides have signed the technical assistance plan for the feasibility study project of the China-Nepal Cross-border Railway Project, marking another solid step in advancing the project. As Nepal's electricity production gradually turns to surplus, China is willing to work together with Nepal to complement each side's advantages, actively promote the power grid interconnection, and build a new channel for Nepal's power export. It must be pointed out that these projects will come across many difficulties such as complex geological conditions, frequent natural disasters, and high construction cost. This requires both sides to formulate practical plans on technical standards, funding sources and so on in the spirit of seeking truth from facts.

Sixth, the people-to-people exchanges were rich and colorful. The pandemic has not cut off the friendship between our two peoples. People from all walks of life in Nepal have actively participated in the painting competition, video clips collection, and online knowledge contest of the Beijing Winter Olympics held by the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, I was deeply moved by the participants' sincere love for China and the friendship between the two countries. The Chinese embassy in Nepal actively helped the

Nepali primary and secondary schools to improve their operation conditions, implemented projects such as Rural Education Support Program in Pokhara and the "Panda Book Corner" Program. Those were warmly welcomed by the teachers and students. The Chinese side will continue to pass on the friendship between the two countries by providing government scholarships, educational equipment and etc.

I understand that you all are concerned about the resumption of direct flights between China and Nepal and the return of Nepali students to China. It is a common problem internationally for students to go back to schools in face of the pandemic. Previously, in order to prevent and control the pandemic, the Nepali side unilaterally announced the suspension of international flights with most countries, which has led to the suspension of direct flights between China and Nepal till now. The personnel exchanges between the two countries, including international students, have since become more difficult. The Chinese side has always cared about the study and life of these Nepali students. Chinese universities have maintained close contact with them and kept providing online education and psychological consultation. The ministries of foreign affairs of the two countries are in closely coordinating for the orderly return of the Nepali students to China and the gradual resumption of direct flights between our two countries. I'm also looking forward to early positive progress as all of you are.

I believe that through my above introduction, you have learned that the BRI cooperation between China and Nepal has not got bogged down because of COVID-19; on the contrary, it has become a road of hope that bolsters resilience and boosts confidence. I would like to point out that BRI has never been a "geopolitical strategy", but a road of development that helps countries along the road, especially developing countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and promote common development and prosperity. China and Nepal are good neighbors, good friends and good partners. Social media is an important link and bridge for the Chinese Embassy in Nepal to communicate with Nepali people, especially the youth. I opened my Twitter account in 2019 to share my work and life in Nepal, and received the enthusiastic support of tens of thousands of fans. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks. In 2020, the Chinese Embassy in Nepal opened a Facebook page to introduce the latest progress in bilateral relations and practical cooperation between China and Nepal, as well as China's domestic development achievements. At the beginning of this year, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Nepal also opened a Twitter account with the account name "Spokesperson of Chinese Embassy in Nepal". Through this platform, we will timely release important positions of the embassy and important information on bilateral cooperation, and I welcome all of you to follow it. Both the Embassy and myself will continue to use social media platforms to interact with media friends and netizens, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and promote cultural mutual learning and people-to-people bonds.

Finally, on behalf of the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, I would like to wish all media friends good health, success in work and family happiness! May Nepal prosperous and the Nepali people happy and healthy!.

*Hou Yanqi is the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal. Excerpts of her statement delivered at on press meet recently.*



## POWER CRISIS

# Short Term

*As the monsoon season just one and half months away, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) hopes to end electricity shortage soon*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when Indian Power Ministry warns that India's power crisis might worsen further in days to come, managing director of NEA Kul Man Ghising is planning to manage domestically produced electricity to avoid prolonged load shedding.

This year, India's peak power demand breached all records to touch 207 GW on May 3 and it is going high due to increasing heat. Official data showed coal stock availability of 21 million tons (MT), enough for nine days, at power stations.

As a net importer of over 300 MW during the dry season, Nepal has no option other than to manage the current level of available energy with equitable and efficient manner.

