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editorial



Although the government has presented its budget before the Legislature Parliament, the whole process was in the back bench, given the country's business to hold the second round of elections, which are coming closer. However, no major political breakthrough is in sight to bring a section of the Madhesh-based parties, united under Rashtriya Janta Party Nepal (RJPN), on board. Although one faction of the United Democratic Madheshi Front led by Upendra Yadav has decided to participate in the elections, RJPN is pressing for an amendment of the constitution, calling for withdrawal of cases, compensation for victims of Madhesh agitation and delineation of border of local bodies in Madhesh on the basis of population as the prerequisite to take part in the elections. For the three parties, which hold two thirds of majority in the Legislature Parliament as required to amend the constitution, the present priority is to go for polls and it is unlikely that these parties accept the demands at least before the poll of June 28. With so much of loss in life and property during the Madhesh agitation, it will be a suicidal for RJPN to take part in the elections without some concessions even if they are an eyewash. Despite promulgating the new constitution legally, participation of RJPN is essential to establish its legitimacy. If the three major parties remain adamant on RJPN demands, the seventh constitution of Nepal is likely to face a similar fate as the past six constitutions. The second round of elections may be held by mobilizing the security personnel. However, it will face the question of legitimacy again. As political disputes and differences continue to dominate the political spectrum, we have looked into the importance of the World Environment Day in our cover story. How will Nepal's transition from a unitary to federal structure impact its environmental policy? This issue has also included an interview with the secretary of Election Commission, Gopi Mainali, for a fresh look into the preparations for the second phase of local polls.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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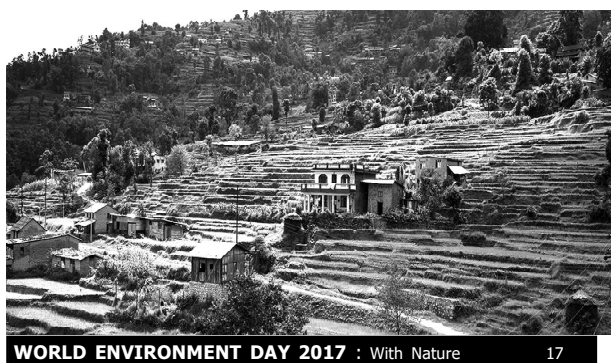
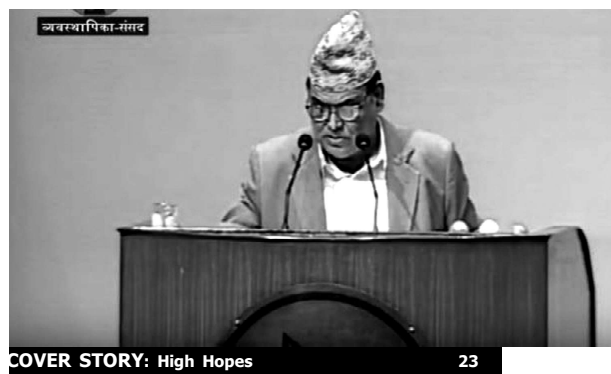
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NEPAL ARMY

Mission Diplomacy

COAS General Rajendra Chhetri's recent visit to the United States has enhanced Nepal's diplomatic image

By A CORRESPONENT

Every state uses different channels of diplomacy -- civilian diplomacy conducted through regular diplomatic missions is one of them.

Equally important and valuable for the country's image and security, however, is the

an international peacekeeping training, high level U.S. Army Generals, among others, visited Nepal.

These activities were not

the country name and fame through the UN Peacekeepers.

Following the appointment as COAS, General Chhetri has made several visits to different parts of the world. Among the visits, his recent sojourn to the United States of America on the invitation of U.S. Army is very significant.

As U.S. Army has been extending support to enhance the disaster capability of Nepal Army and U.S.'s contribution in the last earthquake was very significant in terms of number of personnel and equipment, this visit of COAS General Chhetri has helped to strengthen the relations between the two armies.

During the last year's border crisis, the visit of COAS General Chhetri helped ease the tension. As an old institution of Nepal, Nepal Army has shown that it has the capability of handling the modern-day diplomacy at the global stage. ■



COAS General Chhetri returning from US visit Photo : Nepal Army



COAS General Chhetri exchanging gift with 25th Infantry Division's Commanding Officer Major General Christopher G. Cavoli Photo : Nepal Army

military diplomacy. Along with securing the national border and defending the national sovereignty, the modern day military institutions are handling diplomacy as well.

With the chief of Nepal Army visiting countries abroad, the institution's clout is growing. In his last 20 months of tenure, COAS General Chhetri made visits that took him to African countries where he observed the state of Nepalese peace keepers.

There were also return visits from other countries as well. Chiefs of Indian Army have been regularly visiting Nepal. Similarly, Chinese Defense Minister also visited Nepal. In

exceptional. Having almost six decades of experience in peacekeeping operations around the world, Nepal Army has earned

कल इण्डिया... मात्र रु. २.८० प्रति मिनेट

साथै कतार, साउदी अरेबिया, यू.ए.इ., बहराइन र कुवेतमा फोन गर्दा अब मात्र रु. १२ प्रति मिनेट ।

फोन गर्ने तरिका : ९४२४+कन्ट्रि कोड + फोन नं.

थप जानकारीका लागि :

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उल्लेखित महशुल दरमा नेपाल सरकारको नियमानुसार लाग्ने कर समावेश गरिएको छैन ।



नेपाल टेलिकम

NEWSNOTES

Sustainable Preparedness Sought

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development



(DFID), United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) and the World Food Program (WFP) met at the Humanitarian Staging Area (HSA) to discuss sustainable methods to work together on better preparedness for crises.

"The consultation brought together representatives from the Government, Chief of Missions from various embassies, donors as well as the UN agencies, with the aim of discussing how the humanitarian community can work together to prepare for future emergencies," said a press release issued by WFP.

While opening the event, the Joint Secretary for Policy Division of Ministry of Home Affairs, Kedar Neupane said: "the coordination between the National Emergency Operation Center, the Ministry of Home Affairs, WFP and the Logistics Cluster was excellent during the earthquake emergency. It allowed us to handle, store and dispatch humanitarian relief such as tarpaulins, blankets, food and medication to the earthquake-affected areas in a very efficient manner."

"This initiative, by thinking ahead, saved 8 weeks of confusion and coordination at the airport which implied that humanitarian goods were moved quickly, saving lives," said Gail Marzetti, Head of DFID Nepal.

"Nepal is among the top ten most disaster-affected countries in the world, both in terms of mortality and number of events," said Valerie Julliard, United Nations Resident Coordinator.

"Meeting here at the HSA with our partners and stakeholders, we see a concrete evidence of how we can do better when we all work together. The next step now is to find a sustainable way forward to keep the HSA going and to expand this model," said Pippa Bradford, WFP Representative and Country Director.

UN Nepal, Yeti Partnership In SDGs

With a partnership between UN Nepal and Yeti Airlines, a program has been launched to promote the SDGs in Nepal.

According to a press release issued by UN, Yeti Airlines will promote SDGs logo through different means including painting at the airport bus.

Nepal's Yeti Airlines and the United Nations have agreed to promote global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to raise awareness to reduce poverty, improve wellbeing and protect the environment.

Known as the Global Goals, the SDGs are being promoted by the United Nations worldwide to reach targets to improve health, education and development by 2030 which most countries in the world have signed up to. These are realistic goals that replace the earlier Millennium Development Goals, which Nepal mostly achieved.

Under the partnership, the UN and Yeti Airlines will undertake joint initiatives to raise awareness on the SDGs and mobilise relevant stakeholders and advocates for their contribution to the achievement of the Goals. Yeti's new aircraft as well boarding passes and other literature will carry the SDG goals and slogans.

UNDP Nepal Country Director Renaud Meyer and Yeti Airlines CEO Umesh Chandra Rai signed the agreement in Kathmandu.



"The United Nations in Nepal is pleased and excited to have the Yeti Airlines as our first private sector partner for the Global Goals in Nepal. This has certainly given a very positive message to the development and business communities in Nepal and the world over about the important role the private sector can play in advancing the SDGs," said UNDP Nepal Country Director Renaud Meyer.

"Giving back to the society in every possible way has been a part of our regular practice and initiative, as flying is not the only thing we do," said Yeti Airlines CEO Umesh Chandra Rai. "As a company doing responsible business, we are glad to have this opportunity to work together with the United Nations for the global cause."

EU Film Festival In Kathmandu

Head of Delegation at European Union Delegation to Nepal Rensje Teerink inaugurated the fourth edition of the EU Film Festival.

Several European films were displayed at the event, packed by young Nepalis and a huge crowd of people. This is the fifth consecutive year of the film festival.

Organized by European Union in cooperation with British Council, the festival will conclude on 25th March 2015. There will be four shows every day. The movie festival is entitled 'Voices of the Youth' and features 19

movies from different European Union Member States.

Opening the film festival, Teerink said the festival will bring films from different European countries.

CoAS Chhetri Meets Senior US Army Officials

Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) General Rajendra Chhetri has paid a courtesy call on US Army Pacific Commanding General Robert B Brown in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The meeting dwelled on bolstering military relations and promoting mutual trust and goodwill that exists between the armies of Nepal and the United States, according to a press statement issued by the Directorate of Public Relations of Nepal Army recently. The US Army Pacific Command had offered a guard of honor to CoAS Chhetri on the same day.

CoAS Chhetri had inspected various US Army units including the 25th Infantry Division. Besides attending various briefings and events organized by different US army units, General Chhetri held a meeting with the 25th Infantry Division Commander Major General Christopher G Cavoli.

CoAS Chhetri was on an official visit to the USA upon the invitation of the US Pacific Commanding General Brown from May 17. General Chhetri was scheduled to return home on May 26.

Handover Ceremony

Minister for Labor and Employment Suryaman Gurung, Ambassador Alaina B. Teplitz and U.S. Embassy



defense team took part in an evening ceremony to honor seven Nepali employees of DynCorp International and their families.

According to U.S. Embassy, Nepal's Facebook page, the employees were injured or killed while helping the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen the Afghan National Police and Army to protect against insurgents. The families were given the Chairman's Purple Star Award which is Dyncorp's most prestigious honor. Ambassador Teplitz and the Minister expressed their deep appreciation for their commitment and sacrifice.

'India Keen To Partner With Nepal'

Indian Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri has said India



wants to become a partner in Nepal's quest for infrastructure development and economic progress.

Dubbing Indo-Nepal relations as special, he said bilateral ties between the two countries were deep-rooted and went beyond the realm of politics, economy and culture. "Even our Gods and Goddesses are closely connected," he said while speaking at the Reporter's Club.

Indian envoy to Nepal Puri said that his interest in Nepal was to provide support enhancing connectivity links in the country.

Speaking with the media in Kathmandu, envoy Puri said that India wants to help Nepal and partner with Nepal for better connectivity across the country.

"My interest is in connectivity. We are among the largest providers of lines of credit here in Nepal and we want to make this even faster," he said. "India is and will remain strongly committed to partnering with Nepal, technologically, capacity-wise and in terms of implementation."

Ambassador Puri refused to comment on Nepal's politics, including the local level elections.

When asked how India views Madhesi political forces' hesitation to take part in the second phase of local level elections, the envoy said, "We always wish to see that it happen in as much inclusive a manner as possible."

The second phase of the local level elections is scheduled for June 14 in Provinces 1, 2, 5 and 7.

"The Indian envoy said India had become part of many connectivity projects in Nepal - including railways, roadways, integrated check-posts and electricity transmission lines. He also admitted that some projects had failed to meet expectations due to the cumbersome bureaucratic process and issues of compensation," reports The Himalayan Times.

"India wishes to be a partner in Nepal's infrastructure development and economic progress," he added. He also expressed confidence that bilateral ties between the two countries would further strengthen in the days to come.

Ambassador Puri praised the contribution of Nepali Gorkha soldiers of the Indian Army. Reiterating "neighborhood first" policy of the Government of India, he termed the four high-level visits between the two countries in a span of eight months "unprecedented".

Since September 2016, Nepal's prime minister visited India twice and the presidents of both the neighbors paid a state visit to each other's country. ■

BUSINESS BRIEF

NIRVANA CHAUDHARY

Awarded For Excellence

Known for his dedication and commitment, Nirvana Chaudhary, managing director of Chaudhary Group and Chaudhary Foundation, has been awarded with the 'Philanthropist and Youth Entrepreneur 2017' award.

In a ceremony held in Indian Capital New Delhi recently,



Rajiv Gandhi Global Excellence Award Foundation felicitated young Chaudhary with the award for philanthropy and youth entrepreneurship.

Along with his father, Forbes-listed Nepalese billionaire Binod Chaudhary, Nirvana has been working in various sectors as a philanthropist.

He was honored with the award by Rajeev Gandhi Foundation, India, for his contribution to entrepreneurship and social development. According to the foundation, it provided the award to Chaudhary in recognition of his efforts in philanthropic activities and social services through Chaudhary Foundation, a philanthropic arm under the Chaudhary Group.

