

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



FORUM
Park Tae-Young



ENVIRONMENT
Batu Uprety



VIEWPOINT
Rishav Upadhyaya

NEW
SPOTLIGHT
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Mar. 29, 2024
FORTNIGHTLY

LOSS AND DAMAGE
Upper Tamakoshi A Case

INSIDE



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Mohan Prasad Gautam



NEPAL BRITAIN SOCIETY
Pratima Pande's Leadership



VISIT OF KFW AND EIB TO NEPAL
Mission Matters

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हिमाल आयरन एण्ड स्टील (प्रा.) लि. | ज्योति भवन, १९१९ कान्तिपथ, पो.ब.नं. १३३, काठमाडौं | फोन: ४२२५२३०, ४२२६५३० (मार्केटिङ्ग) | फ्याक्स: ४२२६३१४ | www.himalsteel.com.np



Vol.: 17, No.:16, March-29, 2024
(Chaitra- 16, 2080) Price NRs.100

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Kathmandu DAO Regd. No.

148/11/063/64

Central Region Postal Regd.

No. 36/067/068

US Library of Congress Catalogue

No. 91-905060, ISSN : 2091-0711

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

Printing

Megha Offset Printing Press P. Ltd.,

Dhapasi, Kathmandu

Tel. : 977-1-4363624

Despite the ongoing instability in Nepal, there are no signs of stability in the near future. The frequent changes in government are expected to continue. Recent statements from Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and his new ruling communist ally KP Sharma Oli indicate that political instability will persist. Nepal's adoption of a mixed election system for federal and provincial elections has made it difficult for any single party to achieve a majority. As a result, a hung parliament and coalition governments consisting of three or four parties are likely to become a reality. Some intellectuals and political leaders are calling for electoral process reforms, including the implementation of a directly elected executive. However, with Nepal's limited experience in modern democratic exercises and its agro-based social structures, finding a solution to this issue is challenging. Instead of focusing on an unstable government, it is important to address the losses and damages caused by this instability. Nepal has been experiencing frequent changes in weather patterns over the past four years, leading to fluctuations in the volume of water in rivers due to changing precipitation. During the summer, the volume of water is higher compared to previous years, but it decreases to one-third during the dry season. This has already started to impact Nepal's largest hydropower project, the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi, and other hydropower projects are facing similar challenges. As a result, companies have to pay penalties to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). The production of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) has significantly declined, and they are unable to deliver the agreed-upon electricity. Like the Upper Tamakoshi project, all IPPs are also facing penalties. It is crucial for Nepal to initiate a debate on how to present its case in the international arena and secure funding for addressing these issues.

Keshab Poudel

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Nepal Chamber Expo 2024 Is Significant Event Soster Closer Economic Tie Between Korea And Nepal



BY: PARK TAE-YOUNG

It is an honor and a privilege to address you today on behalf of the Republic of Korea as we gather to celebrate the opening ceremony of the Nepal Chamber Expo 2024 organized by Nepal Chamber of Commerce, one of the most powerful business associations in Nepal.

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to NCC for organizing this prestigious event. It brings together entrepreneurs, innovators, and industry leaders. The Chamber Expo not only fosters meaningful exchanges and collaborations that are vital for driving economic growth and prosperity, but also provides a platform for showcasing the best of our respective economies.

The theme of this year's Expo, 'Bringing Trade and Business Together: Global Opportunities' is particularly significant as Nepal is at a crucial juncture in actively promoting economic development in the face of global challenges and opportunities.

I am delighted to see Korea taking center stage as the 'FOCUS Country' at this year's Chamber Expo. Well-known Korean companies such as Samsung, KOEN (Korea South-East Power co.), Korean Air, which are very active in Nepal, are participating this Expo. The KOREA Pavilion representing Korea's businesses in Nepal offers a unique opportunity for networking with Nepal's many companies, providing invaluable channels for building partnerships and exploring collaboration opportunities in Nepal. This spotlight on Korea underscores the commitment of both our countries to foster closer economic ties and create an environment conducive to cross-border trade and investment.

cive to cross-border trade and investment.

This year, as we mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between our two countries this year, this event serves as a testament to the enduring strength of our bilateral relations and the immense potential for further economic cooperation. Over the past 50 years, our countries have made significant outcomes in fostering economic partnership, facilitating trade, and encouraging investment flows.

However, there is still much untapped potential waiting to be explored. Also EPS has been fostering the solid foundation between Nepal and Korea.

I am confident that events like the Chamber Expo will not only deepen our economic ties but also enhance mutual understanding and friendship between our nations. As we embark on the next chapter

of our bilateral relations, let us seize the opportunities before us and strive to build a future of shared prosperity and cooperation.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to NCC for their warm hospitality and tireless efforts in organizing this Expo. On the occasion of marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties, I, as Korean Ambassador, will continue to work closely with the Nepal Government and entrepreneurs to promote such economic cooperation between the two countries. I hope this expo very successful and fruitful.

Park Tae-Young is the ambassador of Korea to Nepal. Excerpts of the statement delivered at Nepal Chamber Expo 2024.

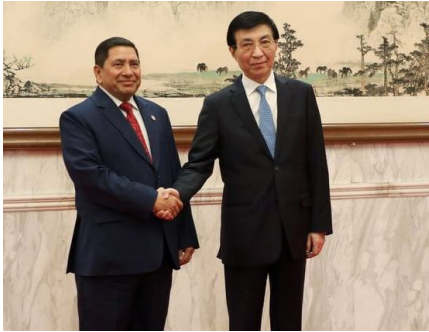


NEWSNOTES

DPM Shrestha And CPPCC Chair Wang Huning Discussed Nepal, China Relations

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayankaji Shrestha, who is on an official visit to China, is busy with political meetings.

A bilateral meeting was held between Shrestha and Chinese Communist Party Standing Committee member and Wang Huning, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).



According to the Foreign Minister's Secretariat, during the meeting held on Monday afternoon at the State Guest House in Beijing, bilateral interests as well as various aspects of economic and social development were discussed between them.

Foreign Minister Shrestha reminded that China and Nepal have been good friends for centuries and said that Nepal is committed to the One China principle.

Stating that Nepal is focused on economic development behind political change, Foreign Minister Shrestha assured that Chinese cooperation will be important in Nepal's journey to economic prosperity. Appreciating China's support for Nepal's development, he hoped that Chinese support would increase in the future.

Shrestha asked for support for the re-operation of 14 traditional checkpoints on the Nepal-China border. Reminding that Nepal has facilitated the entry permit (visa) for Chinese tourists, he urged Nepali citizens to make easy arrangements for entering China.

CPPCC Chairman Huning said that China and Nepal are not only countries connected by the Himalayas and rivers, but also as members of the same family.

He said that the high-level visits from both countries have strengthened the relationship between the two countries. Making it clear that China will not interfere in Nepal's internal affairs, CPPCC Chairman Huning said that China will strongly support the decision taken by Nepal for the prosperity of its country.

He said that both China and Nepal should move together in the direction of economic prosperity.

Nepali Ambassador to China Bishnupokar Shrestha, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Krishna Dhakal, Personal Secretary of Shrestha Sureshkaji Shrestha, Deputy Chief of Courtesy Uttam Kumar Shahi, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Nepali Embassy in Beijing Surendra Yadav and others participated in the meeting.

The Chinese delegation was attended by high-level

officials of the Chinese Communist Party, including Huning.

Ambassador Kikuta Encouraged New Japanese Government Scholarship Students

Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Ambassador Kikuta congratulated the successfully selected MEXT scholarship students and expressed his hope that they would make their best efforts in good learning environment in Japan.

The Ambassador also encouraged the students to venture out of the university to experience various aspects of Japanese culture, make Japanese friends, and deeply understand the spirit of Japanese people.

He stated that he believes that with the knowledge, experience, and Japanese spirit thus acquired, the students will contribute to Nepal's development and play an important role in Japan-Nepal relations in the future.

Ambassador Kikuta hosted a send-off party for Nepali students who will be studying in Japan under the Scholarship offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan, at his Residence.

The Government of Japan offers this no-need-pay-back scholarship to international students to pursue higher studies in Japan for undergraduate, graduate, specialized training college students, and teachers.

Japan started selection of Nepali students in 1957, just one year after the establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

This spring, a total of 7 Nepali students - 2 for undergraduate, 3 for master's and 2 for doctoral degree - will be proceeding to Japan to obtain their degrees.

Dr. Sunil Babu Shrestha, the president of Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN) also offered fruitful advice to the students about life and university in Japan, as he himself had experienced them.

The Embassy is confident that these young scholars will serve as a bridge between Japan and Nepal and contribute to further strengthening mutual understanding, friendship, and cooperation between the two countries.

Nepal And German Discuss On Matter Related To Bilateral Ties

Erik Kurzweil, Ambassador, Indo-Pacific Policy, South Asia and Afghanistan at the German Federal Foreign



Office and Mr. Ganesh Prasad Dhakal, Joint Secretary at the Nepal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, concluded a Political Consultation Meeting in Kathmandu on 20th March.

Several matters related to bilateral ties between the two countries, including the invitation of President Ram Chandra Paudel to Germany, Nepal's Graduation from LDC, Cooperation in Climate Change and Energy Sector, Peace Process, Democracy and Social Inclusion, Cooperation in the cultural field, Visa Permits and Working Status for German NGOs, were discussed at the consultation meeting.



tory by the Russian government, its pledge to democracy, social inclusion and the peace process.

Germany and Nepal, this year, signed a Financial and Technical Cooperation Agreement with a grant totaling 56 million euro. The grant assistance pledges to work in the areas of renewable energy, energy infrastructure, gender equality, maternal care and childcare, quality infrastructure for sustainable economic development, health, and local and provincial economic development.

The meeting ended with pledges from both the governments to increase cooperation, find areas of mutual benefits and continue to build a strong partnership.

“Nepal and Germany established diplomatic relations in 1958,” Ambassador Kurzweil noted. “Despite the geographical distance, our friendship is strong through shared values of democracy, inclusion, and equality.”

“Germany has been a true friend to Nepal. Their unwavering support, particularly during the devastating earthquake of 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic, is deeply appreciated by the Nepali people,” Dhakal expressed.

Japan Hands Over The Training Center and Emergency Shelter In Rautahat District

The handover ceremony of an emergency shelter and training center to the Community Development Center (CDC) was held in Durga Bhagwati Rural Municipality, Rautahat District.

The new building was constructed through the Project for the Construction of an Emergency Shelter Facility and Training Center in Rautahat District with the assistance of USD 78,414 (approximately NPR 9.15 million) under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security

Projects (GGP) of the Government of Japan.

T a m u r a Takahiro, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Japan in Nepal, attended the ceremony and congratulated and expressed his



appreciation for the efforts of all those involved in the project. He also expressed his hope that the facility will contribute to the further development of the community.

This project was implemented by CDC, which was established in 1998 and has been providing disaster preparedness training, vocational training, and educational support for children in the district. The project site is located at the confluence of the Bagmati River and its tributaries in a flood-prone area. However, residents faced a lack of adequate emergency evacuation facilities.

Nepal-EU 15th Joint Commission Meeting Concluded

The European Union and Nepal held their 15th meeting of the Joint Commission (JC) in Kathmandu on 19 March. They discussed a broad range of issues of mutual interest during the meeting. The EU and Nepal are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations this year.

The EU and Nepal reiterated their commitment to work together in upholding democracy and human rights, promoting good governance, realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting investment, and coping against global challenges such as climate change. Nepal highlighted achievements and bottlenecks in the realization of SDGs.

The EU welcomed Nepal's Transition Strategy to graduate from LDC status and expressed their commitment to continue their cooperation through the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP).

The EU and Nepal reviewed the progress of EU's development cooperation in various sectors. The meeting acknowledged the Sub-commission meeting on development cooperation held on 6 March. Nepal welcomed the EU's MIP for the term 2021-2027. Nepal also appreciated the MIP for aligning with the plans and priorities of the Government of Nepal.



NEWSNOTES

On regional and multilateral processes, the EU and Nepal discussed about SAARC and BIMSTEC. They underlined the importance of effective multilateral co-operation. The EU praised Nepal's contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations. The EU and Nepal reaffirmed their commitments to cooperate within the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and other global fora to promote effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order.