Despite knowing state of electricity generation back home and state of electricity supply in India and energy in the world, a group of industrialists having foothold in FNCCI and CNI are making hue and cry squarely blaming NEA.

In her recent meeting with industrialists about the power supply problem in some big industries, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Pampha Bhusal

sought reasons for power outage in industrial areas with the officials of Nepal Electricity Authority and Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

Minister Bhusal said that the

problem in power supply was temporary and it would be solved. "The problem in power supply is not due to us, it is a global problem. In the case of Nepal, the government is committed to resolving it, and a solution to it will be sought soon."

Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority Kul Man Ghising urged the industrialists not to panic, and

carefully, NEA took an immediate step to manage the supply of electricity on the basis house production.

"The NEA has not been able to supply electricity to the industries round the clock for three days as India could not supply the required electricity to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and reduced power generation in Nepal," said Kul Man Ghising, managing director of NEA.

He said that the NEA was compelled to cut power in the industries up to 12 hours at night (from 6 pm to 6 am) after it was unable to purchase enough electricity from the Indian energy market.

He, however, said that NEA is effortful to provide maximum electricity to the industries based on the import from India through the Indian Energy

Exchange and bilateral agreement.

According to him, there will be power cuts to the industries during peak hours and nights for 10/15 days. He also said that prior notice of power cuts would be given to the industries.

"India has not been able to supply enough electricity for the past three days due to the energy crisis. The supply system in India is in disorder due to rising coal prices in the international market and rising demand for electricity in the Indian energy market. Due to this, we could not buy enough electricity and the



said, "The current problem is only for two or four days. Don't panic, it will be resolved."

During the discussion, president of the FNCCI Shekhar Golchha informed about the problems of power supply. He said, "There is a problem in power supply, the government has to solve it."

## There Is No Load shedding: Ghising

With the rapid rise in power demand in domestic market, India has stopped its export to Nepal. Looking



problem came,” he said.

At present, only about 2,000-3,000 MW of electricity is coming to the Indian Energy Exchange for trading, whereas a few weeks ago it was around 18,000 to 20,000 MW daily.

It means, the energy trading in IEX has dropped by almost six times due to short supply of coal and rise in its price, Ghising said.

“Despite being a competitive market, the maximum price has been fixed at IRs. 12 in the IEX. All the bidders have been bidding at IRs. 12. The power is being provided in proportion to bidders based on their quotation. We can only bid a maximum of 500 MW. We get around 80 to 100 MW from IEX,” he said.

In the meantime, electricity generation in Nepal has also dropped by around 150 MW over the past few days due to declining water level in the rivers. At present, Nepal’s production is 900 MW. Around up to 1,400 MW electricity is being generated during peak hours using the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project.

However, Nepal’s demand is 1,500 to 1600 MW. Up to 300 MW of electricity is being imported from India on an average to meet the demand of production and supply, he said.

## Situation In India

The demand for electricity in the Indian market has surged since April. Earlier, the demand in India was 180,000 MW but now it has reached 200,000 MW.

Due to this, there is no electric-

ity in the exchange market of India, said Ghising.

Nepal has been buying electricity from India through three channels, IEX, the state of Bihar and Power Trade Corporation. However, now that India is going through a power crisis, it has been impossible to buy electricity through these three means.

The Bihar government has not been able to supply electricity to Nepal at night for the past one month and it informed NEA that it has not been able to provide electricity in the afternoon for the last three days, Ghising said. According to him, there will be a problem in the electricity supply in the country by mid-May this year.

## Opportunities for Nepal

Even though NEA was compelled to cut power for industries for a few weeks, there is an opportunity for the country to reap benefits by exporting electricity to India after a month, he said.

“Our power generation will increase significantly and will exceed the demand after July 2022.

We can sell energy at a competitive rate through the IEX as there is a projection the energy crisis in India will linger for a few months due to Ukraine and Russia war,” he said.