Budget Implementation Will Help BFIs Flourish

President of Nepal Bankers Association Anil Keshari Shah said he is happy that the budget has been unveiled despite several adversaries. "Implementing the budget is going to be a big task for the government. Because of the election code of conduct, the government has not brought any new program. It has simply given continuity to programs and priorities of the existing budget," said Shah. "Despite bringing new plans and programs, the government has failed to implement many of them in the past fiscal years."



"I am hopeful that the implementation of the new budget will help the bank and financial institutions (BFIs) to grow further. If the government achieves the economic growth target of 7.2 percent in the new fiscal year, the BFIs will grow automatically. The allocation of

budget for local units will also address problems seen at the local level. The government has allocated a huge chunk of budget for infrastructure development, which is very positive."

Paid, Unpaid Work

OXFAM Nepal has organized a national dissemination workshop on balancing paid work and unpaid care work.

Although almost everyone has been talking about economic empowerment of women, only a few talk about the right to choice of women in labor market. Recently, however, there is a good debate going on to balance paid work and unpaid care to achieve women's economic empowerment.

Oxfam's national level sharing workshop built on a research entitled "Balancing Unpaid Care Work and Paid Work."

It is a part of the Growth of Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) Program. The research is carried out in Nepal by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) and it also a part of a multi-country (India, Nepal, Tanzania and Rwanda) project.

Participated in by high level government officials, civil society organizations' representatives, experts and other



stakeholders, the workshop disseminated the findings of the study on social organization of care, precarious condition of work in informal sector and balancing paid work and unpaid care work and, it also attempted to collectively brainstorm and identify areas of policy intervention and Policy advocacy.

Highlighting the GrOW project, Alejandra Vargas Garcia, IDRC, said that the issue of women empowerment needs to be looked at from diverse and various perspectives. Introducing the work in South Asia Deepa Chopra from IDS said they have conducted intensive interactions in two areas of western Nepal.

The first session of the workshop was chaired by Dr. Suresh Dhakal, with a presentation on social organization on care by Anweshaa Ghosh of ISST. Renuka Gurung of Oxfam and Pukar Malla spoke as speakers.

Chaired by Dr. Bimala Rai Poudyal, Anjam Singh of ISST spoke on second session on precarious working conditions of women in unorganized sector, followed by the comment from Om Thapalyia and Mona Sherpa, Deputy Country Director of HELVATS.

Presenting the paper, Anweshaa Ghosh and Anjam Singh of ISST on balancing paid work and unpaid care work shed light on the overall scenario of the respective

region. Bimal Gadal, sustainable development program director, concluded the program.

At a time when there is a growing debate over women's empowerment, only a few talk about balancing the paid and unpaid care work. Opening the Dissemination Workshop, Cecilia Keizer, country director of Oxfam Nepal, said that the issue of unpaid care work is overlooked and this needs to be looked at in the context of women empowering.

Global IME Bank Opens New Branch

In association with Sakchyam to Access Finance Program, Global IME Bank Ltd has started branchless banking services in Kalikot District. According to a press release issued by Sunita Sharma Dhakal of Global IME, the branch was opened in Ward No. 2 of Khadachakar



Municipality of Kalikot district.

Senior relationship manager of Global IME Bank, Swechha Rana inaugurated the bank, handing over the machine to Karn Bahadur Khatri, its representative, who is a resident of the ward. This is 46th branch of the bank.

The bank provides services in money deposit, payment, mobile recharge and money transfer. Under the program, the bank has already opened 3 extension counters and 13 branchless banking services.

Former Secy Appointed DG Of FNCCI

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has appointed former government secretary Suresh Man Shrestha as its director general (DG).

Issuing a statement, FNCCI said Shrestha was appointed to the post. Shrestha, who was in government service for more than 30 years, took retirement from the National Planning Commission (NPC) recently.

According to FNCCI, Shrestha has played a crucial role in securing membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) while he was working at Nepal's permanent mission to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva. "Shrestha also served as the Consulate General of Nepal at Kolkata. He has good experience in the field of education, diplomacy, industry, trade, among others," the statement added.

Shrestha holds a Master's degree in Science and Administration. He completed his post graduation in

environmental management from the Netherlands.

NIC Asia Appoints Two Deputy CEOs



In a bid to further enhance its efficiency, NIC Asia has appointed Roshan Kumar Neupane and Sudhir Pandey as its deputy chief executive officers.

Neupane is a chartered accountant and had started his banking career with then Bank of Asia Nepal around 10 years ago as the chief of Internal Audit Department.

Similarly, Pandey started his banking career with then Nepal Grindlays Bank around 1990. He has worked in various banks and also served NIC Asia Bank under various capacities, as per a media release. ■

BK SHRESTHA

Tourism Loss

The demise of Radisson Hotel owner BK Shrestha is a great loss in tourism sector

At a time when Nepal's tourism sector is gradually recovering following the earthquakes and border blockades, the death of tourism entrepreneur B.K. Shrestha is a major blow.

Having over four decades of experience in the tourism sector, late Shrestha spent his entire life in the promotion of tourism in Nepal. He had entered the tourism sector through Himalaya Travels and Tours, and later opened Hotel Radisson.

Sixty-eight years old Shrestha had been suffering from cancer for the last few months. After receiving intensive treatment at the hospital, he had been receiving treatment at his house at the supervision of a doctor.



Former president of Hotel Association Nepal (HAN) Shrestha is known for his charismatic personality. Soft spoken Shrestha's death is a great loss in the tourism sector.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters. His first daughter stays in the US. Her youngest daughter studies at a college in Kathmandu. His second daughter has been playing an active role in the overall management of Hotel Radisson after he started suffering from the disease. ■

Prachanda Resigns

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal resigned on May 24, 2017, paving way for the major coalition partner Nepali Congress to form a new government as per the agreement reached between the two parties at the time of formation of the current dispensation in July/August last year. Tendering his resignation just five days ahead of the annual budget date and twenty one days ahead of the second phase local polls in the remaining forty one districts, Dahal claimed that he broke the long standing tradition of lack of morality in Nepali politics. He went on to claim that none of the power sharing deals had been implemented in the past resulting in mistrust among the political forces. A shrewd politician Dahal decided to

take a graceful exit at a time when the first phase polls had concluded successfully and the economy is likely to grow impressively this year. He too cannot be denied some credit emanating from an end to hour's long power cut, signing of One Belt One Road initiative with China, finalizing deal on 1200 MW Budhigandaki hydropower project and delimitation of local units under federal setup. Dahal also managed to get twenty two more units added in the southern plains of Nepal, hoping that the disgruntled leaders of Madhesh-centric parties will come on board the election process. The government chose to do this even at the cost of being accused of violating the constitution, the election code of conduct and established national and international practices. Even as head of a caretaker government, Dahal remained very active overseeing formulation and presentation of the annual budget and doing everything possible to ensure smooth holding of second phase polls under the leadership of his political partner, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is almost certain to become in a few days the prime minister of this country for the fourth time. Deuba is likely to face a tough time with the major opposition UML still resorting to

occasional House obstructions and the Sanghiya Gathabandhan, led by Rashtriya Janata Party (RJP-N), still showing no encouraging signs of participation in the polls.

The major opposition party UML took a break from House disruption activity and allowed President Bidya Devi Bhandari on May 25 to read the government's policies and programs that provided guidelines to the Ministry of Finance to frame the annual budget for 2017/2018. It indicated that a big chunk of fund is likely to be allocated to empower the local bodies. UML quickly resumed the disruption, not even



DR. TILAK RAWAL

allowing the House to formally thank the President for reading the annual paper. The Election Commission (EC) also did disappoint the government by stating that it was not possible to hold polls on June 14 in the newly created 22 local units. Adding insult to injury, The Supreme Court issued an interim order against government's decision to increase the number of local units in Terai, stating that the decision to increase the number of units and revise their boundaries was against the Local Level Election Act 2017. The decision of the Sanghiya Gathabandhan to launch fresh protests, which came hours before the Supreme Court ruling, basically to disrupt the polls also was disturbing. In the changed context, any decision to be made by the duo

(Deuba/Prachanda) will have to take into consideration the fact that the government is under tremendous pressure from the agitating parties which do not look fully committed to polls despite withdrawal of protest programs and the major opposition that can disrupt the House as it did to protest against the impeachment motion filed against Chief Justice Sushila Karki, government's decision to increase the number of local units and its efforts to amend the constitution. It did disrupt the House again lately to protest the Bharatpur Metropolitan City vote counting disruption. Supreme Court's

verdict and EC's reluctance to accommodate the increased number for the polls on June 14 further complicated the situation. Even without the apex court's ruling that stayed the decision to increase the number of local units, the government would have to either postpone the election or decide to have a third phase for the added units after the conclusion of the second phase polls in 41 districts of Provinces 1, 2, 5 and 7. It is wise on the part of the government that it has rescheduled second phase of local level elections for the third time on June 28. Weather and religious festivities permitting, looks like the government is prepared to reschedule voting any number of times to ensure participation of the agitating

forces. It is a matter of commonsense that election in Terai will be very difficult to organize if the agitating Madheshi forces decide to foil the polls and even if they are held by any chance, they will be meaningless politically without the participation of Madhesh-centric parties. Looks like the ruling coalition has realized this fact and took the decision to delay the second phase polls. Although it does not look the agitators would oblige the ruling parties easily, they must be aware that the political cost that would flow from nonparticipation in polls is not something to be brushed

Weather and religious festivities permitting, looks like the government is prepared to reschedule voting any number of times to ensure participation of the agitating forces. It is a matter of commonsense that election in Terai will be very difficult to organize if the agitating Madheshi forces decide to foil the polls and even if they are held by any chance, they will be meaningless politically without the participation of Madhesh-centric parties.

aside easily. Clouds of uncertainty certainly hang over the elections to be held. Prachanda must be feeling uneasy at times that he has to operate as a caretaker Prime Minister in these unpleasant times and may also be praying that he does not have to wait long for Deuba to replace him formally through parliamentary process. Hope he does not have to work like Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, senior leader of UML, who continued for months as a caretaker prime minister in the past. Prachanda, however, need not be too disappointed because in the midst of confusion and uncertainty, people have begun to see a ray of hope with the resumption of House proceedings on Saturday (May 27) following the decision of the two ruling parties (NC and Maoist Center) to withdraw an impeachment motion their lawmakers had registered against Chief Justice. This facilitated immediate commencement of discussions on government policies and programs and paved way for other annual rituals like reading of survey report and making public the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure. With rescheduling of polls and assurances that the election laws will be amended, so that the new parties are registered and get election symbols, it looks like the agitating parties will participate in the second phase polls even without amending the constitution for now. The agitating parties are also hopeful that government would make a move to vacate the apex court's May 26 verdict that stayed government's decision to increase the number of local units in Terai. UML has also shown some flexibility that they are not against amending the election laws to accommodate the agitators but the major opposition party is against constitution amendment and increasing the number of local units before the polls. Despite some hiccups that are surfacing intermittently, things appear to be moving positively ahead albeit slowly. Government's policies and programs have been approved and budget has been presented in the Parliament.

The government made public on jetha 15 (May 29) its annual budget with a total outlay of Rs. 1278 billion of which 62.8 percent is set aside to meet recurrent expenditure, while capital expenditure and financial management account for

If the execution part of the budget is paid proper attention to right from the beginning, it should not be too difficult to achieve the hoped 7.2 percent growth next year but the fact to be remembered is that next fiscal year will have to battle with a robust, healthy current year, unlike the lucky this year which is currently facing the weak and feeble last fiscal year when the economy stagnated.

26.2 and 11 percent of the budget respectively. It may be noted that National Planning Commission (NPC) had advised the government early on to cap the budget at Rs. 1156 billion



PM Prachanda

for the coming fiscal year but the Resource Committee headed by vice chairman of NPC decided to inflate the size by 22 percent, basically listening to the argument of authorities at the Ministry of Finance who have set aside large sum for federal units and have a target of collecting Rs. 730 billion as revenue. It is interesting that money that is likely to remain unspent this year (Rs. 102.7 billion) is helping the budget for the next fiscal year. It could be a permanent source, looking at the trend, because last year it happened, it has happened this year as only 52 percent of the budget has been spent and a meager 34 percent of the capital expenditure (Rs. 311 billion) is expended thus far. It is interesting that along with foreign grant (Rs. 72 billion), internal debt (Rs. 145 billion) and foreign loan (Rs. 214 billion), unspent money is also appearing as a significant source. Another fact to be noted is that capital expenditure has been marginally hiked (Rs. 335 billion), compared to last year's allocation. Indeed, it is unwise to simply allocate more under a head when inability to spend is emerging as a major impediment. Looking at this poor performance of the government on this front, one wonders how the ill-equipped and capacity-lacking newly-formed local bodies will be able to spend meaningfully the sum of Rs. 225 billion allocated in the budget. Those concerned must not forget that capacity creation/enhancement is urgently needed to take optimal benefit of these kinds of fiscal transfers from the center. If the execution part of the budget is paid proper attention to right from the beginning, it should not be too difficult to achieve the hoped 7.2 percent growth next year but the fact to be remembered is that next fiscal year will have to battle with a robust, healthy current year, unlike the lucky this year which is currently facing the weak and feeble last fiscal year when the economy stagnated. Much depends on the state of political stability in the country and the level of attention that the economy receives from the concerned. It appears that the government is prepared for anything doable to get the participation of agitating parties. The RJP-N leaders may wish not to ignore the wise counsel given over lunch by Mr. Puri, Indian envoy, to them that the party should take part in the second phase of polls without insisting on constitution amendment, which looks impossible currently due to lack of consensus among the major parties. Let us pray that the situation does not deteriorate alarmingly. ■

LOCAL POLL II

On Balance

Even with the postponement of the second phase of local elections by weeks for June 28, RJPN's participation in the elections is unlikely

By KEHAB POUDEL

With the decision to amend the election laws and postpone the second phase of elections for June 28, the government is expecting that Rastriya Janta Party Nepal (RJPN) will join the local elections.