Human rights including social inclusion were also discussed at the meeting. Nepal reaffirmed its commitment to upholding human rights and concluding transitional justice as soon as possible. The EU expressed hope on the early conclusion of Nepal's peace process.

They both unanimously agreed that corruption, including money laundering and financing of terrorism, is a major impediment to sustainable development. The EU took note of Nepal's ongoing legislative efforts and underlined the importance of compliance and enforcement.

The EU commended Nepal's remarkable strides on inclusive participation and women empowerment. Both sides praised the EU flagship action "Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal", launched last year by the EU and the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens of Nepal. The EU commended Nepal for the child grant schemes and encouraged its expansion.

The EU appreciated the achievements made by Nepal in its socio-economic transformation. The EU and Nepal appraised the recent developments in upholding the democratic processes and institutions, and stressed the important role of civil society and media for strengthening democracy and good governance.

Nepal underlined their multiple vulnerabilities of natural disasters, exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, and discussed climate adaptation finance. The EU complimented Nepal for its position on Climate Change and the 'Mountain Agenda' during COP28 and also on its ambitious goal of reaching net zero carbon status by 2045.

The Nepali side expressed gratitude for the EU's generous assistance following the Jajarkot earthquake, in post-earthquake resilient reconstruction and recovery efforts, and appreciated the cooperative partnership in disaster risk reduction.

The EU and Nepal exchanged their views on bilateral trade relations, including the criteria for acceding to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+).

Nepal expressed appreciation for the exchanges under the Erasmus+ programme, and the scholarships offered for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programmes, including people-to-people contacts.

Rising Religious Fundamentalism In India Poses A Threat To Nepal's Secularism: Former PM Dr. Bhattarai

Former President and Former Prime Minister of

Nepal express concern over the growing religious fundamentalism in India, which poses a threat to secularism and liberal democracy.

During a discussion program at Kathmandu University's School of Management, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the former Prime Minister of Nepal, expressed his concerns about the impact of religious federalism in India on Nepal's secular, republican democracy.

As a special guest at the event, he proudly mentioned his affiliation with Jawaharlal Nehru University, which played a significant role in shaping his beliefs in democracy, secularism, and revolution.

Addressing the controversial initiative he took to form an Eminent Persons Group, Dr. Bhattarai justified the need to review Nepal-India relations, including the 1950 Treaty and the open border. He argued that the treaty, signed by an autocratic Prime Minister and the Indian ambassador, was unequal and called for a new relationship based on sovereign equality. He also made it clear that he respects and acknowledges India's security concerns.

He asserted that the surge of fundamentalism in India would have an impact on the political landscape of Nepal. He noted that there are already signs indicating this.

Professor S.D. Muni attributed the authorship of the book to his students, friends, and well-wishers, giving them credit. He mentioned that he has been visiting Nepal since 1968 as a Ph.D. scholar. Professor Muni clarified that the book is a memoir rather than an academic piece.

A significant number of individuals attended the event, including professors, scholars, students, and former diplomats. Professor Dr. Lok Raj Baral, serving as the chair, provided concluding remarks.

Dr. Baral highlighted Professor Muni's renowned contributions to the region, acknowledged not only in Nepal and India but also in other parts of South Asia. The book encompasses the political dynamics, foreign policy, and security concerns of India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, with an expansion to include Laos and Cambodia.



Japan Hands Over The Sanitary Napkin Making Machine In Parsa District

The hand-over ceremony of the sanitary napkin making machine



to the Centre for Health and Environment Conservation (CHEC) Nepal was held in Birgunj Municipality, Parsa District on March 22, 2024. The installed machine was provided through the Project for the Installation of Sanitary Napkin Making Machine in Parsa District with the assistance of USD 34,964 (approximately NPR 4 million) under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Government of Japan.

TAMURA Takahiro, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Japan in Nepal, attended the ceremony and congratulated and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of all those involved in the project. He also expressed his hope that the school girls and female people will have easy access to sanitary products, and that it will contribute to the improvement of personal hygiene knowledge and further development of the community.

CHEC Nepal, which implemented this project, was established in 2009 and has been conducting health and hygiene improvement programs in public schools as well as environmental conservation activities in Parsa District.

Many of the people living in poverty face various problems related to hygiene, including difficulties in accessing sanitary products and lack of knowledge about hygiene. The sanitary napkins produced by the newly installed machines will be distributed at low or no cost in public schools and health posts, and together with awareness activities by CHEC Nepal, will lead to a healthier life for the people in this area.

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

Handful Of Countries Are Spreading False Rumor Of Debt Trap In Pokhara International Airport: Chinese Embassy Spokesperson

The Chinese Embassy in Nepal has denied that Pokhara Airport has been discussed as ‘debt trap diplomacy’. The spokesperson of the Chinese embassy, Yu, has claimed that no cooperation partner has accused China of creating a debt trap.

Spokesperson Yu says, ‘They are a handful of countries that are spreading the illusion of a Chinese debt trap. ‘Pokhara Airport is the third international airport of Nepal. The airport, which was officially inaugurated on January 1, 2023, has not yet been put into operation. This airport was built by China CAMC Engineering Company.

In a question Pokhara Airport is likely to Cause Debt Problems for Nepal. With no Schedule international flights arriving at the airport, many Nepali say they are worried that the country will default on the loan provided by China to build the airport. Some Indian media have called this an example of China’s “Debt Trap Diplomacy”. What is your response to this? spokesperson said

An agreement of 216 million US dollars has been

signed between Nepal and China for the project. And, 25 percent of the total cost is grant aid, while the remaining 75 percent of the cost is in loans at 2 percent interest. In 2016, a 20-year contract was signed for the project and Nepal will borrow the remaining amount from the Export-Import Bank of China.



Nepal has agreed to start repaying the debt in 2026. The airport, which was opened a year ago, had only charter flights from China. India has not yet provided international air routes for Pokhara Airport and Gautam Budh International Airport.

In response, the embassy spokesperson said that China is always committed to providing more direct flights from China to Pokhara in the international flights mentioned by the questioner, and charter flights from Chengdu and Kunming to Pokhara have already been implemented.

“Rather than some countries speaking for the development of Nepal’s tourism and aviation, I would like to emphasize that it is more appropriate to join hands with China instead of creating obstacles for more international flights and airport operations in Pokhara,” said the spokesperson.

Ambassador Of Thailand To Nepal Present Credential

Newly appointed Ambassador of Thailand to Nepal Suwapong Sirisorn submitted his credentials to President Ramchandra Poudel amid a special function at Presidential office.

Similarly, four Non-resident ambassadors of Portugal, Venezuela and Mongolia to Nepal submitted their credentials to President Ramchandra Paudel today.

During a special ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Ambassador of Thailand Suwapong Sirisorn, Ambassador of Portugal Joao Manuel Mendes Ribeiro de Almeida, Ambassador of Venezuela Capaya Rodriguez Gonzalez and Ambassador of Mongolia Gansbold Dambajav presented their credentials to President Paudel.



BUSINESS BRIEF

FNCCI President Dhakal Requests AIIB To Invest In Nepal

In a meeting between the board officials of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and private sector representatives in Chandragiri on Tuesday, Chandra Dhakal, President of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry requested the AIIB to invest in Nepal.



The meeting specifically dealt with exploring potential investment opportunities in Nepal across various sectors. Talks were also held on how AIIB could contribute the most in sectors like transportation, energy and urban development, among others. Discussions were

held on how the private sector could contribute to the sustainable development of Nepal.

While presenting his views, FNCCI President Dhakal mentioned that Nepal is a country with immense potential for growth and development. He informed the AIIB board officials that the private sector is eager to leverage this potential through strategic partnerships with organisations like AIIB. Dhakal also said that Nepal is strategically located between two economic giants, India and China, which means Nepal can provide easy market access to goods produced in Nepal to two of the world's biggest markets.

Dhakal highlighted that there are investment opportunities in infrastructure, energy, tourism and agriculture in Nepal. He also informed the officials about the external sector stability that Nepal has achieved. He mentioned that the country is now focused on improving domestic consumption. He said AIIB has already been a key partner in several important projects in Nepal, and we are eager to explore new avenues for collaboration.

FNCCI President Dhakal also informed the board officials of AIIB that the Nepali government is in the process of amending 12 Acts so as to improve the investment climate of the country. He stated the government is serious about streamlining processes and regulations to create a better 'doing business' climate. He further apprised the officials of the government's plans to sign bilateral investment agreements with potential countries. Dhakal said the framework for the bilateral investment agreement is expected to be finalised soon.

Further talking about investments, Dhakal informed the officials about the Nepal Investment Summit which is scheduled for April 28-29. He requested the AIIB delegation to disseminate this information to all member nations. The good aspect of the Investment Summit this time is that the private sector too has been included as co-organisers, he stated.

Dhakal also mentioned that the private sector of Nepal has been leading the country's economic development and will continue doing so in the future. As president of FNCCI, I can assure you that we will leave no stone unturned for the socio-economic development of Nepal, he said. He said the private sector has always finished its projects in time and of quality. He added the private sector is now looking for more cooperation and collaboration with institutions like AIIB.

During the meeting, board officials of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), government officials and private sector representatives were present.

Chinese Ambassador Assured Finance Minister Pun To Start Second Phase Of Ring Road Expansion Soon

Chinese ambassador Chen Song called on Finance Minister Barshaman Pun on Tuesday. According to the Minister's Secretariat, the discussion revolved around bilateral cooperation and mutual interests.

During the meeting, Minister Pun urged the Chinese side to expedite Chinese-funded development projects in Nepal, expressing his hope for rapid progress in these projects. He praised China's economic development and measures against poverty alleviation, suggesting Nepal could learn from China's experience.

He assured of prompt progress in implementing the second cluster of the Ring Road expansion project funded by China, including the construction of the 220KV Jilong-Kerung-Rasuwagadhi-Chilime transnational transmission line.

Minister Pun also inquired about progress regarding the feasibility study for the 'Cross Himalaya Railway' project agreed upon during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's China visit in September last year. As he said, the railway project remains a 'dream project' for Nepali citizens and urged its prompt implementation from the Chinese side.



Expressing gratitude for China's decision to operate Tapani and Rasuwagadhi transit points regularly, Minister Pun called for the opening of other transit points along the Nepal-China border. He hoped for quick completion of the feasibility study regarding the Tokha-Chhahare Tunnel Way, a priority project for Nepal.

113 MW Nilgirikhola Hydropower Is Ready To Supply Electricity To National Grid

The 113 MW Nilgiri Hydropower Project, under the leadership of banker Prithvi Bahadur Pandey, is set to provide electricity to the national grid.

The project comprises two cascades, namely the 42 MW Nilgiri I and the 71 MW Nilgiri II. A portion of the 113 MW capacity, specifically 71 MW from the Nilgiri hydropower project, will soon be connected to the national grid.

The 'Nilgirikhola 2nd Hydropower Project' has successfully completed physical construction and testing, boasting a capacity of 71 MW. The 'Nilgiri I', with a capacity of 42 MW, is also nearing completion and is expected to be finished by May.

Despite encountering some issues with the turbine of Nilgiri I, the second turbine has passed the testing phase. The project is currently in the final stages of preparing to transmit 71 MW of electricity through the national grid.

This electricity will be distributed via a 220 kV capacity transmission line stretching from Dobhilna to Dana's national grid. Notably, the cost per MW of this project is Rs. 140 million lower than the current rate of Rs. 200 million per MW.

The project, situated on the Nilgiri river, is estimated to have a total cost of 15.82 billion rupees. While commercial generation is commencing shortly, there are no plans to issue an IPO to the



general public at this time.

A 7.4 km long transmission line, operating at 220 kV, has been constructed from Chotepa, the site of the first power plant of Nilgiri Khola. The dam, tunnel, power house, transmission line, and switchyard underwent testing in collaboration with the Nepal Electricity Authority. The descender (sand settling pond) at Chotepa was tested by filling it with water. Furthermore, a 4,275 meter long tunnel has been built from Chotepa to the power plant in Dovelna.

The tunnel construction began in 2018 and underwent 5 audits, encompassing the power plant and dam of Chotepa. The structure was designed to divert water from the 42 MW Nilgiri first power plant into the 2000-meter-long Nilgiri Cascade tunnel.

FNCCI President Dhakal Meets UAE, Mongolian Ambassadors Requests For Investment promotion In Nepal

In a meeting with the ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates and Mongolia, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, requested the respective ambassadors for support in promoting investment in Nepal.