According to him, around 400 MW of electricity will be sold in the Indian Energy Exchange daily for around five months from July 2022. “We can sell electricity for around Rs. 30 billion if the present rates remain in the Indian Energy Exchange,” he said.

According to Ghising, the NEA

is still working to increase electricity consumption even though there is a problem in supply during the dry season as power generation will be wasted during the rainy season.

The power supply to the industrial corridors has been so erratic that large industrialists have suggested the Nepal Electricity Authority cut off power for two days if it can ensure smooth supply for the remaining five days of the week.

The umbrella body of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) and industrialists of the Sunsari-Morang corridor have jointly handed over a 10-point memorandum to the NEA stating its demands and concerns over the issue.

The country’s industrial sector that had been badly affected due to the coronavirus pandemic and rising bank interest rates is now grappling with unscheduled power cuts of up to 12 hours a day and voltage fluctuations that have resulted in damages to the machinery, among other hassles.

Confederation of Nepalese Industries Province 1 President Bhim Ghimire said that the industrialists were ready to shut production for two days if the NEA can ensure proper management and regular power supply for the rest of the week.

Stating that a proper supply of power is a must for the production sector, Ghimire stressed that the employment and economy of the country could be in peril if problems in the energy sector were not addressed promptly. The NEA is struggling to meet the domestic energy demands as India has decided to stop power export to Nepal for a few days following the rise of coal prices in the international market.

According to NEA Spokesperson Suresh Bahadur Bhattarai, the acute shortage of coal in India has led the southern neighbor to halt power exports for a few days and there is currently shortage of energy traders in the Indian energy exchange market.

According to him, out of the demand for 32,000 to 33,000 MW hours per day, about 12,000 MW hours of energy used to be imported from India, with the rest being fulfilled from our own re-





sources.

“Of our target to procure 10,000 to 12,000 MW hours of energy per day from India, we have been able to purchase only about 1,500 to 2,000 MW hours at the moment,” Bhattarai said.

India has notified about the cut in power supply for three days due to increase in domestic demand.

In the memorandum, industrialists have demanded an immediate release of a fixed load-shedding schedule, prompt solution to the problem of tripping and load-shedding, and that the NEA should bear the responsibility in

case of any damage to industries due to power fluctuations.

It states that industrialists of Province 1 are facing losses amounting to billions of rupees due to power outages.

N E A spokesperson said the two-day power

cut would let industries carry out their maintenance works. “There is no alternative to power cuts,” he said, adding that the situation will likely persist for two more weeks, after which the country’s power generation is expected to surge and suffice to cater to the domestic demand.

The country’s households and small industries, however, will not have to face any power outage, he assured.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is starting a scheduled load shedding to big industries citing reduced import of electricity from India.

According to the NEA, industries will have to undergo power cuts as the power utility has been unable to purchase adequate amounts of electricity from India. NEA will be disrupting power supply to industries during peak hour of electricity demand. Manufacturers have been complaining that they were facing power cuts for over a month despite NEA’s claim for providing adequate electricity to industries.

Good news for all concerned is that the snow has started melting and domestic electricity generation will likely increase from the next week. As the monsoon is approaching, Nepal will have surplus electricity within two months.

Whatever one can say, thanks to MD Kulman Ghising’s strategy Nepal has averted the prolonged power cut this time. Had not MD Ghising applied managerial skills dividing electricity between consumers and industrialists in an equitable manner, Nepal’s power cut would have been much worse than the present one.



## नेपाल राष्ट्र बैंकको अनुरोध

नेपालमा **Virtual Currency/Cryptocurrency** ले विदेशी विनिमय वा मुद्राको रूपमा कानुनी मान्यता नपाएको सन्दर्भमा उपर्युक्त बमोजिमका गैरकानुनी वित्तीय औजारमा आवद्ध भई कारोबार गर्दा सर्वसाधारण ठगिने तथा अवैधानिक तरिकाले रकम बाहिरिई स्वदेशी पूँजी पलायन हुने भएकाले त्यस्ता कारोबार वा व्यवसायमा संलग्न भई नेपालभित्र बसोबास गर्ने नेपाली तथा विदेशी नागरिक र विदेशमा बस्ने नेपाली नागरिकहरु समेतले त्यस्तो कार्य गरे/गराएको पाइएमा प्रचलित कानूनबमोजिम कारवाही हुने व्यहोरा सर्वसाधारण सबैको जानकारीका लागि अनुरोध छ ।

## CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

# Everywhere & Nowhere

*Nepal's constitutional bodies are yet to function as envisaged by the constitution*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Writing a constitution is one thing. However, its proper implementation in words and spirits is more important. Even seven years after the promulgation of a federal republican and inclusive constitution, Nepal is still nowhere near safeguarding and protecting the rights of the marginalized communities and guaranteeing their equal representation at all levels.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has declared Nepal as a federal state but the constitutional organs are still centralized. These bodies are yet to enjoy financial and other forms of autonomy. Known as fourth branches of government, the constitutional bodies are yet to be institutionalized as per the federal structure.

The constitution has created these bodies, called commissions,

to empower and protect the rights of marginalized, backward and disadvantaged communities. At the par with Executive, Judiciary and Legislature in terms of their functional independence and autonomy for check and balance, the 13 commissions, which can even work in close collaboration with civil society to democratize the society, are yet to reach the people and check the government as per their mandates.

The thirteen commissions include Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, Auditor General, Public Service Commission, Election Commission, National Human Rights Commission and National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission. However, National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission,

Madhesi Commission, Tharu Commission and Muslim commission are subject to review in 10 years.

Despite their enormous authority, these constitutional bodies are working as shadows of the federal executive. Appointed on the recommendation of the party in power, their chiefs are acting under the influence of political parties.

Out of 13 constitutional commissions, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, Election Commission, Attorney General, Human Rights Commission and Public Service Commission and National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commissions are active. However, the other six commissions which are constituted with a constitutional provision of review in 10 years are inactive and defunct.

Given this scenario, two research studies conducted by Professor Dr. Bipin Adhikari, Kathmandu University School of Law, have shown serious gaps and lapses in the process of implementation of the commissions' mandates.

The two studies, entitled Strengthening Constitutional Bodies for Democracy and Constitutionalism and Strengthening Election Commission in the Regulation of political parties, have revealed many functional and organizational lapses in protecting and promoting marginalized and oppressed communities and their representation in the state affairs.

"There is everything in the constitution. However, our problem is still in monitoring and implementation of the constitutional provisions







Adhikari.

“New constitutional bodies face additional hurdles in assuming their roles and responsibilities and in the relationship between the constitutional bodies and possible areas for coordination and collaboration. As the country transitions into federalism, much remains to be done to situate the constitutional bodies within the federal structure and establish and nourish the relationship with the sub-national governments as well as civil society organizations,” states Dr. Adhikari.

### Civil Society Voices

Commenting on the study, civil society leaders stressed the need to make the commissions more accountable and functional in their appointment process. They also shared the views that the commissions should be given autonomy for the appointment of their employees and on financial matters.

Civil society leaders also said that not just the appointees, the political leaders making the constitutional commission a place to recruit their party workers are also to blame.

Facilitator Purushottam

related to the constitutional bodies,” said Mohan Das Manandhar, Executive Director of Niti Foundation, a policy research organization. “There are problems in accountability, fairness and justice.”

At an event organized to share the study results with broader stakeholders including the officials from the constitutional bodies, civil society leaders working in the fields, journalists and political leaders, Professor Dr. Adhikari argued that declaring the country inclusive and distributing authority on an inclusive basis, Nepal’s Constitution has provided enormous protection to marginalized and backward communities.

“Along with other state organs, constitutional bodies are important to transform Nepal from an exclusive to an inclusive state. Despite having special constitutional provisions, the constitutional bodies are yet to be inclusive and federal in their forms.”