However, RJPN, which has been launching a nationwide campaign against the elections, is unlikely to join in the fray. RJPN workers are already padlocking and vandalizing the election offices in different parts of the country.

After successfully holding the first phase of elections peacefully, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who is going to hand over the government baton to NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba next week, is overenthusiastic.

"I am confident that RJPN will take part in the elections once the election law is amended to settle the issue of distribution of symbol and time for the preparation of candidates," said Prime Minister Dahal. "As CPN-UML has already said that they will consider the amendment of constitution following the elections, I will push the agenda for constitution amendment after the elections."

At a time when ruling parties, Nepali Congress and Maoist Center, and opposition CPN-UML have already started election campaigning by selecting the candidates for the next poll, RJPN leaders are preparing their candidates for the next round of agitation to obstruct the elections.

"Our bottom-line is the

amendment of the constitution, with the number of local bodies decided on the basis of population," RJPN leader Rajendra Mahato told New Spotlight. "If they are ready to amend the election law through a fast track, what hinders them to amend the constitution the same way."

"Leaders of three parties have

the money but it is yet to take a decision to declare those killed in the six months of the Madheshi agitation as martyrs.

Given the stay order it place, it is unlikely that any change in the current state of local bodies will be made. Similarly, the government has also stopped the proceedings to withdraw the cases.



been cheating Madheshis with false promises. How can we trust this government to amend the constitution and increase the numbers of local bodies in Madhesh when it is unable to take the administrative decision like withdrawing the false cases against Madheshi agitators, paying the compensation and declaring them martyrs."

With the stay order of the Supreme Court, the issue of withdrawing the case against the Madhesh agitation and increasing the numbers of new local bodies in Madhesh is uncertain. Similarly, the government has distributed

As the possibility of fulfilling major demands of RJPN is hanging on a balance at the moment, RJPN cannot have any justification to prove their participation in local poll to legitimize the constitution. More than 60 Madheshis were killed and hundreds of others wounded in opposing the same constitution, blamed to be non-inclusive.

"We have already shown an optimum level of flexibility by withdrawing the demand of rewriting the constitution. If three parties do not agree a just amendment, we don't have any option other than to fight," said

Mahato.

As three major parties including NC, CPN-UML and Maoist Center and two Madhesh based parties, Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party and Sanghiya Samajbadi Party, have decided to take part in the elections, elections may be held in the plains.

However, given the current situation, RJPN workers will make it hard for elections to be smooth in many districts, villages and municipalities. "If we start to fulfill demands of each of them, nothing can be possible in the country. There must be the second round of elections as scheduled," said K.P. Sharma Oli.

RJPN leader Mahato has his own argument. "We are ready to sacrifice more youth to establish our right of equality and end the discrimination. Our participation is unlikely until the real amendment," said Mahato.

As RJPN is challenging the very foundation of constitution, Prime Minister Dahal is stressing its full implementation. "I am convinced that the achievements ensured by the constitution would be institutionalized with the building of the important foundation for constitution implementation after holding of the election to the local level,

province and the federal legislature," said Dahal.

RJPN is not alone outside the constitutional process. A faction of Maoists under the leadership of former rebel Netra Bikram Chand is launching a nationwide violent campaign against the present constitution. Similarly, there are formidable numbers of followers of former monarch, who is isolated by the three parties to sit outside the current politics.

Given Nepal's long history of leaving a faction or two outside the political process, a problem for the future, it is likely to see these forces combining to threaten the present constitutional regime.

With so many contradictions and disputes, the constitution has so many flaws that it is creating constitutional frictions among the institutions. The recent example is the constitutional disputes involving the judiciary, legislature and executive branches. Following

frequent interventions on the executive order by Supreme Court, Nepali Congress and Maoist Center even registered an

impeachment motion against Chief Justice Sushila Karki.

"Not only the door to political stability has been opened with the holding of the first-phase of the local level election, but the journey to economic prosperity and positive change in the lives of the people has also begun. I have the deep faith that with the conclusion of the upcoming second-phase local level election, the people's representatives would assume their responsibility at the grass-root level, which would be a leap forward towards political stability and development in Nepal," the Prime Minister stated.

With so many pressures of major political parties, the local elections will be held on June 28. However, the presence of three political forces outside the constitutional process will continue to put Nepal in a state of instability. ■



नेपाल सरकार
अर्थ मन्त्रालय
आन्तरिक राजस्व विभागको

भुक्तानीमा कर कट्टी गरिएको करको विवरण र कर दाखिला गर्ने सम्बन्धी अत्यन्त जरुरी सूचना

आयकर ऐन, २०५८ ले रोजगार दाताले रकम भुक्तानी गर्दा, लगानी प्रतिफल र सेवा शुल्कको भुक्तानी गर्दा, आकस्मिक लाभको भुक्तानी गर्दा र ठेक्का वा कर भएको भुक्तानी गर्दा भुक्तानीकर्ताले कर कट्टी (अग्रिम कर कट्टी) गर्नुपर्ने रकम अग्रिम कर कट्टी गरी प्रत्येक महिना समाप्त भएको २५ दिन भित्र सम्बन्धित आन्तरिक राजस्व कार्यालयहरू तथा करदाता सेवा कार्यालयहरूमा विवरण र कट्टी गरिएको रकम दाखिला गर्नु पर्ने व्यवस्था रहेको विदितै छ । साथै भुक्तानीकर्ताले कागजात नराखेमा वा विवरण दाखिला नगरेमा, भुटा वा भ्रमपूर्ण विवरण दाखिला गरेमा तथा ऐन, नियमका व्यवस्थाको पालना नगरेमा शुल्क लाग्ने र तोकिएको मिति सम्म कर दाखिला नगरेमा व्याज लाग्ने कानूनी व्यवस्था रहेको छ । तसर्थ उपरोक्ता कानूनी व्यवस्था बमोजिम भुक्तानी गर्दा कर कट्टी गर्ने जिम्मेवारी भएका व्यक्तिहरूले कानूनमा तोकिएको समयमा अनिवार्य रूपमा कर कट्टी गर्नुहुन र कर कट्टी गरिएको विवरण तथा कर कट्टी रकम दाखिला गरी हिसाब फरफारक गर्नु हुन यो सूचना गरिएको छ ।

गौरवका साथ तिरौं कर, समृद्ध राष्ट्र हाम्रो रहर



नेपाल सरकार
अर्थ मन्त्रालय
आन्तरिक राजस्व विभागको

मालसामान तथा सेवा खरिद विक्री गर्दा विल विजक लिने दिने सम्बन्धी आन्तरिक राजस्व विभागको सूचना

मूल्य अभिवृद्धि कर ऐन २०५२ बमोजिम बस्तु तथा सेवा विक्री गर्दा विक्रेताले क्रेतालाई अनिवार्य रूपमा विजक जारी गरे नगरेको अनुगमन गर्न आन्तरिक र राजस्व विभाग तथा मातहत कार्यालयबाट बजारमा कर अधिकृत सहितको टोलीहरू खटाइएको छ । विक्रेताले विजक जारी गरेको नपाइएमा वा कारोबार भन्दा घटीमा विजक जारी गरेको पाइएमा मूल्य अभिवृद्धि कर ऐन बमोजिम कर अधिकृतले प्रत्येक पटक रु. ५००० (पाँच हजार मात्र) तत्कालै जरिवाना गर्न सक्नेछ । त्यसैले प्रत्येक विक्रेताले बस्तु तथा सेवा विक्री गर्दा अनिवार्य रूपमा विजक जारी गर्नुहुन र बस्तु तथा सेवा खरिद गर्दा क्रेताले आफुले तिरेको मूल्यको अनिवार्य रूपमा विजक लिनुहुन अनुरोध छ ।

गौरवका साथ तिरौं कर, समृद्ध राष्ट्र हाम्रो रहर



नेपाल सरकार
अर्थ मन्त्रालय
आन्तरिक राजस्व विभागको
बाजिम्पाट, काठमाण्डौ

मूल्य अभिवृद्धि करमा दर्ता भएका व्यक्तिहरूले आफ्नो कारोवार स्थलमा मूल्य अभिवृद्धि सहितको प्राइस ट्याग उल्लेख गर्ने सम्बन्धी सूचना

मूल्य अभिवृद्धि कर नियमावली (संशोधन सहित) २०५३ को नियम १४ (ख) मा मूल्य अभिवृद्धि करमा दर्ता भएका व्यक्तिले आफ्नो औद्योगिक प्रदर्शनी कक्ष, विक्री कक्ष, होटल, रेष्टुरेण्ट, वार, कारोबार स्थल वा आपूर्ति गर्ने स्थानमा राखिएको कर लाग्ने वस्तु वा सेवाको विक्री मूल्य (ट्याग प्राइस, मेनु प्राइस र सेल्फ प्राइस) मा मूल्य अभिवृद्धि सहितको मूल्य उल्लेख गर्नुपर्नेछ भन्ने व्यवस्था भएकोले सोही अनुसार गर्नु गराउनु हुन सम्बन्धित सबैको जानकारीका लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।

गौरवका साथ तिरौं कर, समृद्ध राष्ट्र हाम्रो रहर

What's in an Address?

Many years ago when I was in London I saw a number of houses with blue oval plaques stating that 'so and so' personage who lived for the period stated, had stayed there. All very well, but as I myself used to stay in a road near the Lords Cricket Ground it was customary for me to frequently pass by 212 Baker Street, where the detective Sherlock Holmes was said to have stayed. Though one was moving from reality to fiction, this was a generous acknowledgement of a fictional character with worldwide fame.

Whilst studying and living in London I was invited many times to the Royal Nepalese Embassy located there. It should have been numbered 13, but perhaps being inauspicious by the British standards of those times it bore the numbering of its address as 12A, Kensington Palace Gardens. There was security too, for sometimes we saw a London Bobby standing beside a sentry box located at the exit end of the premises. It had another advantage too. The story handed down the grapevine was that after any wild party at No. 12A, it was quite in order for the empty bottles to be surreptitiously left at the entry gate of No.14 which was of then USSR Embassy in the UK. Of course one had to be careful and not be seen by the almost ever present policeman there. London then and even now, in spite of BREXIT is a status symbol place and if one was fortunate or wealthy enough to have a Mayfair address, s/he would be floating in the air.

Not so with us in Nepal. We have an Arubari, Bansbari, Chaksibari, Khursanibari and what not. With the coming of the more urban centres - Mahanagarपालिका, Nagarpalikas, the Smartcities and the urban centres to be scattered in the seven provinces of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, things are already on the move and many changes can be expected in the years to come. One realises then that the first municipality of our land only came into being as late as in the nineteen forties at the time of the Rana PM Padma Shumsher!

My earliest recollection of my address in Kathmandu was Block No. 21/504 Dillibazar / Gyaneshwar. Later as the metropolis grew it gave way to a newer house numbering system and so was changed to another designation which I am unable to recall. The implementation of the present categorisation is interesting.

It was in 1979 when I went to Tokyo I realised that the house numbers seemed very individualistic and did not correspond to the regular 1, 2, 3 that I was used to. It was many years later that this Japanese system of house numbering was also adopted in Kathmandu. For example a house numbered 300/62 Nagar Sadak was said to signify that the spot was 300 metres from a designated stop and having reached the point one would have to turn inward and go on a



BY HEMANG DIXIT

further 62 metres. There lo and behold the entrance of the house would be reached! How simple and practical it all seemed.

I was also informed by some advocates then that it would be very practical for the postman to deliver both letters and parcels. However this was a reality many years ago when the postman invariably suddenly turned up at Dasain time to ask for his Dasain Kharcha! Now a days the postman never comes as people communicate with e-mails in a matter of seconds and receive their replies forthwith.

The recent local elections have demonstrated that much change is in the air. I used to live in Ward 33 of Kathmandu, but now it is 30. The house numbering example, I quoted was introduced in Kathmandu but has not been properly implemented and utilised. It should be introduced to many city areas elsewhere in the country too. This is the age of computers, Smartphone, online shopping and even pizza delivery to the homes. This is the call of the times and agencies such as Muncha and Kaymu are already providing such a service. This method is very useful in emergencies too. In New Zealand, a single house along a rural area may have a 'Rapid Number 145' signifying its distance in metres from a designated point. Having received a distress call the driver with his ambulance would be there in a jiffy.