Dhakal met with UAE Ambassador Abdulla Al Shamsi and Mongolian Ambassador to India who is concurrently accredited to Nepal, His Excellency Ganbold Dambajav, on Wednesday. He also requested them for their participation in the Nepal Investment Summit that is scheduled for April 28-29 in Kathmandu. The discussions centred around enhancing bilateral trade and investment ties between Nepal and these two nations.



During the meeting with the UAE ambassador, President Dhakal thanked His Excellency for his support in organising the Nepal Dubai Business Summit that was held in November in Dubai with the support of embassies of both the countries.

He also informed the ambassador of the vast investment potential that Nepal holds. During the meeting His Excellency Abdulla Al Shamsi also spoke about his interest and the possibility of signing a bilateral investment agreement between UAE and Nepal.

Nepal European Union Film Festival 2024: ‘Celebrating Cultural Diversity’

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal is back again with its 13th edition of Nepal European Union Film Festival 2024 (2024 NEUFF) with the theme “Fifty Years of EU-Nepal Relations: Celebrating Cultural Diversity.” This year’s festival is part of a series of events to mark the 50th anniversary of EU-Nepal diplomatic relations.

The opening of the 2024 NEUFF will take place at the CDC Cinemas, CTC Mall in Sundhara Kathmandu on 20 March and continue until 23 March in the same venue. Upsana Singh Thakuri has been selected as the brand ambassador for this year’s Nepal European Union Film Festival (NEUFF).

Participation in the opening day of the film festival is by invitation only while other festival days will be open to the public. The award winning film ‘The Banshees of Inisherin’ directed by Martin McDonagh will be screened on the opening day along with a Nepali film ‘Dhye Dreams’ directed by Shanta Nepali.

Our avid viewers and supporters need not be worried about

missing the opening film as there will be a second screening of ‘The Banshees of Inisherin’ on 22nd March at 1:30 pm. This film with several international awards to its credit is a simple but impactful plot delivered with the most beautiful and serene backdrop of the Irish countryside.



Each screening of the festival will have a ‘double bill’, one Nepali and one European film. A short film competition for young Nepali filmmakers was organised to select films for the festival. The director of the winning film along with one other young director, who are yet to be selected by the EU Delegation to Nepal will be travelling to Brussels in autumn to participate in a mirror festival of Nepali films. The ten Nepali films for the festival were selected through a film competition, which received a large number of entries from young filmmakers.

“I am happy to share the diverse culture, lifestyle and cinematic creativity of Europe with the Nepali audience in Kathmandu, Lumbini, Karnali and Sudurpaschim as we mark the 50 years of EU-Nepal diplomatic relations,” said Dr. Joelle HIVONNET, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal.

PM Requests AIIB To Extend Loans At Subsidised Rates

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ has requested the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a multilateral development bank, to embrace a policy for concessional rate of credit for Nepal.

During a courtesy call by a delegation led by the director of AIIB, which is currently Nepal, Prime Minister Prachanda said that it would be difficult for a country like Nepal to get loans at market rate interest because there is no concessional provision in AIIB.

“Nepal still needs more concession on loans, but AIIB does not have such a provision,” Prime Minister Prachanda said, “The market rate has limited Nepal’s access to finance from AIIB. I urge you, as policymakers, to reconsider.”

Stating that the government is focusing on good governance and institutional development, social justice and prosperity through high economic growth, Prime Minister Prachanda said that he expects the bank’s support in financial management, technical assistance, knowledge sharing and capital mobilisation towards this end.



The Wire Without A Current



BY: BATU UPRETY

Unilateral socio-economic development accelerated consumption of pristine natural resources. Fossil fuel-based industrial development, transportation and infrastructures increased environmental pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Pollution accelerated risks and threats to human health and pollution-induced death compelled human being to clean its mess to protect life and its supporting system. Concerns on the need for protecting environmental resources for ‘human survival’ took appropriate rooting in the 1970s.

Rich countries initiated a process to make the socio-economic and infrastructure development environment-friendly. They developed a tool, popularly known as Environmental Assessment (EA) - Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or other forms of assessment - to assess impacts of a project on the environment. This is a ‘predictive’ tool that uses science in identifying, predicting, and evaluating impacts and selecting measures to avoid, reduce or compensate impacts, and an art in managing those impacts and measures. Effective implementation of this tool has contributed to make the development and infrastructure environment-friendly in several countries. However, this tool has been made complicated in Nepal over the years.

Nearly three decades of experience in legally approving IEE and EIA report of the prescribed projects informs mixing of identified and predicted impacts, and non-evaluation of their significance. Measures proposed to offset environmental impacts look generic. EA reports neither include impacts that are

grouped into identified, predicted, and evaluated nor measures that are specified for avoiding, mitigating, or compensating the adverse impacts. Similar situation exists on compliance and impact monitoring.

Nepal’s EA report follows the formats as prescribed in the Environment Protection Rule (2020). The report not only includes benefits augmentation and adverse impacts mitigation measures but also provisions for environmental monitoring and auditing. However, state of implementation of EA reports of several projects is unclear. Continuous repetition of similar impacts and measures in projects of different ecological zones undermines the area- and resource-specific impacts and practical measures. Limited or non-implementation of measures does not inform their effectiveness. Nepal has completed ‘fitting of wires’, that is, preparation and approval of EA report of the prescribed projects by complying with the legal provisions, but ‘current is yet to release for the proper use of the wire’. It means legally approved EA reports must be implemented to enjoy the benefits of this tool.

Many countries, bilateral and multilateral agencies have institutionalised the need for ensuring environmental safeguards. The safeguards can be ensured through EAs. In Nepal, Environment Protection Act, 2019 (which repealed 1996 Act) and its Rules (2020) prescribes details on type and approval of project level EAs. In addition, projects to be implemented with support from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank should comply with the national legal requirements and their environmental safeguard provisions. The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB)

has issued a Guideline on Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM) for Banks and Financial Institution in February 2022. This guideline urges, inter alia, to implement environmental and social management system. NRB has included monitoring and control provision in its guideline to ensure appropriate risk mitigation measures in lending portfolio and avoid financial transactions that result to unacceptable environmental and social impacts.

Several funding agencies, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF), have introduced environmental safeguards for their funded projects. These global and national initiatives in making development projects environment and climate-friendly are sufficiently grounded but again implementation of these provisions indicate that ‘best wiring is completed in a building’ but ‘current is unavailable’

which makes the building dark. Nearly three decades of experience in using EA tool legally rather provides several examples of non-implementation of environmental safeguard measures. Several projects have not complied with the environmental provisions, and project-induced environmental degradation is increasing.

Project-based EA reports must be location-specific and factual. EA report must include project-specific impacts with practical mitigation measures which should be implemented, monitored, and audited. Environmental monitoring and auditing provide the state of compliance and effectiveness of measures. Knowledge on timing of impacts happened and effectiveness of measures helps to rectify impacts in similar projects.

Increasing trend of implementing environmentally sensitive projects within the national parks

and wildlife reserve, in forests of scientific and ecological importance, and within cultural and historical sites has accelerated threats to natural and cultural resources. If the government intends to implement environmentally sensitive infrastructure and other projects within a national park, it can degazette the national park, and implement the project. Competent authorities should understand the importance of national parks and wildlife reserves. Recalling the case of East



Rapti Irrigation Project (ERIP) planned for Rapti River diversion near the Chitwan National Park, EIA study recommended to reformulate the project and proposed for farmer’s managed irrigation scheme rather than diverting the Rapti river by a constructing a dam. Conserva-

tion NGO in late 1980s during Panchayat regime were instrumental in stopping the river water diversion that affects the national park. In recent years, conservation NGOs in Nepal are silent about the proposed construction of an airport in a pristine forest, and a dam and water infrastructures in the national park etc. Approach of benefitting from privatising the public resources, including footpath prevails in Nepal.

EA does not block the development but makes every effort to make it environment-friendly and sustainable. Although EA is deeply and legally rooted in Nepal for the prescribed projects, four and half-decades of involvement in advancing its use compelled to think EA for Nepal a ‘wire without a current’.

Gender Based Or Gender Biased

Transitional justice mechanisms exhibit various shortcomings, such as the inadequate addressing of gender-based violations and concerns, particularly those impacting women.

By Keshab Poudel

In the final week of January 2024, a group of women who had been raped and sexually assaulted during the conflict period by security forces and Maoist rebels engaged in discussions with leaders of four major political parties, representatives of Kathmandu-based diplomatic missions, officials from the United Nations, representatives of rights groups, and members of the media. They recounted their experiences and the anguish of being female victims of the conflict. Numerous women who had been victimized shared their harrowing stories of the atrocities committed by both Maoist rebels and government forces.

They contended that the peace process could not be fully established until women's dignity and self-respect were reinstated through justice. The women victims also expressed dissatisfaction that only a limited number of cases had been filed with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and questioned the reasons behind the exclusion of other cases. They highlighted that the current system was not conducive to supporting women victims. Many victims opted not to report their ordeals out of fear of reprisal if their identities were disclosed. Despite the courage shown by a few women who shared their stories, it is imperative to address the specific needs of female victims to ensure the effectiveness of the transitional justice system.

The Commission for Investigation, Verification, and Reconciliation of Disappeared Persons Act

Amendment Bill, which was enacted in 2071 BS, was under review by the House of Representatives committee during the interaction program. Women participating in the program demanded that the amendment bill incorporate provisions that prioritize the rights and dignity of women victims.

Multiple organizations are dedicated to addressing the concerns of women affected by conflict. The Conflict Victim Women National Network actively campaigns for justice on behalf of these women. This network comprises various other organizations that are committed to raising awareness about the challenges faced by women victims, such as widows, survivors of rape, and those who have experienced other forms of sexual assault.

Bandana Ran, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), has also been supporting victims of conflict raising the issues in their favor at national and international forum. Her effort is to make the transitional justice system gender friendly and women friendly.

Between 1996 and 2006, both the security forces and the rebels of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) committed severe human rights violations and abuses that qualify as international crimes. These acts included unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and various forms of sexual violence, including rape.

According to a report released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the

decade-long conflict may have witnessed around 9,000 serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The conflict resulted in approximately 13,000 deaths and at least 1,300 enforced disappearances, with women comprising one third of the victims.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed on November 21, 2006, marking the end of the armed conflict. The conflicting parties committed to pursuing truth, addressing impunity, and providing assistance to the conflict victims. However, the fate and whereabouts of many individuals affected by the conflict remain unknown to this day.

Transitional justice mechanisms exhibit various shortcomings, such as the inadequate addressing of gender-based violations and concerns, particularly those impacting women. These processes have perpetuated and strengthened the marginalized position of women, a characteristic of the conflict itself. Women served as essential figures during the conflict as social and political participants, akin to men. Throughout the conflict, numerous women faced arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, rape, and murder.

Many of these abuses were carried out due to connections with one of the conflicting parties or for being associated with either the Maoist or Government forces. Female relatives of those who were killed, disappeared, or tortured also endured suffering. They were forced to bear the responsibility of caring for the family while simultaneously seeking truth and justice for their loved ones.

Women assumed combatant roles during the conflict, deviating from their traditional duties. Nevertheless, their involvement was disregarded during negotiations and was not reflected in the terms of the CPA peace agreement. Following the signing of the CPA, the Government implemented various initiatives to assist conflict victims and address their immediate requirements. However, victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, who had experienced torture and mistreatment, were excluded from the Government's assistance program.

Furthermore, the rehabilitation and reintegration of female combatants have been entirely overlooked. Women's engagement in the legislative and policy-making processes has not been realized. Despite their significant contributions during the conflict, women were largely marginalized in the post-conflict period.

A gender-sensitive approach is essential in Nepal's transitional justice processes to address the unique experiences of women during and after the conflict. It is crucial to understand the different causes and consequences of human rights violations and abuses, as well as their distinct impact on men and women. This understanding will help in designing and implementing transitional justice initiatives that are friendly towards gender.

In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence. The Council specifically directed that the mandate should incorporate a gender perspective throughout its work. The Special Rapporteur's report on July 17, 2020, highlighted the importance of adopting gender-responsive transitional justice mechanisms for states with serious human rights violations. The Human Rights Council has consistently emphasized the need to fully integrate a gender perspective into all activities related to the transitional justice process.