In his presentation, Professor Dr. Adhikari said that the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has created 13 independent constitutional bodies with specific mandates. Although some are traditional and others are new, they are created under the separation of powers as fourth-branch organs of the state

with the overall objective of democracy and constitutionalism.

“The role of constitutional bodies and their relationship to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches is yet to be as envisioned by the Constitution. This relationship requires further explication to ensure they are properly empowered to function independently and effectively,” said Dr. Adhikari.



“Fostering mutually supportive inter-body relations is critical so that the constitutional bodies can benefit from shared opportunities and confront common challenges,” said Dr.

Ghimire, Chairperson of Civil Society Organization, and former secretary Khem Raj Regmi shared views that fiscal independence and functional independence are key to making the



constitutional commissions effective and efficient. “It is unfortunate that no one has made any effort to make these institutions accountable. The report of Dr. Adhikari rightly pointed out the lapses.”

Participating in the debate, human rights defender Charan Prasai said political leaders are responsible for creating the current situation when all commissions are defunct due to constitutional controversy. “I cannot say this person is good or bad as all the appointees are our friends and colleagues. The apex court needs to give a verdict soon on the petitions regarding the appointment,” said Prasai. “The formation of other six additional commissions in the constitution is a result of the pressure of civil society. We need all these commissions to make state inclusive for the time being. However, the current method of nomination of officials in the commission is unacceptable.”

Civil society leaders argued that the commissions are neither a part of the executive nor any other organ of the state. They are independent and mandated by the constitution. To assert their independence, the commissions need to work in close collaboration with civil society organizations.

Senior advocate and rights activist Usha Malla Pathak suggested

the need to make reform in the existing legal system to make the commissions functional. “The appointment procedure of these commissions should be based on merit and quality. Federal parliament needs to take appropriate steps to prevent the wrong appointment.”

Senior advocate Pathak said that these commissions also need to create a situation to work in close collaboration with the civil society organization, province and local level. “They can go up to local levels to work with their report and nothing can prevent them.”

The situation, however, is frustrating. There is no working relationship among the constitutional bodies. “It is the nature of the constitutional bodies’ relationship and engagement with these key stakeholders that determine the extent to which the bodies can effectively look into their mandates,” said Dr. Adhikari.

Dr. Adhikari spoke of challenges the commissions face in engaging with the key stakeholders, including their financial independence and human resource independence. He also mentioned the problematic relationship with parliamentary committees (not taken seriously; sporadic or no discussion, etc) and relationship and engagement with other commissions

(lack of coordination mechanism).

“Since this is the first parliament after the promulgation of the new constitution and we have to pass several new laws and amend old ones, house committees were unable to hold dialogue with the commissions,” said Krishna Prasad Dahal, chairperson of the Fiscal Committee of Federal Parliament. “The situation will be different in coming parliament where a committee will invite and start queries on their annual reports.”

He also blamed the role of the speaker to make the committees defunct and inactive. “Except for Public Accounts Committee, all other committees are inactive due to the failure of the leadership of the speaker to give proper direction. Speaker is our leader and his leadership quality determines the quality of work of the committee,” said Dahal who invited the members and chair of the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission to discuss its annual report.

Babita Mishra, Joint Secretary, and Secretary of State Affairs and Good Governance, said that once the full house of parliament hands over the annual report to the committee, there is a provision to discuss it. “Law-making business consumed much of our time this time. Thus, the committees were unable to discuss the report.”

Secretary of Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee Laxman Aryal said that there is the need to have good communications between the commission and the Committees of the House of Representatives to strengthen the commission. He holds the view that there are no such kinds of relations.

“At a time when the government has no policy, strategies and plans for strengthening the commissions, the parliamentary committee can help them a lot. However, this is not happening because the committees are also working like a shadow of the government.”

### **Election Commission’s Path**

At a time when the com-





mittees in the federal parliament are giving no time to discuss the commission's report and give necessary guidance, the Election Commission has shown a way out.

The Commission took a decision within its legal and constitutional periphery forcing political parties to adhere to the elections code of conduct. The commission has strictly implemented the code of conduct even forcing elected officials to tender resignation to file the nominations.