In conclusion, one remembers that Donald Trump once stated that as he already lived in Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, the shift to the White House on Penn. Ave. was no great deal. Late Harold Wilson's father, whilst visiting London took a picture of his 6 or 8 year old son sitting on the steps of 10, Downing Street. Many years later the adult Harold Wilson moved for sometime into the house as

prime minister of the land. Even now perhaps, in some village in India a small Indian boy may be dreaming of moving at some time in the future into --- 7, Lok Kalyan Marg (old 7, Race Course Road) in Delhi, whilst a Nepali lad in Jomsom / Jumla may have his sights in living for some time at No.1 Baluwatar. This is just life and ambition!

Following the local elections just concluded and the impending one in the remaining parts of the country on the horizon, there will be enthusiasts travelling and staying at places all around in the country. They will have enough funds and power to bring about relevant and required changes on a countrywide basis. The elected ones have even been given the authority to change the name/ designation for the area where they were elected from. Anything is possible. So let us wish them luck and hope for the best.

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SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

PM In Waiting

Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba is likely to begin his fourth tenure as prime minister next week

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba had three tenures as prime minister but no good work to show. His fourth prime ministership is also going to be in a politically very sensitive time, with no better political and economic implications.

If things go as planned, Deuba will be elected the prime minister next week. Although CPN-UML is likely to disturb the Legislature Parliament for a few days, delaying his ascension to the seat of prime minister, the time is politically and constitutionally favorable to him.

With the backing of four parties, NC leader Deuba has enough strengths to prove his majority in the Legislature Parliament.

Deuba was elected prime minister for the first time in 1996 following the reinstatement of parliament by a decision of the Supreme Court. Although he was able to pass the Integrated Mahakali Treaty by a two thirds majority in 1997, his government collapsed with one vote shortage as then Madheshi leader Gajendra Narayan Singh crossed the floor in his quest to test the majority in house.

He became prime minister in 2001 following the resignation of Girija Prasad Koirala. He dissolved the House in 2002 and former King

Gyanendra dismissed his government in 2003 terming him "incapable".

After the dissolution of the House, Deuba also split the party and formed Nepali Congress Democratic with his followers. Former King Gyanendra picked him up again as a prime minister in 2004 to lead the coalition government with CPN-UML. In 2005, former King Gyanendra again dismissed his government and put him in custody.

holding the first phase local elections, posting the highest economic growth in two decades and joining One Road One Belt Initiative with China and thawing the relations with India, among others.

Deuba's days will begin with a possible defiance and violence in terai by RJPN and a bleak economic scenario with declining remittances and predictions of abnormal monsoon.

Although Deuba is known for his



NC Leader Sher Bahadur Deuba

Twelve years after, at the age of 72, Deuba is almost likely to lead the government. His timing is crucial but difficult. His predecessor, Dahal, is taking all the credit, including

flexibility and political maneuvering, it is very difficult for him to conduct the two tier elections, national and provincial, in his next nine months in office. ■

"Second Phase Vote Count Will Be Faster"

After the successful conclusion of the first phase of local elections, the Election Commission is now preparing to conduct the second phase of the elections. As the preparations go on in a full swing, Election Commission secretary **GOPI NATH MAINALI** spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on various issues. Excerpts:

In how many places are you going to hold the elections?

We have already conducted the elections in 34 districts. The second round of elections will be held in 43 districts, including parts of Nawalparasi and Rukum. Elections will be held in 461 units, Municipality and Rural Municipality, covering 4186 wards. The Election Commission has already dispatched the necessary manpower and logistics for the elections. Earlier, we had planned to hold the elections in one round, setting up the office of the chief of Electoral Officer in places, including the units. However, we suspended the local-level units following the postponement of the program. We have already revived all the Electoral Officer's offices at the ward level now. Over 100,000 employees will be deployed for the poll. The offices of the chief election officers and units have already started operations in full phase. We have already trained the chief election officers. Following the training, electoral officers have already moved to their own places of posting to hold the elections. They will establish the election offices in 461 Municipal and Village municipal areas.

What lessons has the Election Commission learnt from the first round of election?

The commission has realized the need to conduct more voter education programs to reduce the number invalid votes. The commission is seriously working to reduce the numbers of invalid votes. Election offices have been established and they are at work from May 29. We are intensively holding voter education programs throughout the areas. There will be well planned security management. EC will work to minimize the security risk in the country. The commission is also discussing with security officials how to improve the security situation in the polling booths. The Election Commission is now working simultaneously to run the polling office, voter education and security programs.

There was a widespread complaint regarding the delay in vote counting. How does the EC look at it?

The EC is well aware of the situation. After the first few days, the pace of counting has tremendously improved. The counting of vote has already completed in the areas where the first round of elections was held. As the ballot paper is large, it takes time to count the vote. In the next round, the counting will be much better because we have learned what is lacking there. There are many candidates and many agents. There are 68 lines in ballot papers and over 400 symbols. There is the need to satisfy the agents of the candidates representing each symbol. There will be more counting places and we will also carry out the orientation program for the political parties. We are requesting the political parties not to raise disputes in counting over petty issues. We will use more manpower. It will take time in counting when there are disputes. We cannot count the vote in a rush because every vote is very important. The EC is analyzing all the shortcomings. We don't want to create complications by

counting in haste.

How do you see the first round of elections?

The EC is really grateful towards the political parties and voters for helping us in holding the elections successfully. Similarly, security agencies and civil servants also worked hard. People were very enthusiastic as exemplified with the turnout of 74-75 percent. It has shown that voters were eagerly waiting to cast vote in the local polls. This election is very significant. For the first time, there will be rural and municipal bodies elected under an inclusive pattern. The election was held for Rural Council and Municipal Council and Rural Executive and Municipal Executive, including judicial body. The participation of marginalized, minorities including Dalits and Women is higher and encouraging. This election was taken as festival. We want to contribute to repeat the first phase of our success. This is a great festival. This is related to legitimacy of the state and legitimacy of service delivery as well. This election has energized us to hold the second round elections more cautiously. This is a great occasion. We want to take voter education to all levels. Every voter should know what the district level bodies do and so on.

What plan do you have for voter education?

As we have conducted several voter education campaigns, we expect that there will be more voters participating in the second round. We want to take voter education in the rural level. Our programs include what is district coordination committee, what is the role and duty of Rural Municipality and Municipality and their functions.

Will it minimize the cancellation of ballot papers?

The current ratio of cancellation of ballot paper was not high. If we are able to continue the current level of momentum with new programs, it is likely we will see a reduction in the cancellation of ballot papers. We can minimize the loss. There will be more voter participation.

How many security forces and employees will be deployed for the second phase?

More than 150,000 security personal and 100,000 employees will be mobilized. Election Commission is limiting its budget not exceeding Rs.10 billion rupees allocated to the commission. If more budget is required, we will request with the government for that. As we have been spending money very cautiously, I don't think we will require a big supplementary budget now. We are spending with a concept of value for money. We have increased the activities but we have spent less budget compared to previous elections. Major expenditure goes to security arrangements and transport and other allowances for employees. EC has fewer budget for other activities. We cannot say how much budget has been spent for security since the security budget is allocated through a different channel. After completion of two phases of elections, we will publicize the budget and expenditure. We will disclose the expenditure which includes foreign aids.

It is reported that EC is barring foreign observer.



Can you explain why?

So far as foreign election observers are concerned, they are allowed to monitor only national level elections. Since the last many years, EC has been allowing the national observer. It is the policy of Election Commission and Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to allow foreigners foreign observers to monitor national elections.

What policy do you have for diplomatic missions based in Kathmandu for elections visit?

We have a system for "elections visit" to the development partners including UN bodies and Kathmandu based diplomatic missions. Under the liaison of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we permitted diplomatic missions for elections visit. Since the second round of elections is going to be held outside Kathmandu, it is very difficult for us to arrange such visits. Since most of our security personnel will be deployed in the elections booth, it will add further burden to provide high security to the representatives of diplomatic missions willing to visit outside the Kathmandu. Ten teams have applied for such election visit permissions through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We also provide transport pass. We will follow a similar practice for even the second phase. There is no practice to give observer status to diplomatic missions. We are arranging the elections visit only. Since there are separate Codes of Conduct, criteria and activities for elections observers. They have not even applied for observation.

Have you held meetings with diplomatic missions?

We held discussions with the diplomatic missions. Although they have shown the willingness to pay visits to many parts, we requested them to restrict such visits to a few places due to security reason. It is very difficult to allow

diplomats for visiting outside Kathmandu because of security risk. We have not taken any decision yet whether to allow the elections visit to Kathmandu based diplomatic mission. We will take the decision in consultation with Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We still have time.

What about the state of national observer groups?

In the first phase, 66 different local observer groups applied for election monitoring and the commission permitted 49 organizations, which met the criteria for observation. They mobilized 49700 observers in the first phase.

What do you expect from others to hold for free and fair elections in the second round?

We need support and cooperation from political parties. Election Commission is capable to ensure free and fair polls. Our constitutional duty is to hold the elections. We hope all political parties will take part in the second phase of elections. We have compulsions to hold the elections. We will like to request political parties to maintain restraints in the elections. It is unfortunate that there were sporadic incidents of violence in the first phase with some casualty. I would like to request all political parties to maintain restraint on behalf of Election Commission to maintain restrain in second phase. We are expecting political parties to abide by election codes of conduct. Political parties have to take all necessary work to pave the way for voters to exercise their right to vote peacefully. All the media groups and observers too need to follow the code of conduct. In the first phase, there were some reports regarding the misuse of observer status campaigning the candidates of certain political parties. ■

For Our Environmental Future

While studying plant ecology in the early 1980s, Gurus repeatedly emphasized that 'the Earth does not belong to man. Man belongs to the earth... All things are connected like the blood which unites one family... Whatever man does to the web, he does to himself. A nation that destroys its soils, destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.' These statements contributed to the need to realize the urgency of conserving the Nature - the plant, animal, water, air and the soil.

This year, the World Environment Day (WED) will be celebrated on the theme of 'Connecting People to Nature' to further realize the importance of and appreciate the beauty of Nature, and work together to protect the Earth that we all share. The WED is celebrated on June 5, the day the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment was started in 1972 and the day designated by the UN General Assembly on 15 December 1972 to observe as WED. The WED was celebrated for the first time on 5 June 1974 with the theme 'only one Earth' and WED celebrations have been held annually since 1974 to reaffirm, inter alia, concerns for the preservation and enhancement of the environment.

Nepal started celebrating WED, initially with contribution and coordination from the Man and Biosphere Programme, a UNESCO initiative, by organising exhibition, interaction, talk and awareness raising programmes. The then Prime Minister Nagendra Prasad Rijal planted a sapling to observe the WED in the mid-1980s. Later on the Environmental Impact Study Project, established in 1982 under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) was engaged in organizing this event. The National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPCS), being the Secretariat of the Environment Protection Council, organized a comparatively mega-event in 1993, after Rio Earth Summit in 1992, to celebrate WED under the theme 'poverty and the environment'. Initially coordinated by MoFSC and then by NPCS, the Ministry of Population and Environment (MoPE) was involved in organizing and coordinating WED activities since its establishment in September 1995. Recalling the past, WED main programme is honoured with the gracious presence of Prime Minister of Nepal from over two decades.

Nepal's experience in observing the WED has yet to contribute to improve the environmental quality, rather several commitments were made in conserving the environment and the Nature. Although the 1972 National Report prepared for the UN Conference on Human Environment recognized pollution problem in Kathmandu Valley and made commitments to improve air quality, Kathmandu is now labelled as 'dustmandu' or 'maskmandu' or a polluted city. Interestingly, 'pollution control' was one of the commitments of the candidates of the May 2017 local election in Kathmandu. This could be considered a 'reasonable realization' but it requires 'translation of commitments' into actions in a city where 'all are superb', and all want to grab 'power and resources' but a culture of 'shifting responsibility' has matured over the years. Furthermore, nobody cares for 'cost of delay decision and no action'.

Importance of nature conservation has been highlighted in Nepal since the 1970s. During the last 4 decades, several policies, strategies, plans, programmes, and decisions have been made to advance nature conservation and protect the environment in Nepal. Nearly one-fourth of the total area of



BY BATU UPRETY

the country is maintained as protected area. However, increasing pressure from infrastructure projects, including in national parks, has challenged the 'very existence of biodiversity-rich protected areas'. Tools and processes, internationally used to make the development environment-friendly and sustainable, do not work in Nepal's landscape because technical requirements are yet to be 'determined' by competent personalities. There is a tendency even among professionals of sometimes waiting for non-technical political

guidance. Alternatively, professionals have yet to contribute to 'informed decision-making'. One could take the example of environmental assessment (EA) system. This tool is widely used in all countries through 'prescriptive' and/or 'discretionary' approaches. Nepal followed the 'prescriptive' approach through environmental laws. Investors or project proponents are challenging its use without proper understanding on usefulness of this tool. 'Cut-and-paste syndrome' prevails in Nepal's EA reports and effective implementation of approved EA report might not contribute to make that development sustainable and environment-friendly. This ground reality has not contributed to conserve nature and natural resources for present and future generations.