Despite the progress made, there are obstacles in the transitional justice system. The formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Disappearance Commission, along with the support from the Supreme Court, Human Rights Commission, Women's Commission, and international organizations, have aimed to establish a victim-friendly justice system. However, the process has faced challenges due to excessive politicization and pressure from conflicting factions seeking blanket justice. Political parties in power tend to support the peace process, but once they are out of power, they often oppose its provisions.

Obstacles in Transitional Justice

Various measures have been implemented since the signing of the CPA, such as the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Disappearance Commission as part of the transitional justice system. The Supreme Court, Human Rights Commission, Women's Commission, as well as several international organizations and UN agencies, have been aiding in the finalization of the peace process with a justice system that is supportive of victims.

However, the progress has been hindered by excessive politiciza-

tion and pressure from two conflicting factions vying for comprehensive justice. Political parties in power tend to endorse the peace process under specific conditions, but once they are no longer in power, they begin to oppose the terms. The current amendment bill on transitional justice is said to be trying to bypass justice through methods that do not align with Nepal's Supreme Court ruling and international norms, making the goals of accountability and reparations hard to achieve. The Nepali Congress has shown support for the bill, while the CPN-UML has expressed opposition.

The parties altered their stance after modifying the ruling equation. On February 20th, the Law, Justice, and Human Rights Committee made preparations to approve a bill that would amend the Investigation, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2071, on Disappeared Persons. However, due to a shift in coalition and political dynamics the following week, the bill could not be passed. As of March 25th, the committee has not convened for another meeting. Despite the UML's previous disagreement, they are now willing to pass the bill, but former Minister of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs Dhanraj Gurung, who is also the Vice President of the Nepali Congress, requested



additional time from the Committee Chairman. He explained that two more matters needed to be discussed.

Previously, the bill faced obstacles due to the UML's dissatisfaction with certain provisions, including blanket amnesty, fast-track procedures, and gender-related issues. The Congress-Maoist party sought the UML's support to ensure unanimous passage of the bill through the committee. Now, with a change in political power and the UML as a ruling partner, the NC is determined to push the bill forward.

The recently revealed minimum policy priorities, similar to previous coalition minimum programs, stress the importance of promptly addressing outstanding tasks related to the peace process. The policy is dedicated to providing medical treatment, employment opportunities, and rehabilitation to individuals who suffered disabilities during the conflict period (1996-2006). Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of fulfilling obligations concerning the compensation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of families affected by the conflict.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda has pledged to finalize The Commission for Investigation, Verification, and Reconciliation of Disappeared Persons Act, which was enacted in 2071 BS, during the upcoming session of the House. However, there are still disagreements regarding the bill.

The Prime Minister has been consistently striving to persuade the victims and other stakeholders that his government will pass the law to bring the peace process to a conclusion. During an event organized by the National Alliance of Victims of Human Rights Violations, the Prime Minister declared that the Bill would be given utmost priority in the forthcoming summer session of the Federal Parliament.

The Prime Minister emphasized his dedication to resolving the issue through national consensus, mentioning that democratic processes will be followed if necessary. Both the victims and the government are eager for a swift progress in this matter, with no room for uncertainty.

At the UNGA and its sideline

meetings, the PM highlighted that Nepal's peace process is reaching its conclusion, not just a national concern. He assured that transitional justice will prioritize the victims by aligning with global standards and court rulings, ensuring a proper conclusion to the process.

A dilemma between the right to truth and the right to justice

Nepal's initial transitional justice bodies were established in 2015 with the purpose of gathering data on more than 60,000 cases. However, their efforts were unsuccessful in completing any investigations due to the country's Supreme Court ruling certain aspects of the law that created these bodies as unconstitutional. Currently, a new bill is being discussed as of March 2024, and Nepal's transitional justice community is facing and addressing the various challenges and dilemmas involved.

The approach of Nepal's draft bill has faced criticism regarding its treatment of women victims and the granting of amnesties, which the truth commission is expected to recommend in specific cases. To enhance clarity and coherence, the text has been reorganized to present information in a logical sequence, outlining the processes that should be followed.

Experts have stressed the importance of establishing an effective and well-equipped mechanism for criminal accountability before any suspensions of sentences can occur. The bill is currently in its final stage, and it is essential for all stakeholders to collaborate in order to ensure that the transitional justice process is inclusive and prioritizes the needs of the victims, ultimately fostering peace and development. Continued support from the international community is crucial in assisting Nepal in this endeavor.

Photos courtesy: Amnesty International Nepal and Conflict Victim Women National Network

Visit Of KfW And EIB To Nepal

Mission Matters

Kul Man Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), arrived from Washington DC participating in the high level World Bank meeting. He then drove to Trishuli to brief a high-level team from KfW, Germany's leading development bank, and the European Investment Bank (EIB) about the progress achieved in the 220 kV Chilime Transmission line project. MD Ghising prioritizes the mission over his personal life, despite the hectic schedule.

By A CORRESPONDENT

After a nearly 20-hour flight from the World Bank's headquarters in Washington DC, Ghising's Qatar Airlines plane landed at the Tribhuvan International Airport on 6:30 AM on March 23.

Without taking break, he drove his vehicle straight to Trishuli Hub, 150 kilometer north of Kathmandu, a remotest corner of the world, leaving his luggage to be dropped off by some other officials. He reached at approximately 12 afternoon at Trishuli 3 B Hub to meet the higher delegation from KfW and EIB. His cycle of air and vehicle travel ended when he arrived home at 7:30 PM on March 23.

A team led by Gisela Hamerschmidt, Director for Asia at BMZ, along with representatives from the European Union and German Development

Bank (KfW), conducted on-site monitoring of the Chilime-Trishuli

220 kV transmission line project under construction. The team monitored the





construction progress of the transmission line and substation.

NEA's grid relies heavily on the transmission line to evacuate electricity generated in Rasuwa by various hydropower. It is understandable that MD Ghising rushed to the site.

Ghising's official missions have always been more important than his personal life. This time around also he was keen to brief high-level team members from KfW, Germany's leading development bank, and EIB delegation in Trishuli 3 B Hub about the progress of the 220 kV Transmission Line project, which is funded by KfW and EIB, hoping to get more support from future. The past three days have been very hectic for MD Ghising.

His decision to attend the meeting in person instead of sending a senior official sends a positive message, especially at a time when NEA requires significant investment for the expansion of transmission and strengthening of the distribution system. He made his official mission a priority and gave up his house.

Despite the long and tedious journey, which included 17 hours of flights, a few hours of layover in Doha, and four hours of driving on rough, hilly roads, he finally arrived at Trishuli 3 B Hub to welcome and brief the high-level visiting delegation.

His sacrifice paid off for the

country. Following the visit, the delegation leaders from Germany and the European Union expressed their commitment to increase investment in the sector. He aspired to this.

Despite his professional commitments, a handful of cronies and retired colleagues from his office continue to make efforts to demoralize him.

MD Ghising said, 'My priority is my organization. I am happy to say that things are moving in the right direction, overcoming crises and challenges one after another.' His family feels good about doing meaningful



work.

Transmission Line Hub

The construction of the Chilime Hub and Trishuli 3B Hub substations is in their final stage. These substations are located at Thimbuchet in Amachodingmo rural municipality of Rasuwa and Pahrebensi of Kispang rural municipality of Nuwakot. Additionally, the construction of a 28 km 220 kV transmission line from Chilime Hub to Trishuli 3B Hub substation is also in its final stage.

The Chilime-Trishuli 220 KV transmission line and the Chilime and Trishuli 3B hub substations have been constructed to transmit power from hydroelectric projects. The projects are under construction and those to be built in the Trishuli river and its tributaries to the national system.

The project is estimated to cost 30.9 million US dollars. The Government of Nepal and the Nepal Electricity Authority have invested in the project, and it has also received a grant from the German Development Bank (KfW). The European Union has set up a concessional loan through the European Investment Bank (EIB) for the Trishuli 3B hub substation and transmission line construction project.

The Nepal Electricity Authority and the project management team were monitored, and progress,

problems, expected completion date, and potential further investment in the energy sector were discussed.

Team leader Gisela Hammerschmidt expressed her pleasure at completing the project in a risky and difficult mountainous area.

He also committed to providing more subsidies for the development of Nepal's energy sector and urged the authority to identify areas that require investment and propose them.

Kulman Ghising, the authority's Managing Director, informed the team that the final phase of work is underway. The substation and transmission line will be completed and put into operation by the second week of April.

Due to the difficult and risky mountainous terrain, the construction of a tower in this crowded area presents several challenges. People or carts must transport all necessary materials, including stones, sand, and water. Additionally, the project has been impacted by floods, poor contractor performance, land use issues in forest areas, obstacles from locals, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these challenges, a transmission line has been successfully constructed in the area, ranging from 680 to 2600 meters above sea level. To reach the locations where the 33 towers were built, a separate access road was constructed. Investors expressed concern about construction delays in the past.

However, during the inspection visit, the team expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the significant progress made in the project, despite the challenging conditions of the Himalayan area. MD Ghising reported their positive feedback.

Managing Director Ghising instructed the project management, consultants, and contractor companies to speed up the construction work by adding more workers and not to delay



it. He emphasized that the deadline for the completion of the construction cannot be missed.

Donor agencies are also concerned about the project's deadline. The preparation of the 110-megawatt Rasuwagadhi hydropower project to be connected to this line is underway.

"If we cannot build the line, we will have to waste electricity," said Ghising. "Let's all be responsible and make the last effort. We will provide the necessary support and facilitation from our side."

Currently, 65 out of the 75 towers for the 28 km transmission line have been laid, and work is being done on the remaining 10 towers. Out of the 65 towers that have been erected, work is being done on three towers. The erected towers are currently undergoing wire pulling work for the 11 km of wire that has been stretched.

The Chilime-Trishuli 3B hub transmission line includes a 20 km double circuit Chilime-Mailung section and an 8 km four (multi) circuit line up to Mailung-Trishuli 3B hub.

A multi-circuit line, led by Korean companies, will connect the power of the 216 MW Upper Trishuli-1 hydroelectric projects. The Chinese company Pinggao Group of Companies signed a contract in Octo-

ber 2074

to construct transmission lines and substations, with Upper Trishuli-1 bearing 60 percent of the cost. The contract was implemented in January 2074.

NEA's success is attributed to its leader-based decisions, as well as its sales, profits, and growth. At NEA, MD Ghising executes policies with NEA's mission in mind, not just money.

This purpose-driven approach helps NEA stay focused and attract foreign investments for expanding transmission lines and distribution systems throughout Nepal.

The inspection of the Chilime-Trishuli 220 kV transmission project by a team from Germany and the European Union concluded with a commitment to increase subsidies and loans in the energy sector.

Last month, MD Ghising invited Nepal's Improvement Accomplices and advised them on the condition of power and interest in Butwal. MD Ghising's persistent effort paid off with the commitment of additional advances, which are fundamental for further developing power quality and assisting Nepal with satisfying its obligation to zero discharges by 2045.

UTKHPL's Generation Has Significantly Impacted By Changing Weather Pattern: CEO Gautam

Having extensive experience in the hydropower sector, MOHAN PRASAD GAUTAM, the Chief Executive Officer of Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Limited (UTKHPL), is a well-established manager. With the gradual impact of Climate Change on Nepal's rainfall patterns, the country's hydropower generation capacity is taking a hit in dry session. Over the past three years, UTKHPL generation capacity has significantly declined in the span of three months. CEO Gautam discussed various future issues with KESHAB POUDEL. Here are the excerpts.

How do you see your one year tenure as Chief Executive Officer(CEO)?

When I assumed the role of CEO on Chaitra 14 (March 2023), the company resembled a project office, lacking the necessary institutional mechanisms and capacity to operate as a corporate entity. A significant portion of my time has been dedicated to establishing and institutionalizing the company. I have overseen the recruitment of new staff members to support the development of these new institutions. Sufficient technical manpower is recruited to run the plant efficiently and independently, whereas some administrative positions have also been filled as per the revised organizational chart of the company. Moreover, priority and efforts are made to conclude the construction contracts. I view my one-year tenure as a period of transformation and transition. Consequently, my first year has been dedicated to establishing and reforming the institution as a corporate entity.

What are the challenges facing the CEO now?