The full implementation of the elections code of conduct will help in the future to reform the elections process preventing legally unwanted people to contest the elections. Despite lack of clarity in the elections laws, the Elections Commission, asserted a desirable role.

The commission in engagement with media and civil society organizations is able to pursue its agenda for elections reform. Election Commission exists as other independent constitutional bodies with specific mandates to conduct all the elections.

As per the law and constitution, the EC is the sole body to decide on the registration of the political parties. The commission has also been supporting making all political parties inclusive by deciding on registration on the basis of representation in the

party and its constitution.

National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission has also shown a way out to make it accountable to the people in absence of the supervision and monitoring by the oversight agencies like the Parliamentary committee.

"All the members of constitutional committees are appointed only after the completion of the hearing procedure in the House of Representatives. By constitution, law and practices, the commissions are accountable to the people through the parliament. Thus, it is the constitutional duty of the parliament to make commissions accountable to the people," said Balandndu Paudel, Chairperson of the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission. "If the parliamentary committees become active, everything will be changed. Till then, we also can reach to the people by using provincial parliament, local level, media and civil society organizations."

Murari Kharel, acting secretary of the Human Rights Commission, said that we all are weakening the constitutional bodies taking this and that side. As long as political leaders continue to have a mentality to nominate their own persons in the commissions nothing will change.

He said by taking this and

that side, civil society members and media are further weakening the Commission. All the commissions are defunct now due to a delay in taking the decision on the petition.

Deputy Auditor-General Ramu Dotel held the view that only by strengthening the constitutional commissions, our democracy will strengthen and it will be accountable. "The situation is not emerging in the right way now where the central government is trying to curtail the rights of the commissions. Civil society and media should come to save our autonomy and independence."

Wrapping up the two discussions, former law secretary Madhav Paudel said that even years after the promulgation of the constitution, the constitutional bodies are unable to perform their role as envisaged by the constitution.

He said that the active role of constitutional bodies is key to achieving the objective pursued in the preamble of the constitution to make Nepal an inclusive, federal state.

Paudel said that they are thus envisaged to play important roles to ensure the development and sustenance of the rule of law, an egalitarian society, social justice, social and cultural solidarity, federalism, multiparty democratic governance, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, adult franchise, and periodic elections.

He argued that commissioners also need to make themselves active in mobilizing media, civil society organizations, provincial-level legislature and local level.

The studies on strengthening the constitutional bodies for democracy and constitutionalism and strengthening the Election Commission in the regulation of political parties are the first ones looking into Nepal's constitutional commissions and their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

## E-COOKING

# Reduce LPGs

*Stakeholders urge Government to Waive taxes on electric cooking devices*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Government officials and activists agree on the need to provide tax waiver on appliances of eCooking to transform Nepali kitchen, promote cleaner energy and reduce dependency on imported LPG and traditional biomass based dirty energy.

The current data published by the Department of Customs show that Nepal imported LPG worth Rs.

increase clean energy.

Presenting the overall scenario of energy use Dilli Prasad Ghimire, General Secretary of Nepal Energy Foundation said that overwhelming 69 percent of the population still use traditional sources of energy for cooking followed by 6 percent renewable and 3 percent commercial. Out of this, 58.5 percent population are using

the improvement of current distribution system in the country. He demanded that the government must come up with clear strategy and packages.

Nepal imported Rs.46 billion equivalent vehicles, Rs. 35 billion equivalent mobiles, Rs. 2.5 billion alcohol, Rs. 2.5 billion cigarettes, Rs. 280 million cards, Rs. 27.48 billion gold and Rs. 900 mil-



45.34 billion in the last nine months hitting Nepal's dwindling foreign currency reserve.

Given the concern over Nepal's dwindling foreign currency reserve, activists urged the government to provide tax waiver to electric cooking appliances to promote clean cooking. They argued that just million rupees equivalent of tax waiver can save millions in foreign currency reserve.