Rapid environmental degradation associated with country's geological fragility and unregulated use of natural resources has increased human-induced disasters thereby claiming the lives and property each year. Human existence is also challenged by disasters. People are habituated in informing the consequences of environmental degradation. Leaders and decision-makers speak much on nature conservation and postpone actions. This 'syndrome' is likely to continue.

The WED is an opportunity to recommit publicly for action for the whole year. In general, countries declare on 5 June the key environmental undertakings and review progress and shortcomings next year to declare new and additional initiatives to address the on-going and emerging environmental threats. In Nepal, awareness raising programmes are organized. Many organizations and individuals are being recognized each year for their 'excellent work' on environment conservation. Environmental award is offered mostly based on 'applicant's request for award' and selection by a committee. This ritual has continued over the years and the situation has changed. Recalling 1984, the District Administration Office regulated distribution of pamphlets and 'maun julus' in Ratnapark area on June 5. At that time, batabaran was understood or interpreted as 'political environment'.

This year's theme focuses on linkages between people and Nature and WED slogan is 'I am With Nature'. It signifies the urgency of engaging people for nature conservation. Excluding pollution and wastes, Nepal's environmental problems are mostly rural in nature and related to loss of fertile soil, landslides, deforestation and forest degradation, and drying-up of drinking water sources. They sufficiently require nature-based solutions. Let us hope that this year WED urges Nepali people to redouble community efforts in conserving the nature, promoting effective implementation of nature-based solutions, and sustainably utilizing its resources to improve the living standard of the poor and environmentally vulnerable people and resources. We should base our action on what we have and what we need. I saw somewhere on Twitter: 'nothing will work unless you do'. Let us ACT now and continue to ACT to shape our environmental future. ■

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2017

With Nature

From its high mountains to hills and plains, Nepal has diverse geographies, flora and fauna. Despite running many successful environmental protection programs, including the community forestry and Local Adaptation Program of Action, however, Nepal is still environmentally sensitive. At a time when the global temperature is rising and Nepal is facing several environment-related disasters, the World Environment Day celebrations seem to have their own significance

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal is a country with high risk in terms of climate change and other disasters. However, Nepal is also known for its successful models in implementing forest conservation, environmental protection and community level adaptation activities as well.

Celebrating the World Environment Day for almost over 30 years, Nepal has seen the people's level of awareness in environmental protection going up. To capture the trend, Nepal has chosen a slogan for the World Environment Day 2017: I am with Nature.

"This year's World Environment Day slogan is Connecting People to Nature. However, we have localized it and our slogan for the World Environment Day, that is, on June 5, 2017 is: I am with Nature. This is a very important day for a country like ours, which has been facing severe environmental challenges. This slogan is very timely in the sense of fostering relations between nature and people. All our environmental and nature conservation related programs and policies are related to the people. In our nature conservation programs, there is a direct involvement of ethnic groups and communities," said secretary of Population of Environment Dr. Bishwa Nath Oli. (See Interview)

Nepal's experience of living with nature is recognized worldwide. As Nepal is heading from a unitary to federal structure, with the elections of

local bodies happening after a long time, everything may not be the same again. The right to decide on nature preservation and environment is given to the locally elected bodies, although, it is certainly unclear now what will the state of community forest user groups be.

As the slogan hints at, Nepalese communities have shown how to live



Former Minister Shah

and manage nature. Any changes in their current status will drastically change the current success. As Nepal is projecting its success story of community management of nature, which it learnt in decades, the new political apparatus may invite certain level of conflict.

With the change in state structure, Nepal needs to review its policy, regulations and acts. Unlike in the past, the new constitution devolves most of the environmental protection activities to the local and provincial

levels.

As Nepal is celebrating WED 2017 with its own slogan, this is the right occasion to debate the issue to protect the people living with nature. As UN Environment seeks to make the biggest global call and mobilize people for action on 5 June, World Environment Day (WED), Nepal has to start the debate to avoid future confrontation.

After the implementation of the constitution, all the district level forest offices will be removed and EIA and IEE will be the responsibility of provinces. Similarly, execution of air quality control mechanism will go to the provinces. It will diminish the role of Department of Environment and Ministry of Population and Environment.

As the World Environment Day is the biggest annual event for positive environmental action and takes place every 5 June, Nepalese also needs to think about the future. "This is the right time to think about what we need to do and how to make our old institutions compatible to the changed context," said Ganesh Shaha, former Minister for Environment, Science and Technology.

The World Environment Day is a day for everyone, everywhere. Since it began in 1972, Nepalese citizens have organized many thousands of events, from neighborhood clean-ups, to action against wildlife crime, to replanting forests and improving the quality of air.

As nature and people are

FORUM

disconnecting with various interventions, this year's World Environment Day makes a call for connection. "Connecting People to Nature", the theme for the World Environment Day 2017, implores us to get outdoors and into nature, to appreciate its beauty and its importance, and to take forward the call to protect the Earth that we share.

This year's theme invites you to think about how we are part of nature and how intimately we depend on it. It challenges us to find fun and exciting ways to experience and cherish this vital relationship.

History of World Environment Day

World Environment Day started with celebrations of an annual event on every 5th of June since 1973 in order to raise the global awareness about the importance of a healthy and green environment for human lives, to solve the environmental issues by implementing some positive environmental actions as well as to make the common public worldwide aware that everyone is responsible for saving his environment and not only somebody, government or some organization explicitly working for it.

The environment day was first established to be celebrated every year by running some effective campaigns by the United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in the conference on Human Environment, that had been held from 5th to 16th of June at United Nations in 1972. It was the first celebration in 1973, and the particular theme was, Only One Earth. Since 1974, the celebrations on the world environment day are hosted in different cities of the world.

The big annual celebration was started by the United Nations General Assembly to engage millions of people from different countries across the globe as well as draw the attention of political and health organizations to implement some effective actions.

Why Does Nepal Celebrate It?

World environment day celebration aimed at addressing the huge environmental issues like wastage and losses of food, deforestation, increasing global warming, among others. Every

year's celebration is planned according to the particular theme and slogan of the year to bring effectiveness in the campaign all through the world.

It is celebrated to successfully get carbon neutrality, focusing on the forest management, reducing greenhouse effects, promoting bio-fuels production by planting on degraded lands, use of hydro-power to enhance electricity production, encourage common public to use solar water heaters, energy production through solar sources, developing new drainage systems, promoting coral reefs and mangroves restoration in order to get safe from flooding and erosion, including other ways of environmental preservation. Some of the objectives of the world environment day campaign are mentioned below:

It is celebrated to make the common public aware about the environmental

towards the celebration. Various news channels take part very actively in the celebration to cover the news and distribute messages about the celebration among common public through their news publications to bring effective and positive changes towards the environment to solve all the environmental issues.

Some of the national level activities include street rallies, tree plantation, garbage recycling, surrounding area clean-up, parades and so many activities in order to draw people's attention towards a wide range of environmental issues as well as bring difference.

People of all age groups actively get involved during the celebration to save their planet in original form as gifted by the nature. Youths hugely take part in the celebration through many activities such as clean up



issues while encouraging them in different societies and communities to actively participate in the celebration as well as becoming an active agent in developing environmental safety measures.

It also aims to let them know that community people are very essential to inhibit negative changes towards the environmental issues while encouraging people to make their nearby surroundings safe and clean, to enjoy safer, cleaner and more prosperous future.

WED Activities

Many programs are planned to celebrate the event in different parts of the country to encourage more people

campaigns, art exhibitions, motivating people for tree-planting, dance activities, recycling garbage, film festivals, community events, essay writing, poster competition, social media campaign and a lot more.

As the world community is celebrating the World Environment Day 2017 on June 5, Nepal, a country in the middle of a state restructuring, should tap the opportunity to turn the new state structures more environment-friendly than they have been ever before.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy everyman's needs, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi ■

Balancing Climate Adaptation And Mitigation Action

The 21st Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris in 2015 built the momentum in which 147 parties ratified the Paris Agreement to act to minimize the impacts of climate change and keep the global temperature rise well below 2°C. Countries submitted their INDCs (Intended National Determined Contributions) prior to the conference, which entailed either mitigation actions or both adaptation and mitigation actions. The INDC were later upgraded to NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) post the Paris Meeting.

Nepal too submitted its INDCs to the UNFCCC in October 2015, which was later upgraded to NDCs. Nepal's NDCs identifies the sectors to cover both adaptation and mitigation actions and the level of support needed (both technical and financial) for it to progress and build its resilience towards climate change.

Nepal is among the climate vulnerable countries in the world and with an agrarian economy that depends on the monsoons and with a fragile physiography, puts its overall social and economic development at stake. However, given the new governance structure as per its new constitution promulgated in September 2015 that decentralizes power at the local level, provides an opportunity for Nepal to rethink climate smart development across the 744 municipalities and rural municipalities.

Adaptation is key for all local communities, indigenous people, women and children, as it is about survival. The Government of Nepal has also allocated funds in relation to climate change for the coming fiscal year (2017-2018) of which 4% is highly relevant and 26% is relevant; but at the same time the budget also focusses highly on development through mega infrastructures, thus it is critical that we ensure our development mainstreams climate change and that we tread low carbon development pathways as we adapt to the changes.

Nepal has been an energy deficient country for the past nearly two decades, and suddenly in 2016, we have the scenarios of a balanced energy supply and demand situation. Initially given the high investment costs on renewables, industries and enterprises took up to fossil fuel. Nearly 40% of the diesel was consumed in the capital for electricity generation. With time and the decreasing costs of solar energy, citizens of Nepal did take up to diversifying the energy mix and switching to solar and in some place wind as well. But suddenly with the energy sufficiency, the diversification of the energy mix was at stake. People and the country are again fully reliant on



BY UGAN MANANDHAR

the imported energy from India. The diversification should continue as this opens doors for self-energy reliance and reducing the costs of energy consumption. Energy efficiency is also playing a key role with energy efficient appliances and lighting technologies evolving from fluorescent lamps to CFLs to now LEDs. All of this contributes to lowering energy demands and costs and increasing self-sufficiency.

Besides the energy sector, the transport sector is also an important sector where there lie great opportunities for change. Policies are in place to promote e-vehicles, but

there are no infrastructures in place to promote the full functioning of e-vehicles. Countries like Germany and India have already pledged for decarbonizing the transport sector; Nepal too could take a step forward to make this big change. We have seen e-vehicle (three wheelers and four wheelers) ply in the road. But in a country where we must depend on imported fossil fuels and imported vehicles, why can't there be a step to go for 100% e-vehicles progressively in the years to come given that we expand the renewable energy mix and build on our self-reliance for energy and energy efficiency.

Similarly, our kitchens too took can go e-cooking with power supplied from the diversification of energy rather than full relying on imported LPGs and kerosene. Biogas in the sub-urban and rural areas have already played an exemplary role on the switch to renewables, reducing or completely not using fuel wood. The cost of Induction cookers and vessels are also not that expensive if one would consider the switch.

Climate change brings about so much uncertainties. Nothing is predictable and consistent because of climate change. A recent example of the region, deadly floods in Sri-Lanka, the devastating cyclone Maro hitting Bangladesh and the expected delay in the 2017 monsoons in Nepal all at the same time. At the end of the day we must also fight our own battle; we need to allocate sufficient resources, take up risk reduction measures across all sectors and strengthen preparedness at all levels in addition to the international support to better prepare for climate change. This finally leads to the context that Nepal should strategize to looking at balancing both adaptation and mitigation actions and plan climate smart development in the context of its new governance structures that is being functional.

Manandhar is a Deputy Director: Climate and Energy, WWF Nepal ■

"Environmental Concerns Need A Fit With Federal Structures"

As Nepal is celebrating the World Environment Day on June 5 with various programs, **DR. BISHWA NATH OLI**, Secretary at the Ministry of Population and Environment, spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on the importance of the day in Nepal's context. Excerpts:

What is the importance of the World Environment Day in the context of Nepal?

This year's World Environment Day slogan is "Connecting People to Nature." However, we have localized it and our slogan for the World Environment Day, June 5, 2017, is: "I am with Nature." This is very important for a country like ours, which has been facing severe environmental challenges. The slogan is very timely in the sense of fostering relations between the nature and people. All our environmental and nature conservation related programs and policies are related to the people. In our nature conservation programs, there is direct involvement of ethnic groups and communities. Almost 1.9 million hectares of forest is now under the management of the community user groups. Our community forestry is managed by over 19,000 community user groups. Similarly, 7000 households are managing forest under the contract. This is a record in direct involvement of people in our forest management. Besides that, there are various communities involved in the natural resources management.

How do you see the contribution of forest and natural resources?