I am still confronted with the challenges that have been passed down from the construction phase. Ever since I assumed the role of CEO, the water discharge has been decreasing due to global climate patterns, and the company is also being penalized for a situ-

ation that was not caused by any technical malfunction. To address this, I have initiated a public offering and distributed shares to the general public, and issued an IPO. Additionally, I have organized a general meeting for the company.

Considering that the data indicates your company is suffering from changing weather patterns, what steps are you taking to build a case for loss and damage claims?

We have gathered sufficient documentation and evidence to demonstrate the damage caused by changing weather patterns. We are currently compiling all necessary documents to support our claim for losses if the global community agrees to provide compensation. On a domestic level, we have already appealed to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) to waive the penalties incurred due to the loss of energy caused by unavoidable circumstances. The current circumstances are beyond our control.

How NEA is responding to the crisis?

NEA has responded to the company's request by not making any efforts to reduce the penalty costs, as we are simply adhering to the clauses outlined in the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). There is a specific clause regarding force majeure events.



We have been advocating that drought should be classified as a force majeure event. Our company has been arguing that both droughts and heavy rainfall are natural occurrences and should be considered force majeure events to mitigate penalties. NEA has yet to agree to this point. This issue is not unique to our company, as other independent power producers (IPPs) and NEA's subsidiaries are also grappling with similar challenges.

How is the state of electricity generation?

I have already mentioned that the generation of electricity has been fluctuating since the inception of the generation three years ago. In the month of 2078 Chaitra (March-April), the company exceeded the contract energy by 35.89%, delivering 98,440,820 kWh. However, in the following months of 2079 Baisakh and Jestha (April-June), the generation declined. In Baisakh, the company delivered 103,230,460 kWh, which was 13.65% less than the contract energy of 119,547,000 kWh. In Jestha, the plant delivered 212,115,350 kWh, which was 24.42% less than the contract energy of 280,640,000 kWh.

How about the generation trend last year?

The decline in generation persisted, resulting in a shortfall in delivering the contracted energy. In the month of Chaitra 2079 (March-April 2023), the company fell short by 30.67 percent, leading to a penalty payment of Rs. 55,402,518.30 to NEA. Subsequently, in Baisakh and Jestha 2080 (April-May and May-June 2023), the company could deliver to NEA 54.38 percent and 50.18 percent less with respect to Contract Energy respectively. It is noteworthy that no penalties were paid in the years 2079–80. Over the

span of three months, including Chaitra 2079, Baisakh, and Jestha 2080, the company incurred a total penalty of Rs. 538,360,209.75 to NEA. It raises the question of whether PPA conducted a thorough study and analysis of hydrology.

What was the average discharge of the river?

The discharge pattern of water in the Tamakoshi river during the months of Chaitra, Baisakh, and Jestha in the consecutive five years from 2072 to 2077 showed predominantly positive trends. The average discharge during this period was 32.0 cubic meters per second (cumecs), which was significantly higher compared to the average of the last three years, which ranged from 10.8 to 14.0 cumecs. This below-average water level had a detrimental impact on the generation of the project, resulting in a heavy loss of energy. Last year alone, our cumulative loss exceeded a billion. Given the weather conditions in the previous winter, characterized by prolonged winter drought and minimal snowfall, it is likely that this year's losses will further increase.

How would you describe the condition of the watershed?

It is important to note that the availability of water in the Tamakoshi River is currently at an average of 11 cubic meters per second in the month of March. The condition of the watershed, particularly in the upper Tamakoshi area, is concerning. Approximately 70 percent of the high Himalayan watershed area falls in Tibet, and this exacerbates the situation. This year, there has been a decrease in snowfall in the mountains, further impacting the water supply. As a result, all six units of the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant, each unit having a capacity of 76 MW, are unable to



operate at full capacity due to the lack of water in the river.

Is there a provision in the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to exempt the company from penalties due to such natural occurrences?

The contract energy delivery was based on a meticulous examination of 15 years' water discharge data, with the agreed generation in the PPA being contingent on the river's discharge. According to the PPA terms, the company is obligated to pay a penalty if it fails to deliver 80 percent of the expected contract energy to the NEA. While there is a provision to waive the penalty in cases of "unavoidable circumstances," it must be proven that the situation falls under this category. NEA has not yet clarified the interpretation of this term.

Has any documentation been prepared in case Nepal becomes eligible to declare its support for the loss and damage agenda, as it has been advocating for along with other LDCs?

We possess sufficient recorded data that demonstrates a significant decrease in water discharge in the Upper Tamakoshi region over the past five years. The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology's data also indicates a change in discharge patterns, with a notable decline in water flow. The data collected over the past 15 years illustrates the fluctuating nature of river discharge, with a consistent decrease in water flow each year, particularly in

the last three years.

What are the mitigation efforts the company is taking?

The company has taken several mitigation efforts to address the issues inherited from the construction period. One of the key efforts is the start of the construction of the RolwalingKholahydroelectric Project, which has an installed capacity of 22 MW. Apart from 105 GWh of annual energy generated from this power plant itself, an additional 212 GWh of annual energy, which is equivalent to 50–60 MW will be generated from the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant by the diversion of the Rolwaling Kalato Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant (UTKHPP) Reserve at Lamabagar. This project will enhance the dry season energy of UTKHPP and peaking hours from 4 hours to 6 hours even in the driest months.

What about the status of Rolwaling?

Currently, after the mobilization at the project site, the contractor has already started the excavation of the diversion tunnel and the construction of other infrastructure for the RolwalingKholahydroelectric Project. Similarly, the construction of the main access tunnel to the powerhouse is also ongoing. However, the contractor is facing challenges in obtaining permission from India to import explosives, as the joint venture involves a Chinese contractor company. The company has applied for explosives through the

Indian Embassy, but it is currently in a pending status.

How does the does the RolwalingKholaHydropower Project impact the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant?

Upon the completion of the Rolwaling River diversion, the energy output of the Upper Tamakoshi HPP will experience a significant improvement during the dry season. Once the diversion is in place, the company’s power generation will increase by 212 GWh plus 105 GWh annually. This generation capacity is equivalent to that of a 60 MW project and will be available during the peak demand period. It is worth noting that the tariff for electricity during peak hours is higher than the standard rate. If the necessary explosives are provided as per demand, the construction of the diversion tunnel will be finished within three years.

What is the progress now?

The main tunnel for the diversion of water, measuring 250 meters in length, has been opened. Additionally, some 240 meters of Main Access Tunnel to the powerhouse have also been completed. Since there is no motorable access to the Headworks Site and nearby work fronts, the construction of Mule Track from Lower Lamabagar has been substantially completed, and further improvements for the track are underway. This will enhance the excavation of the diversion tunnel from other ends as well, which will help expedite the excavation progress of the diversion tunnel in order to complete the excavation of the tunnel in time.

The equipment necessary for the construction of works at Headworks and other work fronts of the project has to be air-lifted. As soon as the necessary equipment is transported, excavation will begin from the other side as well.

Are you familiar with what constitutes loss and damage?

This topic has gained popularity in recent global climate discussions. Loss and damage can arise from extreme weather events such as droughts, glacial retreat, and land degradation. In essence, it involves claiming compensation for damages caused by the impacts of climate change. As a CEO, I am also trying to see how Upper Tamakoshi’s current crisis can become Nepal’s global agenda to get compensation for the loss.

What other steps are you taking?

By providing clean energy, we have been actively contributing to the reduction of emissions. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of participating in carbon trading. To achieve this, we are in need of hiring a team of experts. This move

will significantly enhance the financial well-being of the company. We are currently contemplating our next steps and are seeking guidance from professionals on how to proceed.

Given that the changing weather patterns have already led to a decrease in river water discharge, how do you anticipate the economic losses for the company?

The economic losses resulting from reduced water levels significantly impact the generation of clean electricity as an alternative to fossil fuels. The decreased generation and penalties for failing to meet energy delivery contracts are also affecting profits and constraining resources for expansion. Although the impact may seem minor, it has national-scale repercussions.



LOSS AND DAMAGE Upper Tamakoshi A Case

Over the past two years, the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower has witnessed a decline in its generation capacity. This decline is a stark contrast to its initial generation three years ago. The primary reason behind this decline is the reduced water discharge in the Tamakoshi River, which can be attributed to a prolonged winter drought and decreased rainfall and snowfall. The Upper Tamakoshi project serves as a compelling example to highlight Nepal's advocacy for the loss and damage agenda in UNFCCC.

By KESHAB POUDEL

Nepal's hydropower generation has already been impacted by the drying of rivers, prolonged droughts, rising temperatures, rapid snow melting, and glacier retreat. This is exemplified by the 456 MW, the largest hydropower plant in Nepal, which highlights the imminent crisis caused by climate change and the potential loss and damage faced by the country. The shifting patterns of precipitation will not only vary between countries but also within nations.

During his recent address to a high-level delegation from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Kul Man Ghising, the Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), emphasized the threat that climate change poses to Nepal's hydropower sector. Ghising pointed out that despite Nepal's con-

tribution to greenhouse gas emissions being only 0.0027 percent, the impact is significant. He highlighted changes in precipitation patterns, glacier retreat, shifts in river flows, and an increase in extreme events such as flash floods and droughts as factors leading to decreased hydropower generation. Additionally, Ghising mentioned issues like sedimentation, rising temperatures, and challenges related to water availability and demand.

Not nominating a Nepalese participant for a high-level LDC meeting in Malawi, scheduled for next week, is causing Nepal to miss out on a significant opportunity. This decision comes at a time when the hydropower sector is already facing substantial losses, which are detrimental to the national economy and development.

The Finance Minister, Bar-

sha Man Pun, has emphasized the importance of utilizing the available climate funds for Nepal's development. However, the Ministry of Forest and Environment is contradicting this by not sending any delegation to the conference where Nepal is supposed to present its position.

Environmentalists have expressed their frustration, stating that senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign and Environment lack understanding of international climate change issues and perspectives. They believe that separating the Ministry of Environment from the Ministry of Forest is necessary if Nepal intends to utilize the climate fund for its development.

The current capacity of the Ministry of Forest and Environment, which primarily focuses on forestry

matters, is insufficient considering the potential damage to Nepal's infrastructure, including hydropower, caused by climate-induced disasters.

What is Loss and Damage?

Loss and damage pertain to the detrimental consequences of climate change that surpass the ability of affected communities to cope and adjust. It encompasses both tangible losses, such as infrastructure damage and loss of life, as well as intangible losses like cultural heritage and community cohesion.

Climate change remains a contentious issue, with developed and developing nations interpreting and addressing it in varying ways. Developed countries often perceive it as falling within the realm of adaptation measures, whereas developing nations view it as encompassing impacts that go beyond the limits of adaptation.

Article 8 of the Paris Agreement acknowledges the significance of preventing, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage associated with climate

change, thereby emphasizing the global commitment to tackling this issue (Paris Agreement, Article 8(1)). While adaptation is considered urgent, financial support for adaptation efforts lags behind mitigation financing.

The concept gained prominence in international climate negotiations through the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) in 2013.

Loss and Damage, which has become a prominent topic in recent climate change discussions, lacks an official definition. It generally refers to the adverse impacts of climate change that cannot be mitigated or adapted to.

COP28 was a significant event as it concluded the first global assessment of efforts to combat climate change under the Paris Agreement. The term is commonly used to describe the UN climate negotiations and the strategies discussed to address climate impacts.

The decision to establish a Loss and Damage Fund at COP27 in 2022 in response to appeals for financial assistance for climate-vulnerable nations has been reached. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Fund and the development of its governing regulations are still pending, resulting in ongoing discussions regarding the efficacy of such a financial mechanism.



Up to now, there has been no designated international funding set aside for loss and damage within the United Nations Framework. For many countries, especially those most at risk from the effects of climate change such as Nepal, obtaining financial support for climate-induced losses is a crucial matter of accountability.

Given that Nepal is already experiencing damage as a result of climate change, it is one of the eligible candidates to request assistance for damages caused by rainfall, drought, and rising temperatures.

Nepal's Position

Nepal has been advocating

for the agenda within the LDCs group since 2013. Dr. Buddhi Sagar Paudyal, the head of the Climate Change Management Division, highlighted Nepal's long-standing efforts on this issue. The changing precipitation patterns have had a significant impact on various sectors, with hydropower plants experiencing noticeable losses.