In an interaction program organized by Nepal Energy Foundation on the theme Clean Energy in Cooking in the Coming Fiscal Budget and policy agenda, speakers highlighted how Nepal can achieve the goal set by the government to

firewood, LPG 9.4 percent and very small numbers of household or 3 percent of population have been using eCooking.

Nepal has already targeted to reduce use of LPG to 2 percent by 2030. For this the government has announced its policy to distribute 500,000 electric stoves to households by 2025. According to the policy, Nepal has also targeted to distribute additional 200,000 by 2028 to meet the Social Development Goals.

Ghimire, a well known eCooking activist, urged the government to take all necessary steps, including waiver in tax for electric cooking devices and investment in

lion hair oil.

Dr. Kundan Pokharel Magaiya, senior officer of Alternative Energy Promotion Center, said AEPC has been working for long in promoting clean energy supplying smokeless stoves, improved stoves and biogas.

He said that AEPC has already installed 450,000 biogas plants. "We are also planning to use liquid wastes and public toilets. AEPC has also installed the biogas plants in Central Prison and other such places to produce the clean energy. He said that there are possibilities to install 1.1 million biogas plants. He also said that AEPC has already distributed 1.4 million



smokeless stoves in the country and additional 3 million improved stoves on the process of distribution. He said that they have 22373 electric cookers.

Despite the constraint of the budget, AEPC is working to distribute electric cooking devices including induction, infrared and electric pressure cooker. AEPC has also been working with local levels, promoting eCooking.

Narayan Prasad Khatiwada, program director of National Planning Commission, said that ongoing 15<sup>th</sup> five-year plan is giving priority to promotion of eCooking and clean cooking. “eCooking is our priority area,” said Khatiwada.

At the event participated in by representatives from Ministry of Forest and Environment, National Planning Commission, Alternative Energy Promotion Center, Nepal Electricity Authority, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, media persons, persons representing the civil society organization involved in clean cooking campaigns, the first of its kind discussion focused on the budget and policy issues.

Under secretary from Ministry of Forest and Environment said that the government has already committed to clean and electric energy through its nationally



determined commitment presented to the UNFCC.

Sagar Mani Gyawali, engineer of NEA, said that there are over 5000 transformers in the country and they are enough to supply 3000 MW of electricity. He said that there are enough transformers to supply electricity in the current situation. What is required is just to turn present 2-phase electricity supply to 3-phase.

He also warned that distributing induction rampantly without analyzing the capacity for distribution and wiring may invite disaster and it is highly risky as well. There need to address safety issue.

At a time when Maoist Center in its political manifesto announced to provide incentive to

step should be to waive the VAT for clean cooking devices.

“Waiver of VAT will surely help to promote eCooking Appliances,” said Mohan Das Manandhar. We have been making all out efforts to convince the Ministry of Finance to take this decision.”

General secretary of Nepal Energy Foundation Dilli Prasad Ghimire presented the paper showing the state of electric cooking, constitutional provision, legal and regulation and status of eCooking.

Narayan Gyawali, chairperson of National Association of Community Electricity Users-Nepal, (NACEUN), demanded policy level change and tax waiver in the forthcoming budget.

Karuna Bajrachaya from Clean Cooking said that there is the need raise the awareness regarding the benefit of use of Electric cooking. She said that traditional source energy is affecting the health of children and women. “Given current state of deteriorating environment and impact of climate change, electric cooking has no alternatives.”

As the government is preparing the budget searching the way to reduce the dependency on LPG, the suggestions given by the interactions is highly valuable and helpful for policy making.



clean cooking and Finance Minister Jannardan Sharma Prabhakar and Energy Minister Pampha Bhusal have been publicly expressing their commitment to the clean cooking energy, the first



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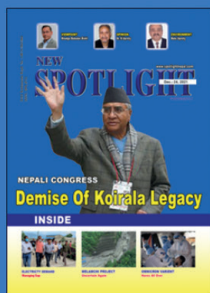


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