We are conserving natural resources and forests. This has been contributing to tourism promotion. It is contributing to the national economy as a source of foreign currency. We celebrated the Biodiversity Day with the slogan highlighting biodiversity and sustainable management. This year's World Environment Day slogan is very similar to the policies Nepal has been formulating for conservation and management of nature and environment and the works done in this regard.

Does celebrating the day annually as a ritual contribute to nature conservation? What do you say?

I agree with you that just celebrating a particular day annually cannot preserve and conserve the environment. Although it is like a ritual, the UN Day has certain significance as well. Celebrating the World Environment Day helps increase the level of awareness about the issue at stake. All such days of UN have the objective of mainstreaming the slogans in the national programs of the member countries. World Environment Day is no exception. Nepal is a party to UN Convention and it is the obligation of Nepal to incorporate its resolutions in the policies.

How do you view the issue of environment in general?

So far as environment is concerned, it is a multi-dimensional issue. And it is inter-sectoral. We need to pursue all the environment day related activities not just on a specific occasion and day once a year but take them

seriously on all days. Environment protection and preservation starts from the house. We need to incorporate, integrate and mainstream all environment related activities in our programs and policies. On the environmental related work, our ministry is responsible for environment management and regulation related areas. There are Ministry of Local Development and Federal Affairs, Ministry of Urban Affairs, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation working in the environment front. Ministries are scattered in various areas as this is a multi-sectoral issue. It is a very complex issue and all the concerned ministries need to work cautiously. In our context, all of us have expressed the commitment for environmental protection. However, we care little so far as implementation is concerned. We have the tendency of shifting the responsibility to others. However, recently, we have been receiving good support in mainstreaming the environment from none state actors as well.

As Nepal is moving from a unitary to federal state structure, what do you suggest should be changed for taking a better care of environment?

In the changing context, as we are heading from a unitary to federal structure. environment conservation, protection and management issues need to be taken care of by all three tiers of government. There is a very clear need to move the awareness and management part to different levels. Our constitution has clear responsibilities and guidelines regarding the functions of three tiers and the issue of environment should follow that spirit.

How do you see the present level of governance?

At the federal level, there are international environmental management issues. This includes the formulation of policies related to environment protection and management. Our responsibility will be to fulfill the commitments expressed in the international conferences as a party.

Will there be any change?

Environment protection and management sides will go to the province and local level. IEE and EIA will go to the second tier of governance or province. Only the EIAs that cross more than one state come under the purview of the center. Similarly, environmental monitoring will also fall under the jurisdiction of local bodies and provinces, for instance, the monitoring of industries, air quality, and waste management. Most of the implementation side will be now with local and provincial levels and center will just decide on the policy matter. Policy and international level works will be with the center.

What is the state of Paris Agreement?

Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a part of UNFCCC. We have already ratified it and Nepal is a party. We are already in the stage of implementation of the agreement. As a party of the agreement, it demands certain things. There are several benefits Nepal can make from



the agreement. For instance, we need to submit periodic reports to the UNFCCC. One of the liabilities is to inform periodically about our state of environment. Each party of the conference has to submit Nationally Determined Contribution.

What obligation does Nepal have under this agreement?

We need to make period reports about the status. This is also good for a country like Nepal to brief the international community on the status of work on environment. We have submitted the NDC during the ratification of Paris Agreement. Under NDC, we have all the activities currently operational. We have also set the targets as to what to do or what not to do. We have proposed promotion of electrical vehicles, alternative energy, maintaining for forest sectors and so on. It is a compilation of our works.

What is climate finance?

As an LDC, we can attract funds from the Green Climate Fund to formulate the National Adaptation Plan. It is fortunate that Nepal is the first country to attract finance from the fund to formulate NAP. As the Ministry of Finance is the national designated authority, we have already submitted some proposals to GCF and our proposals are under review. We are already in the process of fund accession. Under the Paris agreement, developed countries can provide funds to LDCs.

What is the stage of NAP?

All the ministries are now at the central level. We are formulating the NAP through nine thematic groups. However, there are now elected local bodies. As the scenario is foggy, we are working to send the block grant

at the local level. We are discussing it. We will formulate our NAP with the structure of the states. We are working on how to transfer the areas identified by NAP at local and provincial levels.

How do you see NCCSP?

As NCCSP is based on local bodies, we can implement it at the local level. It is a model project to show how adaptation program can work with the support of local communities and local bodies. The liaison ministry of NCSSP is MOFAL and this is recognized by MOFAL and taken by international community in good spirit. Due to this, DFID agreed to support NCCSP's second phase. This has already continued for the second phase.

What will be the state of forest user groups in the changed circumstances?

Earlier, these groups were registered under the District Forest and Soil Conservation offices. Now, all these systems will be changed with powers to the local bodies. What will be the state of those local user groups is important. There is the need to formulate an Umbrella Act, like in India. Our acts are based on piecemeal basis. There are acts like National Park Act, Forest Act and Soil Conservation Act. All have different natures. There are also quasi legal rights given to forest officials and officials of National Park and Wildlife. There is also the need to review these. In my opinion, these rights should be given to technical manpower that is protecting wildlife and plants. These rights are given to forest officials to protect animals. There is also the same practice in India. There is the need to review policies and programs. We need to restructure policies and programs. ■

Valuating Nepal's Natural Capital: Opportunities And Challenges

NEPAL, with an area of 147,181 sq. kilometers, comprises of three out of the 200 global eco-regions of WWF. Known for its natural beauty from the alpine regions and hilly areas to the low lands Tarai with abundant resources of freshwater, sub-tropical forests and high biodiversity paints a picture of Nepal's natural capital. However, in the lime light of such huge natural capital but positioned as a least developed country, the economic value of the nature has been limitedly understood and the valuation processes of natural capital have never been undertaken. Hence sidelining the concept of mainstreaming of natural capital into the economy.

The limitations lie in the fact that there is limited capacities and knowledge on natural capital and processes

to undertaking its valuation within the country. Key domestic ministerial institutions that undertake the responsibility of planning and financing development do have a surficial understanding, but the understanding is not noted in the context of implementation.



Processes like Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) do take note of impacts on nature while recommending appropriate actions, but the financial value

of protecting the environment is omitted. Hence, omitting financial valuation does not really help imbed the real value of nature and sustaining development.

As Nepal's progresses as a developing country building large infrastructures that will take a toll of its natural capital in the near future; understanding the context of natural capital, its value, implementing proper land use planning and building capacities of the relevant stakeholder both government and non-government institutions are key.

This paper outlines the opportunities and challenges in the context of Nepal to understand and valuate natural capital. It also highlights the identification of key stakeholders and the processes to start up natural capital valuation in the country so as to contribute to Nepal's overall sustainable development.

Key Words; Natural Capital, Economy, Sustainable development.

WWF Nepal

WWF Nepal as an organisation is defined by its core values: Results, Integrity and Respect. We are driven by innovation and perseverance in the changing context in the country and the global politico-economic climate. Our programme strategy rests upon the following three pillars in the next five years towards becoming a strong, sustainable and influential organisation in the future.

WWF Nepal has worked with the Government of Nepal for over five decades, helping secure significant victories in wildlife conservation. ■

BUDGET

High Hopes

With the completion of local elections, development affairs will be taken care of by the local bodies. The proposed budget expenditures should provide for the local development but it remains to be seen how it all works. Given the current level of revenue collection, a growing dependency on development partners for budgetary supplements is likely

By A CORRESPONDENT

S mug with the highest economic growth of 6.9 percent in 23 years, Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara presented his budget for 2017/18. Given the new local structures in place and huge budget allocation at the local level, the growth achieved this year will be difficult to sustain in the coming fiscal year.

The government has tabled a budget of Rs 1.278 trillion for the Fiscal Year 2017/18. This budget is different from the past ones as it has allocated sizable resources to the federal units for the first time. As part of the implementation of the new constitution, the central government has allotted Rs 225 billion to 744 local units and another Rs 1.02 billion for each of the seven provinces.

Presenting the budget in parliament, Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara said that lawmakers will no longer find the development programs of their localities in the central level budget and programs. The job of the rural municipalities, municipalities, and sub-metropolitan and metropolitan cities is to run the

development program.

"The budget has been allocated based on population, development indicators and the input costs of development like price of construction materials and labor charges. As part of financial equalization, each rural municipality gets a minimum of Rs 100 million and the maximum amount is up to Rs 390 million. The range of budget allocation for municipalities and sub metropolitan cities is Rs 150 to Rs 460 million and Rs 400 to Rs 630 million," said Finance Minister Mahara.

The local units have also received separate budget allocations as conditional grants, totaling Rs 76 billion. "The budget has empowered local units with the implementation of the constitution but the amounts allocated for the local units is not sufficient," said former finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari.

The government has also decided to provide a grant to Rural Municipalities, Municipalities, and Metropolises from the Central Government. Rural Municipality would get a minimum grant of Rs 100 million to a maximum grant of Rs 390 million, Municipality would get a

minimum grant of Rs 150 million to a maximum grant of Rs 430 million. Similarly, Metropolitan cities would get a minimum grant of Rs 400 million to a maximum grant of Rs 640 million.

The government has also incorporated the provision of distributing teachers' remuneration, education materials, textbooks and scholarship amounts up to grade 10 by the local bodies.

At a time when there is no tangible source to meet the allocation, the budget is up by 36 percent compared to the revised budget of the current fiscal year. With the slowing of the remittance intake, it will affect the import of goods as well. However, the budget has targeted 26 percent revenue growth (Rs 730 billion).

The government aims to borrow Rs 145 billion from the local market but experts say this will reduce the investment the private sector relies on for growth. "The target of meeting the budget deficit will affect the economic growth target," said Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, former governor.

Enthusiastic at the high growth rate projections of 6.94 percent in the

COVER STORY

current fiscal year, the government has targeted at a growth rate of 7.2 percent for next year, all without tangible programs and sources.

"There will be no bouncing back. We need to maintain the current level of growth," said Finance Minister Mahara. The present growth was projected to be the highest in 23 years on the back of improved power supplies, agricultural production and higher spending on reconstruction work after earthquakes.

Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara said the economy would grow by 6.9 percent and it will be over 7 percent next year. The forecast compares with no growth last year, following earthquakes and border blockades.

"Fewer strikes have contributed to increase industrial production and private sector investment which in turn helped achieve a higher growth rate despite the political instability," said Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, former central bank governor. One of the major successes is that Nepal has virtually ended long power cuts of up to 20 hours through increased electricity imports from India, distribution management and theft control."

New Budget

As the political restructuring process has begun following the first phase of elections, the budget of fiscal year 2017/18 has opened the process for economic restructuring. With no institutional backup at the local level, however, allocating the budget alone cannot be sufficient.

The question now is how the government takes steps to proper implementation of the budget and allocation of funds in new ways for a proper utilization of the funds.

According to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the government budget was in accordance with the ceiling fixed by the National Planning Commission (NPC) as mandated by the Constitution on May 29. NPC, the apex planning body of the country, had raised the budget ceiling for fiscal 2017/18 by 10.21 per cent as compared to the current fiscal which stood at Rs 1,156.04 billion.

"The budget allocated to the local bodies is not enough. It would only cover the daily administrative cost and supportive elements of the



Finance Minister Mahara heading to parliament

establishment," said former finance minister Adhikari.

As the government has spent only 22.54 per cent of the total budget of Rs 1,048.92 billion under current fiscal year (2016/2017), the fate of the new budget too does not look promising, given the past records.

"The weak performance in budget implementation is due to slow capital expenditure. If the government allocated the budget without proper administrative units and structures, the fate of the current budget will be more disastrous than the previous one," said former finance secretary Rameshwar Khanal.

The capital expenditure of the government this year was approximately 3.8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) crossing the trends of last one decade. However, there is no solid basis to say that the current level of expenditure will be sustained.

As the new Constitution devolves substantial amount of power, including drafting laws, collecting certain taxes and even some judicial powers, to the local bodies, the government expects that the capital expenditure will increase.

Ambitious Budget

Out of the total budget of Rs 1,278 billion, Rs 804 billion is recurrent expenditure, Rs 335 billion is capital expenditure and Rs 140 billion is financing provision for the coming fiscal year.

The budget has given priority to holding two phases of elections next year; expedite reconstruction projects, constitution implementation and continuation of national pride projects.

GDP growth rate would be 7.2 per cent, the highest in recent years, agriculture sector would reach 5.3 per cent, the industrial sector would grow by 11 per cent, service sector would be up by 6 per cent in the coming fiscal year. The budget also projected that the inflation rate would remain at 7 per cent in the coming fiscal year.

Without any management of alternative sources, the government has decided to add Rs 1,00,000 and provide Rs 3,00,000 to earthquake victims for the construction of a house in the quake-affected areas.

Projects for National Priority

The budget has also allotted Rs 13 billion for the completion of Pokhara and Bhairahawa regional airports and Kathmandu-Terai fast track. The government has also disbursed Rs 3 billion and 570 million for the Melamchi Drinking Water Project. The government has also vowed to upgrade the run-way of Tribhuvan International Airport.

With an aim to eradicate load shedding from the nation and plan to generate 17,000 megawatts electricity, the government has launched a program jantako Pani Janta Ko Lagani. The government has also allocated the budget of Rs. 10 billion for Budhi Gandaki Hydro Project and promised to complete Chameliya and Kulekhani III next year.