Upper Tamakoshi Hydro-power Limited (UTKHPL) has faced penalties from the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) for the third consecutive year due to its inability to meet the energy delivery requirements outlined in the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The fluctuations in water discharge, beyond the control of

UTKHPL, have resulted in unforeseen challenges due to the unexpected changes in precipitation patterns.

The reduced water discharge in the river has affected the energy production capacity of Nepal's largest hydropower plant during the dry season from February to May. If this trend persists, UTKHPL may

be required to pay an annual sum of approximately Rs. 500 million. Studies indicate that water resources will be significantly impacted by climate change effects, particularly in terms of altered precipitation patterns affecting river discharge and hydropower generation.

The generation capacity of the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi has been directly affected by the recent changes in precipitation patterns over the past three years. The decrease in winter rainfall from 2020 to 2023 has resulted in a significant decline in water discharge levels in major river systems, including the Tamakosi river.

COVERSTORY



As a consequence, the effects of climate change have had a significant impact on electricity generation. Currently, during the evening and morning peak periods, electricity generation can reach up to 300-456 MW for a duration of 3-4 hours, as water is accumulated throughout the day. However, due to the changing climate patterns, the water level in the Tamakoshi River has decreased, leading to a decrease in electricity generation, as stated by Mohan Gautam, CEO of Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Limited (UTKHPL) in an interview.

As Nepal's river are drying due to increasing days of drought and rise of temperature, fast snow melting and retreating of glacier, Nepal's hydropower generation has already hit by these phenom-

enon.

456 MW, largest hydropower, is an example to depict the looming crisis cause by climate change and Nepal's position for loss and damage.



Shifting precipitation patterns will vary widely not just from country to country, but also within nations.

At a time when climate induced disasters are going to damage

Nepal's many infrastructures including hydropower, Nepal has to go to claim for the loss. For this, the current capacity of Ministry of Forest, which is a specialized ministry of forest, is not adequate.

What about the state of Fund

The loss and damage fund has already received pledges amounting to \$700 million globally. Now, it is crucial for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) like Nepal to participate in negotiations in order to access these funds. However, the Ministry of Forest and Environment in Nepal is yet to reach a decision

on this matter.

If the current trend of altered winter precipitation patterns persists in the coming years, projects such as the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi could face

significant financial losses in terms of annual income. This could also lead to a decline in clean energy production, resulting in a greater reliance on fossil fuels.

The declining trend in river discharge may pose a hindrance to Nepal's objective of achieving zero emissions by 2045 through its NDC, which primarily focuses on hydropower projects.

Economic Loss

The generation of clean electricity as a substitute for fossil fuels is greatly affected by the economic losses caused by the decline in water levels. The reduction in electricity generation, along with the penalties incurred for not meeting energy delivery agreements, is also impacting profits and limiting resources for growth. Despite appearing insignificant, these consequences have far-reaching implications at a national level.

In his recent article published in Urjakhbar online, Prabal Adhikari, former Deputy Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, emphasizes the urgent need for Nepal to address the issue of living in a state of uneaten poison, despite its negligible impact on climate change. Adhikari stresses the importance of raising this concern at various levels, including international, regional, and sub-regional conferences and meetings.

Adhikari also highlights that the effects of climate change are already evident in the mountains of Nepal, leading to adverse impacts on water resources and hydropower projects in the region.

The rise in temperature will result in a decrease in water volume, reducing the lifespan of the turbines

connected to these projects and leading to higher operational costs. Additionally, the occurrence of floods during summer and droughts in winter poses a significant risk of not meeting the contracted energy requirements for electricity production.

“Given this situation, it is imperative for the government to reassess its existing policies in order to maintain private sector investment and participation. As a country highly vulnerable to climate change, Nepal must incorporate energy-friendly provisions into its laws and policies and take



timely and practical actions to address these challenges,” writes Adhikari.

According to Adhikari, Nepal must now consider the implications of climate change when developing energy plans and establishing electricity laws and agreements. If these regulations and agreements are not adapted to address the global impact of climate change, they will soon become impractical.

“It is anticipated that climate change will have a greater impact on Nepal's hydropower projects in the future, leading to reduced electricity production due to extreme natural disasters like floods and droughts. This will result in increased operation and maintenance costs, heightened risks,

and limited ability to raise electricity prices in the market,” said Adhikari.

As a result of climate change, only a fraction of the project's connected capacity will be generated during the dry season. Therefore, it is imperative to exclude the provision for royalty on the connected capacity in the proposed legislation by replicating the old law. Numerous water sources have disappeared, leading to significant alterations in the river's flow pattern.

“Nepal Electricity Authority is the only public body in Nepal that

procures electricity generated by private entities. In recent times, a provision has been implemented to levy a nominal deviation fee in cases of insufficient energy production in hydropower projects with a capacity of up to 10 megawatts. Moreover, developers are not subject to penalties for failing to meet power supply requirements as specified in the

contract due to reduced water flow,” Adhikari said.

In that case, even if the production is not delivered, according to the PPA, the promoter will have to pay 80 percent of the 40 percent i.e. 32 percent of the fine to the buyer, or if the supply is less than one-third of the energy agreed in the contract, the penalty for the non-delivered energy will be paid to the authority only.

Nepal's hydropower projects face significant risks in the future due to various factors such as changes in precipitation patterns, glacial retreat, rising temperatures, and the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme natural disasters caused by climate change.

Enhancing Nepal's Cybersecurity Posture Through The Establishment Of The National Cyber Security Centre



BY: RISHAV UPADHYAYA

Executive Summary:

In light of the growing concerns around threats within the digital landscape, Nepal Government recently declared the establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) on January 24 2024. This move marks a step towards bolstering the country's cybersecurity framework and showcases a dedicated effort to combat the intricate issues presented by cyber threats. The NCSC is set to function as Nepal's regulatory body responsible for overseeing, coordinating and resolving cybersecurity incidents throughout the nation. Nevertheless there are hurdles and milestones to overcome.

Context and Rationale:

There is a stream of cybersecurity issues making headlines worldwide. From breaches, to attacks on vital systems and sophisticated threats orchestrated by nation states, the security landscape is constantly evolving. Equipped tech companies and governments are not immune, to these incidents despite their significant cybersecurity capabilities and knowledge.

The very recent breaches reported by The Hacker News and Bleeping Computer on January 2014, involving prominent tech companies Microsoft and Hewlett Packard underscore how even the most vigilant organizations are not immune from infiltration by adept adversaries.

Additionally, the gravity of ransomware attacks, seen in the disruption of healthcare services in Romania and Kansas City, Missouri earlier this year, serve as further evidence of the crucial vulnerability in critical infrastructures and the potential scope of societal impact. With a 33% global increase in ransomware attacks, including a noteworthy 22% rise within the retail sector in 2023 according to Check Point Research, time is of the essence in advancing cybersecurity measures.

Challenges and Opportunities in Nepal:

Over the last few years, Nepal has seen a worrying trend of cyber-attacks against government bodies and prominent online services showcasing the nation's underlying cybersecurity posture. The NCSC alone might not be enough to cope with volume and breadth of cyber threats faced by the country. Past incidents such as the aforementioned breach on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017 as well as recent DDoS attacks on government servers earlier in the year illustrate the need for continual improvements to cyber hygiene and infrastructure resilience.

An examination of the cybersecurity measures in place

within Nepal's healthcare sector, such as the insecure online patient data portal at Medicit Hospital, further accentuates the critical need for governance, due diligence, and compliance standards. This necessitates a comprehensive approach to cyber security that transcends mere policy implementation and calls for actionable, enforceable measures.

Strategic Recommendations:

Efforts to combat the present day spectrum of dynamic cyber threats require that Nepal's cybersecurity move beyond being reactive and evolve to be proactive. The immediate deployment of DDoS mitigation solutions, advanced Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) systems and meticulous patch management protocols are imperative.

Furthermore, the adoption of regular Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing (VAPT) is essential to proactively identify and rectify security vulnerabilities. This, coupled with ongoing security assessments and user awareness training should be integrated into the nation's cybersecurity strategy.

From day one, the NCSC must have the authority to investigate cyber incidents, ensure compliance and enforce accountability. Without rigorous security measures in place, and a fully trained staff to enforce best practice across the nation's enterprises, both current and evolving cyber threats will continue to place Nepal at increasingly greater risk.

In Conclusion:

The establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre is a commendable first step in enhancing Nepal's cybersecurity capabilities. Anyone who is deeply invested in the field of cybersecurity is genuinely optimistic about the potential impact of the National Cyber Security Centre on Nepal's digital resilience.

There is hope that the NCSC will embody the quintessential attributes of a governing body, effectively safeguarding the nation's digital frontiers. As we continue to witness cyber-attacks and evolving threat landscapes, it is upon all stakeholders to introspect and ensure that due diligence and due care is exercised in our cybersecurity endeavours. Ultimately, the journey toward fortifying Nepal's cybersecurity posture requires collective commitment, proactive measures, and a steadfast resolve to mitigate the inevitable cyber threats that lie ahead.

The Nepal Britain Society Has Been Working To Strengthen Bilateral Relations



BY: PRATIMA PANDE

As the President of the Nepal Britain Society, I am happy to welcome His Excellency Rob Fenn and Julia Fenn to Kathmandu. We are also celebrating the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Friendship Treaty between Nepal and Great Britain.

I would like to extend a special welcome to His Excellency Rob Fenn, the British Ambassador and honorary Trustee of our society. The Nepal Britain Society will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2024. This is a significant milestone for one of Nepal's oldest friendship societies. The celebration will be a memorable event. In 2016, the Nepal Britain Society marked the 200th anniversary of bilateral relations between Nepal and Britain.

The celebration included a variety of activities, such as a musical program, a Shakespeare drama, *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream* at the British School, charitable programs, a book launch, and an art exhibition. We can hold events to celebrate our 60th and 100th anniversaries.

We would like to thank the United Kingdom for their friendship, support, and cooperation in the past year, as well as their efforts in the development field. The United Kingdom, as one of the greatest financial supporters, has shown true friendship and goodwill to Nepal at all times. On behalf of the Nepali people gathered here, as the President of the Society, we thank the British government for their ongoing support of Nepal.

Additionally, we appreciate the British Government's generous support of our heritage conservation activities in Nepal.

In March 2016, I had the privilege of welcoming and showing HRH Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, the newly restored Visheshwor Temple and the Patan Durbar Square. Late H.E. Richard Morris and Rohit Ranjitkar of the KVPT were also present. The temples were destroyed in the earthquake but were restored and built with British Aid.

Our Society members are mostly people who have studied, worked, and lived in the UK. They attended prestigious schools and universities and have returned to Nepal to make a difference with the knowledge gained from their British education.

The Nepal Britain Society is the oldest bilateral friendship society in Nepal, consisting of members from the diplomatic corps, bankers, doctors, businessmen, hoteliers, professionals, educationists, journalists, and civil society.

The Nepal Britain Society has supported theatre, arts, and philanthropic causes for years. It is a voluntary organization, and its executive members have dedicated their time to establish it as a cultural and philanthropic organization. The society is non-profit and has provided financial support to many worthy causes, such as burn victims, through fundraising.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Greta Rana,

our board members, and the person responsible for organizing the plays and comedies we have hosted for the past 20 years. Mrs. Rana's energy, direction, and vision have made it possible for our New Shakespeare Wallahs and other aspiring actors to stage numerous productions, bringing much laughter and joy to theater enthusiasts in Kathmandu.

The plays were mostly held at the Sterling Club in the British Embassy, hostels, and the British School. Nowadays, they are performed in many local theater halls in Kathmandu, all committed to elevating the level of theater in Nepal.

In 2015, we were privileged to see *Hamlet* performed by the Global Theatre in London, which toured 145 countries. The play was staged in Bhaktapur in collaboration with the British Council. It was a once-in-a-lifetime treat for many of us. To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, we presented Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* during the COVID pandemic. Despite the challenges, we successfully executed the event with a packed crowd.

Our past activities will be highlighted in the video presentation by Sanjiv and Kapil. We plan to organize more programs in the near future.

We also mourn the passing of His Royal Highness, the late Duke of Prince Philip, who was a Patron of the Nepal Britain Society and had visited Nepal many times. During his visit to the British Embassy to open the Sterling Club, some of us had the privilege of meeting him.

Before concluding, we would like to pay tribute to all the NS members who have passed away in the last two years. They were all distinguished members of society, leaders in their respective fields, and served their country Nepal.

Thank you all for being here tonight and for your love, help, and support of the Nepal Britain Society. Your memberships and interest are essential to the society's function.

I would also like to thank the Trustees and board members for their ongoing assistance in running the society's many activities. I want to thank Jitendra Rajbhandary, Kapil Lohani, and Sanjiv Pandey for their contributions to the society. Sanjiv Pandey has been particularly helpful in sending invitations and emails for our programs and participating in them with enthusiasm.

We are excited to collaborate with H.E. Rob Fenn and the British Embassy to promote goodwill and friendship between our countries and people.

We wish His Majesty King Charles III a speedy recovery and also extend our best wishes to Her Royal Highness Katherine, Princess of Wales, for good health. Have a pleasant evening and a happy Easter and Nepal New Year.

Pande is the President of NBS. Excerpts of her statement delivered at the program.



Pratima Pande's Leadership

As the leader of the Nepal Britain Society (NBS) for over 25 years, Pratima Pande, a renowned heritage conservationist and a humble person, has shown the importance of strong commitment in leading the charity organization successfully.

By A CORRESPONDENT

He famously said, 'Never give in, never give in, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.

'Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister and statesman, believed that leaders must have firm convictions and character and stand up for their beliefs, even in the face of adversity. Pande, the president of Nepal Britain Society, possesses the qualities that Churchill considered most essential in a leader to run an organization successfully.

Heading an organization like Nepal Britain Society, which has wide variety of members representing various sectors of Nepal, for a quarter of a century on a consensus is a great task, and Pande, a well-known heritage conservationist, has made this impos-

sible task possible because she possesses the qualities mentioned above by Churchill.

Nepal has been politically unstable for the last two and a half decades, changing from one political order to another. Despite the circumstances, Pande continues to lead the organization and firmly stands to protect the institution while pursuing its goals.

Pande has worked tirelessly to make the Nepal Britain Society, which was established sixty years ago, active and effective in fostering relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said, 'Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. This is the attitude that has enabled Pande to lead as the President of the Nepal Britain Society for over 25 years.

Pande's attitude



has been backed by her colleagues in the society, and it is the reason behind the successful running of the Nepal Britain Society. British ambassador to Nepal Rob Fenn also praised Pande during his address to the gathering, giving her due recognition at the program.

Even Pratima's colleague Junu Thapa praised her dedication to strengthening the people-to-people relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

Pande is the daughter of the late Himalaya Sumsher Rana, a renowned economist, civil servant, and the first governor of Nepal. He remained active in all kinds of activities until the day he died at the age of 95. Pande has followed in her father's



footsteps and has always been an active participant in various activities.

Her husband, Prithvi Bahadur Pande, Chairman of Nepal Investment Mega Bank, has always been supportive of her efforts. Pande has personally contributed to the conservation of Kathmandu Valley's heritage sites and remains a strong supporter. Himalayan Bank Ltd, founded by late Himalaya Sumsher Rana, and CEO Ashoke Sumsher Rana, her brother, has been providing financial support to Nepal Britain Society to organize programs.

Pande, a dedicated heritage lover, has always been at the forefront of organizing programs to promote the interests of Nepal and Britain or welcoming high-level guests from the United Kingdom. The text has been improved to meet the desired characteristics of short sentences, active voice, logical structure, verb phrases, simple sentence structure, grammatical correctness, simple vocabulary, and accessible language. No changes in content have been made.

During a program organized by the Nepal Britain Society to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Friendship Treaty between Nepal and the United Kingdom, Ambassador Fenn emphasized the treaty's uniqueness. He noted that it is a treaty for friendship, not for any

alliance or trade.

Additionally, Ambassador Fenn highlighted the signing of the Nepal-UK Friendship Treaty 100 years ago. Ambassador Fenn thanked the Nepal Britain Society for organizing programs that strengthen bilateral friendly relations between the two countries.

He stated that his government is sending a high-level delegation to the Investment Summit Nepal. Ambassador Fenn stated that his government will continue to provide necessary support



to Nepal during the period of LDC graduation.

He emphasized the potential of creating a Nepali brand of Pashmina for export to the United Kingdom. British Ambassador to Nepal, Fenn, stated that the relationship between Britain and Nepal is deeply rooted at the people-to-people level.



Pande, the President of Nepal Britain Society, stated that it is a historic moment for us to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the friendship treaty between Nepal and Great Britain.

President Pande welcomed the new British ambassador, Fenn, and stated that the Nepal Britain Society is committed to further strengthening the people-to-people relations between the two countries. She stated that the society is looking forward to working with Ambassador Rob Fenn and the British Embassy, along with the Nepal

Britain Society, to promote goodwill and friendship between our two countries and peoples.

During the program, Sanjiv Pandey and Kapil Lohani presented the highlights of the activities conducted by the Nepal Britain Society over the years. Additionally, member Junu Thapa delivered a vote of thanks.

President Pande has been working for the last twenty-five years without any personal ambitions. Her commitment to strengthening relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom is the driving force behind her work



HELVETAS-NEPAL

Dr. Prabin Manandhar's Leadership

Helvetas-Nepal has been actively involved in numerous projects across the Karnali, Madhesh, and Koshi provinces. The organization has increased its responsibilities following the last year's earthquake in Jajarkot. Dr. Prabin Manandhar is the Country Director of Helvetas Nepal. He has extensive experience leading successful relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction projects in post-disaster areas. He has mobilized the entire team to work closely with provincial and local governments, as well as NGOs. Recently, Dr. Manandhar visited the earthquake-affected regions of Jajarkot and Rukum districts to assess the situation. During his visit, he met with local government officials, provincial leaders, NGOs, and his team to discuss areas where Helvetas Nepal can provide support in post-recovery and reconstruction efforts. Dr. Manandhar's focus now is to reconstruct the resilient Jajarkot.

By Keshab Poudel

Dr. Prabin Manandhar, the Country Director of Helvetas Nepal, recently completed a weeklong visit to the earthquake-affected areas of Jajarkot and Rukum districts. Despite the hectic and extensive nature of the visit, Dr. Manandhar was able to identify the potential sectors where Helvetas Nepal can provide support in terms of reconstruction and recovery efforts.

For an organization like Helvetas-Nepal, which already has numerous ongoing projects and programs in Koshi, Madhesh, and Karnali Provinces, the task of supporting earthquake reconstruction and recovery is an additional responsibility. However, it is important to note that Helvetas-Nepal's regular programs, ranging from WASH initiatives to youth employment and livelihood, are closely linked to the overall recovery process.

During the visit, Dr. Manandhar was accompanied by his senior colleagues, as well as Aman Jonchhhe, the Program Management Specialist/Team Leader at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and a



local NGO partner. Together, they inspected the affected areas and engaged in discussions with elected representatives of local and provincial governments, local NGOs, headmasters of schools, and the affected population.

The team also included PROYEL Project Coordinator Aagya Pokharel, Om Khadka, Knowl-

edge Management and IT Coordinator, Shreda Shrestha, Project Officer (GESI), Dinesh Pandey, Caroline Guillet, and Shraddha Karmacharya, from Helvetas Nepal Office.

Helvetas-Nepal, a Swiss INGO, has been actively involved in various development sectors in Nepal for over six decades, including the

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Back Better project. Additionally, his organization facilitated a large-scale mason training program.

Mayor Chandra Prasad Gharti of Bheri Municipality approved the proposal for mason training to construct earthquake-resistant houses and expressed gratitude to Helvetas Nepal for their timely relief assistance.

“We require skilled masons for our rebuilding efforts. The proposal put forth by Helvetas Nepal is agreeable to us,” Mayor Gharti declared during the meeting. “We appreciate the generous relief aid extended by the Swiss Embassy in Kathmandu through Helvetas-Nepal in the initial phase.”

With the Municipality’s endorsement, Helvetas Nepal is now progressing with the implementation of the Earthquake Resilient Mason Training program, aiming to train approximately 500 individuals.

The Skills and Reconstruction Project, a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) initiative, seeks to support reconstruction efforts with a focus on gender sensitivity and social inclusion, ensuring that no one is left behind. Helvetas Nepal will be responsible for executing this project.

The second meeting was held with the officials of Hilly Region Development Campaign (HRDC), a local partner of Helvetas Nepal, in Khalanga. Dr. Pradip Jung Shahi, chairperson of the RDC, and other members briefed the status of ongoing projects.



construction of suspension bridges. Through its work, it has established itself as a reliable development partner dedicated to assisting those in need. The districts of Jajarkot and Rukum, both affected by earthquakes, are no exception to Helvetas-Nepal’s efforts.

During his visit to Karnali Province as a country director and member of a stock taking team, Dr. Manandhar engaged in discussions with numerous officials in the earthquake-affected districts, as well as higher-ranking officials in the provincial capital of Surkhet. Additionally, Dr. Manandhar participated in the Annual Review and Planning 2024 of Helvetas Nepal’s Karnali Provincial office.

One of the key meetings held by the team was with Chandra Prakash Gharti, the Mayor of Bheri Municipality, at his office in Khalanga, the district headquarters of Jajarkot. The purpose of this meeting was to explore the potential support that the Swiss government, through Helvetas Nepal, could provide for the reconstruction efforts.

Aman Jonchhhe, the Program Management Specialist/Team Leader at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, also frequently intervened in the interactions.

Dr. Manandhar proposed the implementation of mason training before commencing the reconstruction process. He emphasized the importance of skilled and trained masons in building earthquake-resistant houses, highlighting their crucial role in the reconstruction efforts.

“We are implementing the ENSSURE project in Karnali province, which is related to youth employment, and planning to support the reconstruction process,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, country director of Helvetas Nepal. We will need support from members of the Youth Panel. With 42 percent of the population being youth and 42 percent of elected representatives being young, youth are at the forefront of the country, and our project is no exception.”

Following the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, Dr. Manandhar spearheaded the Lutheran World Service Nepal organization in constructing over 5000 houses across various regions of Nepal as part of the Build



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Dr. Manandhar and his team visited Tribhuwan Secondary School in Nalgadh Municipality, Jajarkot district to interact with the students and teachers after the collapse of a classroom. The students are currently studying and taking exams in the open sky due to the lack of space. During a meeting with Helvetas Nepal country director, Gyanendra Bahadur Singh, the school's headmaster expressed concerns about the upcoming SEE exams and requested support for the reconstruction of the classroom.

The school, which has 1,200 students from ECD to class 12, is located in ward no. 1 of Nalgadh Municipality and is one of the largest high schools in the area. Given Helvetas Nepal's grassroots connections, earthquake victims in Jajarkot and Rukum are hopeful for support in the reconstruction and recovery process. Nalgadh Municipality is currently facing significant challenges due to limited resources and extensive damage, especially in the 13 schools that have been severely affected.

During the meeting between Mayor Damber Bahadur Rawat and country director Dr. Manandhar, it was emphasized that the municipality heavily depends on grants from the Federal and Provincial governments. Currently, the municipality is facing a shortage of resources. Mayor Rawat expressed hope for support from Helvetas-Nepal.

Due to the destruction of classrooms, students at Bheri Tribeni Higher Secondary School in Bheri Municipality Ward 1 are being taught in open spaces. Fortunately, the dry



winter has been a blessing. However, Krishna Pariyar, a teacher at the school, mentioned that if there were to be any rainfall similar to that of the past, students would face significant challenges.

Pariyar acknowledges that the municipal government lacks sufficient resources to construct all school buildings and classrooms at the moment. Among the municipalities severely affected by the earthquake, Bheri and Nalgadh Municipality have been actively seeking funds from development partners, including the Swiss Embassy and Helvetas Nepal. The reconstruction work is progressing under the dynamic leadership of Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti.

Mayor Gharti expressed gratitude towards the Swiss Embassy and Helvetas Nepal for their collaboration in providing relief materials and temporary shelters to the municipality.

Dr. Manandhar also highlighted the contribution of the youth volunteers from Promotion of Youth Engagement in the Local Government Process (PROYEL),

stating that Helvetas Nepal has been working in the district and municipality for a long time and provided relief materials shortly after the earthquake.