Like in the past, the government has presented a highly ambitious budget with a big target for revenue generation to meet the budget. What one can say about the budget at the moment is, it will rely more on development partners in the coming years to fulfill the expenditure than before. ■



BY AYUSHI SUREKA

"I Wish Something ... Done For Promotion Of Music"

FRANCK BERNÈDE is an ethnomusicologist, an ex-professor at Yale University, a phenomenal cellist and the founder of Singhini Research Center who moved to Nepal in 1999. Belonging to a family of musicians, his being the fourth generation, Franck has known what life for a professional musician in Nepal looks like. With a warm smile and a fresh cup of tea, Franck spoke to **AYUSHI SUREKA**, giving Spotlight a slice of his insight. Just like his 17th CE cello, he is a legend forever. Some inspiring words by Franck: 'Music is not just a tune, it is a whole language with which people connect everywhere in the world'. Franck beautifully describes a tale of Venetia reflecting the music that lies within nature itself and imitating it is the basic lesson for a music student. He says it wouldn't be possible for him to have an insight this deep if it weren't for education because he has learned about so many different values from each culture so yes, it is vital. Excerpts of the views of the virtuoso, Franck Bernède:

When did you step into the music field and who was your inspiration?

I started to play cello when I was 7 and I started my career at the age of 15. My father Jean-Claude Bernède was a famous violinist and my mother was an opera singer and most of my ancestors were violinists so to answer your question my family has been my inspiration, I was always nudged in that direction. It has been 50 years since I've been playing my cello.

How did you stumble upon Nepal?

Because I am involved in another activity, it is like the anthropology of music [or an ethnomusicology]. My field of research brought me here. I started my study from the northern valley and moved to the far-western region for a comparative study. I came to study the cultural system of music in Nepal.

What is the Singhini Research Center?

I am the Singhini Research Center, right here, my home is the center, in the sense that this is an association based in the Newar guthi system. Guthi refers to the promotion and preservation of the Himalayan culture, especially music and dance. It started in 2001 and in 2004 we had a huge 4.5-hour long program where we performed in front of 2000 people. Several Nepalese artists, about 60 of them, went through this channel that plays worldwide- Europe, US to name a few.

How important do you find is the role of education?

I am French, I did my studies in France and Finland then I started my professional career doing concerts abroad. It is true I dropped out of school after grade 6 but later I did a Ph.D. When I was young, my father gave me two choices, he said, "Do you want to pursue your classical studies or do you want to concentrate on musical studies?" It was clear for me at the time but yes, I believe musical education



is a must. Here in Nepal it is difficult to thrive as the localities have very little knowledge.

What is the life of a musician in our country, especially the income?

To draw income from Nepal as a musician is extremely difficult for several reasons - one is that the music I am originally playing interests not everyone. Some appreciate it, but many don't. Secondly, in general, people here don't see music as something that is worth paying for, I believe, they want it to be free! It is the mentality to not spend money on a cultural program which is why even the local talents have to go abroad to survive and have a quality life. I wish something could be done for the promotion of music among the general public. But looks like I did the reverse

eh?.

Could you describe one of the fondest memories during this journey?

Playing on a stage, that too solo, can be nerve-wracking. When you are on the stage you need to not only play the tune but prove that you are capable and make those countless hours of practice worth it. One of my concerts took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, where I was asked to perform solo in front of 1200 people. That was a concert that holds a special place in my heart because when I was up there, it was exceptional. Everything was in a perfect balance where your fingers could play for hours, you are in a sort of state of grace and utter peace.

To sum up, what has fascinated you about the cultures and musical aspects of Nepal?

I love Nepal. I love the culture and I love absolutely everything. It has an enormous amount of talent but maybe the youngsters fear the amount of determination required. I have been involved with mainly two different zones - the Newars in hilly regions and the people in Terai. In the Newar system, what fascinates me is how they use sound as a part of their worship and divinize it which has a philosophical touch to it. It uses music to ignite a sense of spirituality and purity while the musical pattern in Terai is honestly not something extraordinary but the aesthetics and the passion are remarkable. The music system here focuses mainly on the rituals, devotion to God and it recites great epics through it is like the disappearance of the king in the 18th CE or the unification of Nepal. These places are meaningful and much more advanced musically than other regions, their emotional drive is something that has helped me connect to my cello on a whole new level which I probably never would have. Both these experiences were fruitful for me and I truly thank the people involved from the bottom of my heart. ■



Everest Green Cleaning Mount Everest

First, I want to pay tributes to my fellow French people and their Sherpa friends, who have organized an ambitious expedition to clean Mount Sagarmatha. Sagarmatha is the pride of Nepal and hundreds of climbers are trying summit it this year. We know it is a dangerous sport, so the climbers who attempt it are certainly bold people.

But Gérard Clermidy and his friends are not only courageous, they are also generous. They have raised funds, as much as 150000 €, for this team of 23 people, during the 40 days expedition, to clean a mountain, which is too often polluted by climbers, who only focus on their sporting performance.

A recent editorial in the Nepalese press stressed the concerns: tons of human excreta carelessly dumped, tons of garbage of all kinds. Since 2014, the law obliges climbers to bring back at least 8 kg of rubbish and it remains to be assessed yet how far that rule is respected, and how and where the rubbish is recycled. So the initiative of "Everest green" is highly commendable and I do hope it will increase the awareness of unchecked pollution generated by the increasing flow of tourists on the roof of the world.

Besides that specific action, Clermidy's NGO Montagne et Partage has also funded the reconstruction of schools, including one I was proud to inaugurate with him last year in Dhading district.

Mountains are very important for all mankind and responsible tourism is a must. Climbers and trekkers must pay their due, including permits, guides and porters, which is vital for Nepal's economy.

So this reception is about the mountain and all guests, whether public officials, trek agencies, NGOs and diplomats are related to the mountain, whether by their personal interest or by the flow of their fellow visitors.

France has many mountains, which culminate with the highest summit in Europe, the Mont Blanc. Therefore,



BY YVES CARMONA

mountain tourism in France is a century old experience.

Some 23% of French territory is in the mountains, with 300 ski resorts in six different regions, 30% of the European ski areas. Some 32% of our customers are foreigners, overall 10 million visitors each winter generate a 9 billion € revenues allowing 120 000 jobs.

A vibrant economic sector is serving that market with 400 companies, 70% of them with international involvement and famous business fairs are organized yearly in Grenoble and Chambéry.

With that background, no wonder the mountain has been a very strong link between Nepal and France and that will continue.

It goes back to the epoch making climb by the late Maurice Herzog of Annapurna, the first 8000 m summit, in 1951. That epic story, which he narrated himself in his book, was followed by numbers of French alpinists and trekkers. That was the origin of a passionate friendship between French and Nepalese mountaineers and numbers of common actions, including mountain medicine, training of mountain and ski guides, support to the reconstruction, enhancement of livestock raising...etc.

Airbus helicopters are also famous in Nepalese mountains and I hope soon POMA, one of the leaders in cable car, will be allowed to provide transportation in Kathmandu valley.

The mountain is a significant EU policy as well, since it represents 36% of the EU and Switzerland's territory with 18% of its population. The EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) funds specific actions in mountain livestock and the European Investment Bank (EIB) invests in mountain related infrastructure like hydropower and cable car. I wish a big success to "Everest green" which will soon become a TV documentary I hope we can watch in Nepal.

(Yves Carmona is the ambassador of France to Nepal) ■



BY ADITI ARYAL

"Nepal Is A Jewel In So Many Ways"

LINDA CRUSE is an international humanitarian aid worker guided by the philosophy of 'trade, not aid'. She follows a 'hand up', not a 'hand out', approach, which means that everything she does in areas that have faced catastrophic disasters is to empower the people to be economically stable and independent. She is also an author, a senior fellow at Canterbury University in New Zealand, motivational speaker and personal development trainer. Linda Cruse spoke to **ADITI ARYAL** on various issues. Excerpts:

What are some of the good works you have done in Nepal? What obstacles did you face?

After the earthquake, I have worked in a number of affected areas, including Thangdor, which lies on the Tibet-Nepal border. I have faced no obstacle in Nepal. I believe it is more about the way we approach working in a country which keeps us obstacle-free. My approach has been engaging with the local communities, village elders, youth leaders, and healthcare assistants. I engage people from the business world within and beyond the country to help me.

In Thangdor, this was possible by finding a gap in the market, which also had a market value for the people, like growing bamboo. Bamboo can be used to make and sell furniture, stop landslide, and its shoots can be consumed as nutritious foods. We have also started a honey and an apple growing projects. We are looking for an easy income generating solution for the local people by ensuring a good market value.

You stress on the involvement of private sector in the humanitarian work. What is the scope for the same in an emerging economy like Nepal?

I feel the 'Corporate Social Responsibility' is an associated connection, with a burden, an unfair, maybe even unrealistic obligation on a company, and often results in quick fix cheque writing with a swift hand over of the required responsibility.

Seventeen years ago I flipped the CSR approach on its head and introduced CSO - Corporate Social Opportunity, recognizing the long term opportunities of an investment of engaging more creatively and actively in community support, resulting in mutual benefits for the company, employee and community. There are many ways that industry can create a win-win situation both for the company and the community.

How does the CSR work?

An example of CSO is an initiative I worked on in Pakistan in remote rural communities to develop the milk industry. Pakistan is the world's sixth largest producer of milk, but most of it is produced in small rural communities. Teaming up with one of the country's main dairies we arranged for training on better milk-producing methods, including care of their livestock and simple storage practices, in turn guaranteeing them the daily sales in cash. The results were immediate with both the dairies and the communities profiting financially from the arrangement. Community funds were then invested, by their choice, in medical services, school teachers and any equipment that the village decided was required.

How do you see your products?

One of the products we have just started is a honey bee project in Thangdor, with the right unique flavor and great

marketing it has the potential to be a best selling product in the world and maybe we can sell it in Harrods in London! Nepal and India share a border where some of the best tea in the world is produced. Why does Nepal not share the same and income from it? I believe that within Nepal there are many things that have a global market can be produced.

How important has the role of youth been in the implementation of your projects in Nepal as well as globally?

The role of youth is undoubtedly important. For many years I have engaged the private sector to help solve seemingly intractable problems in development work. They bring mature, experienced brain, entrepreneurial skills and business acumen. But even the best mature business brain can slip into what they expect will work or won't work. When we engage youth, we harness the passionate unfettered un-programmed brain where everything seems possible. The youth are the future and if you ignore youth, you ignore the future. So my



model engages both the mature experienced brain with the young un-programmed brain and that's where the magic happens.

Throughout the time you've been in Nepal, has there been any obstacle that you have faced because of the political situation here or any politically affiliated individual or group?

CULTURE



Korea Culture Day 2017

BY PARK YOUNG-SIK

I have never been affected by the political scenario of Nepal. Governments have their ups and downs in every country I have worked in, even in the UK or the US. Governments have a very difficult, complex, job to do and they do the best they can. I believe it is up to every individual to take the responsibility for the well-being of the country. The more we organize ourselves in a community, the stronger we become. If we take that responsibility and organize ourselves we do the best for our lives and for our friends and family.

If you had to sum up your journey briefly and give a couple of concrete advice to the people of Nepal what could it be?

Be proud of your country and people. I have travelled to literally every continent and Nepal is the most uniquely special country I've been in, lived in, travelled in and had the honour to serve in and contribute to. I think you have to be more outward in who you are and what you are. Encourage other people to visit Nepal not just for the tourism, but for spirituality too. The great philosophies and other things people are interested to learn about have come from Hinduism and Buddhism. There is so much to develop apart from adventure sport and mountain climbing. Shine your light a bit more and let the world know about you in many different ways. Whatever Nepal has gone through, including the Maoist insurgency or the hard emotional years with the royal

First of all, I would like to remind all of you that the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Nepal has been organizing various kinds of cultural programs to display Korean Culture in Nepal. This year, we are working to host Korean cultural program in two phases, including biannual and annual. This "2017 Korea Culture Day," was first biannual cultural program and it will conclude at the end of the year with Korean Film festival, Tae-Kwando, cultural



programs and many other interesting programs.

To give a true sense of Korean friendship to large number of Nepalis, we have prepared three different programs. The programs include K-pop World Festival in Nepal, a program of Korean dance and music by Nepalese selected from different parts of Nepal, Korean Food Festival and Quiz on Korea.

K-pop competition involves Nepalese K-pop teams that have been selected from different parts of the country. Likewise, "Quiz on Korea" involves many delicious Korean food items. K-pop program is regarded as a worldwide program conducted through fan clubs to exchange views and enhance understanding about each other. Especially, when I see Nepalese K-pop community, which was set up by them, participating with leadership quality, what I can feel is that it has a significant importance in Nepal. Sixty seven teams took part in the preliminary stage. Twelve teams reached the last round in Nepal. After watching their performance, I find the occasion to see how Nepalese youth are greatly influenced by Korean culture and K-pop. I was deeply impressed by acceptance of Korean culture by Nepalese with all respect. I was deeply impressed to see all the participants and fans enjoying Korean culture and showing talents, without any reservation, gathered at Auditorium. This has really impressed me.