The earthquake that occurred on November 3, 2023, measuring 6.4 in magnitude, shook the Jajarkot and Rukum Districts. The epicenter of the earthquake was in Jajarkot, leading to the displacement of 60,478 families in the province, as per the data provided by the Karnali provincial government.

Despite more than three months passing since the disaster, only approximately 17,000 temporary huts have been constructed, leaving numerous displaced individuals living in inadequate tarpaulin tents.

As per the Temporary Housing Construction Grant Procedure for Earthquake-affected Households-2023, the federal government offers Rs. 50,000 in two installments to families whose homes were either completely or partially damaged and are now uninhabitable.

Data from the province's Internal Affairs Ministry indicates that Jajarkot has 35,140 applicants, while Rukum West and Salyan have 23,608 and 1,730 applicants, respectively.

After conducting visits to the earthquake-affected regions and holding discussions with local government officials, local NGOs, and the Head-



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master, Dr. Manandhar engaged with the provincial ministers, including the chief minister of Karnali Province. Subsequently, Dr. Manandhar participated in the Annual Review and Planning 2024 of Helvetas Nepal's Karnali Province office.

During his address at the meeting, Dr. Manandhar emphasized the importance of close collaboration and coordination with provincial and local governments, as well as NGOs, to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Dr. Manandhar, with the largest funding in the WASH sector in Karnali Province, has instructed provincial officials to allocate the funds towards rebuilding drinking water projects in areas affected by the earthquake. Helvetas-Nepal has consistently been at the forefront during major disasters and crises in Nepal.

The devastating earthquake in Jajarkot and Rukum districts of Karnali province, with its epicenter in Nalgadh Municipality in November 2023, along with subsequent aftershocks in April and May 2015, resulted in significant loss of lives and properties. Leading Helvetas-Nepal, the largest and oldest INGO in Nepal, is not an easy task. The country director already has a demanding workload on normal days, and the situation becomes even more complex and challenging during major disasters.

However, Dr. Manandhar has demonstrated that it is possible to accelerate the pace of development activities through close coordination and collaboration with project heads and

employees.

During the field visit and participation in the annual review meeting of Helvetas Nepal's Karnali Provincial office, Dr. Manandhar, the country director, engaged in various meetings



with the provincial chief minister, ministers, as well as the heads and members of local level governments in different regions.

Similarly, Dr. Manandhar also highlighted the significance of the PROYEL project in selecting



youth for mason training, leveraging InElam's expertise to enhance livelihoods. Moreover, the InElam Project has initiated support for beekeeping farmers in the earthquake-affected districts.

Dr. Manandhar spared two days in Surkhet discussing with Hel-

vetas-Nepal's The Helvetas-Nepal's Karnali provincial office, under the Integrated Water Resources Management Program (IWRMP), is currently implementing drinking water projects in the province, particularly in the districts affected by earthquakes. Dr. Manandhar emphasized the importance of prioritizing the earthquake-affected areas when planning and executing projects.

Madan Raj Bhatta, who is the head of Karnali Province leading Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program in Nepal,

briefed the state of the ongoing programs in the region. He

Dr. Manandhar also mentioned that the upcoming implementation of the Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) program will create additional opportunities for youth employment. As Dr. Manandhar concluded his visit, he instructed Helvetas Nepal's Provincial Office to effectively carry out regular programs with a focus on recovery and immediate action.

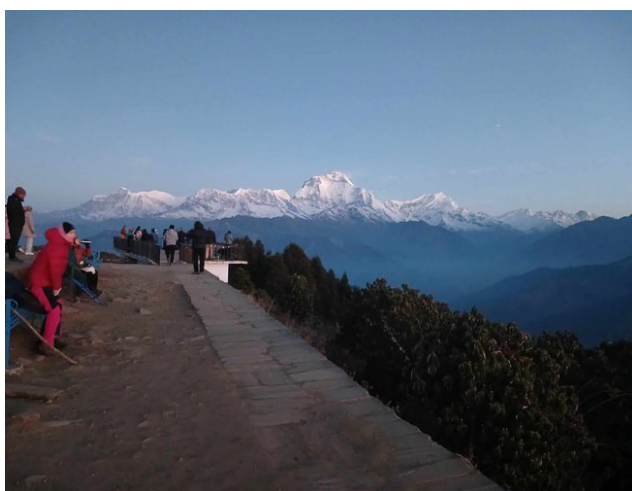
Helvetas Nepal has recently issued a notification regarding the execution of a Skills Training program for Masons. The training will focus on Earthquake Resilient Construction Technology and will also include facilitation for the Skill Test with NSTB for the participants. This initiative aims to provide training to individuals affected by the earthquake in Karnali Province. The project intends to train a total of 500 masons.

Once Again A Trip To Poonhill



BY: ABHISHEKH ADHIKARI

I made a five day trip in the second week of March. My destination was Poonhill. Surprisingly, a trip to



Poonhill is less time consuming with the access to roads. Little did I know Ghorepani was linked with roads. One bus leaves Ghorepani to Pokhara every morning between 8:30am to 9:00am. We were glad to catch that bus on our way back from Poonhill trek. It took us a little more than six hours to reach Pokhara by that bus. I must confess that at the start of the trip I wasn't up-to-date about the circumstances. I moved with the flow. The last time I was at Poonhill there was no bus service. I doubt there was a road linked to Ghorepani then. With the connection of roads and public transportation carrying goods and commuting for people have become easy. The prices of things have gone down too. There is a shorter road connecting Ghorepani to Nayapul which is under construction. This should cut short the time further by a couple of hours.

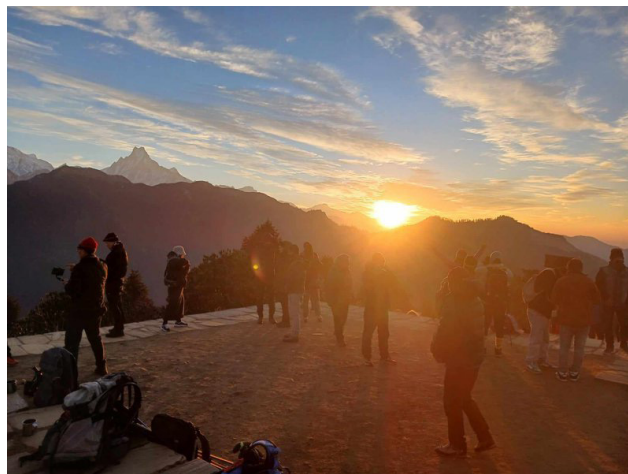
My plan was to reach Nayapul on Friday, the day my journey began. I took a flight to Pokhara. From the Pokhara International Airport I headed to Harichowk from where the jeeps leave for Ghandruk on a sharing basis. I was waiting for a city bus at the airport when I chanced to chat with a person who was trying to solicit a taxi ride. In a brief conversation I got to know that Ghandruk was a

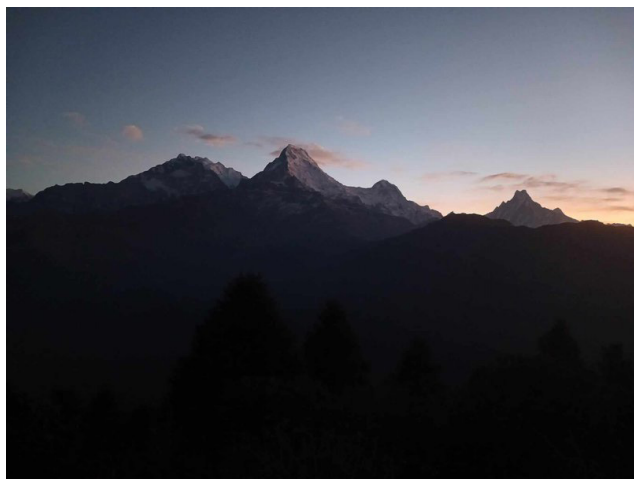
two and half hours ride from Harichowk. I was encouraged by the information. I took a local bus to the nearest stop to Harichowk. The bus I boarded didn't go to Harichowk but it went near it. I had to wait there for a while as it took time for the rest of the passengers to arrive. The vehicle would move once the owner earned Rs.6000.

It was a comfortable ride till Ghandruk. Except for the last 8 kilometers which was off road, the rest of the road was in good condition. It was Shivaratri night. There was a huge bonfire erected at the Ghandruk bus stop. I stayed at Blue Poppy Lodge at Ghandruk which at first glance appealed to me. I paid Rs.1500 for a room. A hot water shower was refreshing.

The next day I started early. After performing my morning ritual of pranayama and meditation, I was already on the trail by quarter to seven. I navigated my way through the Ghandruk village. As I was about to reach Bhaisikharka I met two other solo trekkers. Paola and I would make stories together.

At first glance Paola looked like a Nepali. Upon getting to know her Peruvian and Italian ancestry I was more intrigued by her. She could fluently speak six different languages. She lived in Germany. Every guess I made about her proved otherwise. This made conversing with her more interesting. Both of us stopped by a tea shop





at Bhaishikharka. I had my chapati, omelet and pickle for breakfast there. Paola just had an apple and black tea. She told me she wasn't feeling well. As we proceeded her condition didn't improve. As a trekker's ethics I couldn't leave her alone when she was sick. I surmised it was altitude sickness she suffered from. So as we proceeded we chatted. Paola worked for a German NGO AWO International. AWO International has an office here in Nepal as well. One very unusual thing I got to know about Paola was that she had unbaptized herself because Christians had to pay taxes to the Church.

At Banthanti we met Paki, an Italian dude. He too had an intriguing ancestry. His father was an Italian and mother a Portuguese. While Paola and Paki flirted with Italian and Portuguese languages I only had universal languages, smile and laughter, to keep up with them. In fact I was amused by how diverse the world is. We just have to meet different people and they make you so humble. I immediately realized how limited my horizon was. I offered them Pustakari, a local energy candy. In the beginning though Paki found them hard to chew, later on seemed to like them.

As we descended and ascended the hills Paola was drained out of energy. She couldn't eat because she felt pukish. Without food she was in a sorry state. I gave her electrolytes and company from Deurali.

I had stopped at Deurali for lunch after Paola and I had parted at Banthanti. At Banthanti she wasn't sure if she wanted to continue with the journey that day. However, we again met at Deurali. Dal, Bhat and Tarkari with pickles was delicious.

As we gained altitude it was getting difficult for Paola. However, we got to know that once we reached Deurali at around 3100 meters, we would descend for Ghorepani at 2874 meters. Reaching Ghorepani made more sense than staying at Deurali for us. It took us more than 10 hours to reach Ghorepani from Ghandruk that day. I am so happy that Paola didn't give up. At Ghorepani we had a heated bed and hot water shower at The Sunny Hotel for just Rs.1000. The view of the mountains from our common balcony was magnificent too.

Next morning I went to Poonhill alone. It took me an hour. However, there were hundreds of others who went to witness the rising sun and mesmerizing mountains. After hanging around for some time there I had to come back to Ghorepani to catch a bus to Pokhara. Paola and I had breakfast together. Immediately after having breakfast we boarded the bus.

The bus ride was comparatively comfortable given the terrain and the newly opened track. I chatted with fellow passengers. One of the sensitive issues we touched about was casteism. I was encouraged to learn that with education and international exposure of the people in the village, in that area the severity of it was lessening.

As we descended Paola felt better. At Lakeside Pokhara we parted our ways. My trip wasn't over yet. I had my early dinner at Japanese restaurant Fujiyama and stayed at Hotel Snowland. Next morning after performing my morning rituals I went to Bindabasini temple to offer my prayers. I returned back to Lakeside and went to Tal Barahi temple. I nibbled baby corn chili and steam rice at The Old Lan Hua Chinese for lunch. I indulged myself in Spa for an hour. My muscles had stiffened after the previous days' travel. I had an apple pie at The German Bakery and my early dinner at Marwadi restaurant. My last evening at Pokhara I spent witnessing Arati in front of Tal Barahi temple.

On the fifth day of my trip I went for a morning walk along the Fewa Lake and took a flight to Kathmandu. Airplanes make life so convenient. Convenience and advancement in transportation is one of the wonders that the human mind and civilization has achieved.



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VOL. 14 No. 03, August 21, 2020 (Bhadra 05, 2077) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75



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VOL. 14 No. 01, July 17, 2020 (Shrawan 02, 2077) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75



VOL. 13 No. 18, June 19, 2020 (Asadh 5, 2077) Publisher: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75

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