Seven Korean restaurants, which are based in Kathmandu, took part in the food festival. They prepared various kinds of Korean foods with hard work. The person who wins the Quiz on Korea here will be selected for final round in Korea. Korea and Nepal have many similarities. People of both the countries celebrate any festival with full heart, and they do have diverse foods, with various vegetables and spices. Because of this kind of similarity, Nepalese and Korean are very close. These commonalities also help Nepalese people to create conducive environment to strengthen their relations with Korea.

By hosting 2017 Korean Culture Program, Embassy of Korea in Nepal started the day of Korean Cultural Programs and we will organize many such programs in future to provide taste of Korean culture to Nepalese people. I believe that this kind of cultural program will help strengthen our existing friendly relations.

PARK YOUNG-SIK is the ambassador of Republic of Korea to Nepal. Excerpts of his statement delivered at the Korea Culture 2017 Program. ■



family massacre, people still come here. Nepal is a jewel in so many ways! ■

PPA IN DOLLAR

Too Little Too Late

Following years of obstruction, Nepal Electricity Authority has come up with a set of Power Purchasing Agreement PPA Directives for electricity purchasing

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the government has announced an ambitious plan to generate 20,000 MW of electricity within a decade, there is the need of a huge foreign investment to fulfill the objective. To lure foreign investment, there is the need to sign the PPA in dollars.

With the direction of Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature Parliament for NEA not to sign the PPA without the directives, many foreign investors packed up from Nepal. Although they had invested a huge amount of money in construction of roads and other infrastructure, many left.

However, only a few companies like Nepal Water and Energy Development Committee, a Nepali-Korean joint venture, for example, remained firm to construct the 2001 Upper Trishuli-1.

Despite many shortcomings, the guidelines give a ray of hope for foreign investors. After a long homework, NEA has brought out the Dollar PPA Directives for companies, which will spend the foreign currency (US Dollar).

The directives concisely and clearly set the conditions including payment in dollar, and exchange risk. According to the guidelines, NEA will sign the dollar-PPA with only those projects that are above 100 MW. This will encourage the local investors to invest in project up to 100 MW.

The dollar-PPA will be signed for a maximum period of 10 years or a day starting from commercial production of (COD) or payback period, whichever comes first. After this period, all other amounts will be paid in Nepalese currencies.

NEA has fixed tariffs for all Dollar PPA Run off the River Projects. NEA will set the rate of Rs.8.40 and Rs.4.80 per unit during dry and the rainy seasons

respectively. Even for the storage projects, the rate will be the same as announced.

Stale PPA rate has so many benefits as it would not allow promoter's cost of the project and discourage the foreign investors to increase dollar PPA price showing the total construction costs.



For the run off the river, the month from December 2 to May 30 is regarded as dry season and May 30 to December 1 as lean season. There is the need to have a mandatory provision to generate 30 percent energy even in the dry season. Like domestic investors, method of a 3 percent price escalation is applied to the same with 8 price escalation.

The guidelines also fix the structures for foreign investment projects. There is the need to have 20 percent equity and 80 percent loan. The PPA rate is fixed not to increase equity of promoters over 17 percent. The exchange rate of dollar will be fixed as per the dollar rate fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank on the day of signing the PPA. This will tolerate the fluctuation of dollar rate.

NEA will also establish Accent Risk Fund to reduce the risk of

dollar escalation. Nepal Rastra Bank will make regulatory structures for the hedging fund. This fund is proposed to deal with risks in NEA's fund in case of escalation of dollar in international market.

Nepal has signed Dollar PPA in the past with 70 MW Khimti, 35 MW Bhotekosi, 50 MW Upper

Marsyangdi A, 82 MW Lower Solu and 37.6 MW Kabeli A.

Although NEA has announced Dollar PPA Directives, it has so many ifs and buts and foreign investors don't have a complete relief. At a time when Nepal is importing electricity from India paying almost 13 to 14 billion rupees equivalent to US dollar and importing petroleum products paying over 100 billion rupees annually, restricting on Dollar PPA agreement will further increase our burden to Petrol and import of electricity instead of promoting generation capacity back home.

Instead of looking at the deal on the basis sentiment, one needs to look at the dollar PPA issue with commercial and economic perspectives, keeping the national interest on the mind. ■

Ways To BeeCreative



BY: AKANKSHYA SHRESTHA,
AND SABRINA ADHIKARI

The desire to understand the existence and ourselves might have first initiated the process of education, which then diverged into various categories targeting different aspects of life. The Physical Sciences addressed the material aspects of life and universe whereas the Social Sciences targeted the spiritual aspects of humanity. The conflict between human desires and limited resources forced the start of the economic aspects of life and therefore the commencement of commerce education. Today, we can find these fields merging to create a distinct social body known as education.

As the world starts to dig deep into the essence of this categorization; subjects were arbitrarily ranked higher in importance, forgetting our aesthetic needs. Studying soon became more of an effort to

let their children follow their dreams. Some colleges and schools have started to adopt practical and hands-on teaching methods, and some societies have stopped judging children based on their grades.

Directing this wave of progressive teaching and learning, Karkhana emerged and found its footing as an education company three years ago. Karkhana's evolution was guided by the need to reimagine how teaching and learning was approached by mainstream education in Nepal. Initially run by a collective of technologists, Karkhana's vision was to prepare the Nepali ecosystem for innovation. Their paths as technologists and makers crossed with education after they observed serious gaps in pedagogical orientation that was hindering the processes of creativity, collaboration,



receive social acceptance than to learn. The real essence of education got lost in the act of competing and categorizing humans on the basis of their intellectual competencies and degrees.

Nepal did not remain untouched by this misguided approach to teaching and learning. We started producing scholars who scored soaring marks in exams but were hardly capable of effecting any real change in our country. We started admiring people for their formal credentials leaving the efforts towards the welfare of their communities alone. Students competed for grades and remained intellectually unchallenged.

After a series of political, educational and economic setbacks, a handful of suicides, and a plethora of dropouts, we are starting to wonder - are we doing the things right? A number of parents have started to

critical thinking and communication- and ultimately innovation. This vision materialized through the Karkhana Innovators' Club (KIC), an afterschool program that immersed middle school students in long drawn project-based learning. However, the need to extend hands-on learning to a wider network of middle school students prompted the maturation of a co-curricular program known as BeeCreative (BC).

BeeCreative's 2014 pilot program at Triyog school was well received by the school and especially by the middle school students it catered to. Each class was run by a BeeCreative teacher who would go to the school every week with materials and a lesson plan that encouraged students to grasp a concept in their school curriculum through a hands-on approach.

After the pilot took off, BC extended its service across Kathmandu. The BeeCreative program offers hands-on classes that primarily cover content from the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics- collectively known as the STEAM subjects.

BC classes introduce students to different materials to build and understand simple concepts like how things move or how colors work. The teachers use as few instructions as possible and let students' imagination run free. Different clusters are available, which are a group of 6-8 classes that the schools can choose. For instance, the Storytelling series includes activities that encourage students to create or adapt stories and tell them. Presentation techniques such as paper slides, storyboarding, and public speaking are also taught to help them communicate their stories. Next, the Structure and Stability series include structural design activities. These activities challenge students to create complex structures using very basic materials while keeping firmness or balance or stability of structure. Math-a-magic connects day-to-day objects and activities with their mathematics classes. It explores a wide range of concepts like mathematical patterns found in nature to magical ways to do calculations faster. Thus, BeeCreative creates classes that are interactive, practical but still curricular.

Karkhana therefore matured from a makerspace run by a team of just seven members to an education company now held together by more than thirty members. The company caters to a lot of students through its BeeCreative program in over 22 different schools around the Valley. Working closely with both the teachers and students, Karkhana has now found itself spreading the public imagination about learning that is based on the 4Cs: critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

BeeCreative has been trying to make a difference in educational space of our country. With a hands-on approach, it is making the traditional form of education much more interesting and more fun to learn. To produce a generation of thinkers, innovators and creators, BeeCreative will definitely be seen playing a big part in schools. Let us all hold back and watch as education is revolutionized!

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KOREAN CULTURE PROGRAM 2017

Sharing Culture

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although Nepal and Korea are geographically far away, they have many similarities in culture, food and way of enjoying them. They enjoy spicy foods, music and other things. This was what one saw at the 2017 Korea Culture Day, the first biannual cultural program.

At the event, organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea at Army Officers' Club, Bhadrakali, Kathmandu, the presence of young population was so huge that it showed the popularity of Korean culture and music in Nepal.

Inaugurated by speaker of Legislature Parliament Onshari Gharti, the Korean Culture programs included the Korean music, foods, games and other related activities. "Nepal shares so many things with Korea and this kind of cultural program helps to strengthen Nepal-Korea people to people relations. I was very impressed by the presence of large numbers of youth here," said speaker Gharti.

Minister for Energy Janardan Sharma Prabhakar and Minister for Tourism Culture and Civil Aviation Jitendra Dev also attended the food festival and culture programs attended by Nepalese people and Korean citizens living in Nepal.

Highlighting the program, ambassador of Republic of Korea to Nepal Park Young-sik said Korean music and culture is very



popular in Nepal. Ambassador Park Young-sik said large numbers of Nepalese are working in Korea supporting Nepal's economic development. The ambassador also said Korea and Nepal were linked by Lumbini, the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Korea culture program included vivid aspects of Korean culture presented live. The completion of K-pop competition among Nepalese K-pop teams that had been selected from different parts of the country attracted large crowds. Likewise, a quiz contest "Quiz on Korea" also took place.

With music, play and quiz, visitors enjoyed many delicious Korean food items free of cost. Around three thousand visitors enthusiastically attended the cultural event last year. This year the crowd was much higher.

The craze of Nepali youths has noticeably increased this year in K-pop competition. The preliminary round was held on Saturday, May 20, 2017 in Kathmandu in which 67 teams with around 300 participants took part for over three hours.

Seven Korean restaurants running in Kathmandu served many delicious Korean food items such as, Bulgogi, Kimchi, Dakgalbi, Kheranmari, Tokbokgi, Kimbaap, Haemuljon, Yaksik, Sungwa etc. all free of cost. Likewise, another attraction of the program was mixing of large bibimbaap. Visitors also took photographs wearing Hanbok, the national dress of Korea, and also enjoyed playing traditional game "Thuho" during the event. ■



EVEREST GREEN film - Teaser KissKissBankBank

EVEREST GREEN PROJECT

Cleaning Everest

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the number of Everest Expedition teams and trekkers visiting the base camp growing, piles of wastes lying here and there in the base camp, as well as the expedition route to Mount Everest, are growing.

At a time when the need to clean the Everest area is getting acute, a group of French mountaineers and Sherpas have completed the "Everest Green" project, successfully recovering five tons of waste from the world's rooftop.

Nepal's mountaineering community celebrated the first conquest 64 years ago of Mount Everest on 29 May with the first successful Everest climb by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, who made it to the top in 1953.

French association "Montagne et Partage" organized an ambitious Everest cleaning campaign dubbed "Everest Green". Their 40-day mission started on April 13 and ended on May 23 by recovering 5 tons of waste from the Everest between Base Camp (5300m) and the South Col (7906m).

Out of 5 tons, 2 tons were sent to Namche for incineration whereas 3 tons of recyclable waste is being brought to Kathmandu by road for further processing/treatment. Amongst the waste that the group recovered, majority were aluminum, nylon cords, textiles, scrap waste, batteries, plastic objects etc. Their project, which costs Euros 150,000.00, is entirely financed by "Montagne et Partage's own resources.

In honor of the expedition group and their efforts in helping clean Everest, the Ambassador of France, Yves Carmona hosted a reception at the Residence of France during which the expedition group talked about their project and also presented the Ambassador with a symbolic expedition flag.

Ambassador Carmona recalled the common relationship between Nepal and France around mountains and highlighted the need to raise environmental awareness amongst the relevant stakeholders as a long-term solution.

About "Montagne et Partage": Montagne & Partage is a French association which aims to provide all forms of humanitarian aid to the needy people in mountain areas, in the fields of education, health, the environment, and economic development. For them, the mountains represent one of the finest schools of life; that of humility and sharing, that of universal brotherhood.

Addressing the program Gérard Clermidy, President of "Montagne et Partage", said every year over 800,000 tourists visit Nepal and 1500 people reach base camp each season. Out of them, 400 reach the summit. "And all will leave the mark behind on the top of the world."

"We found long ropes on the path to top left for years. Mineral water bottles, metals. Our effort was to decontaminate Everest," said French mountaineer Gérard Clermidy.

Along with this, these climbers leave a lot of wastes, degradable and non-degradable, including plastic, cane, foods and others annually, ropes, cylinders and other equipments there. ■

DEVELOPMENT

NCCSP

For Climate Resilience

NCCSP works towards building climate resilience

By A CORRESPONDENT

After showing how adaptation programs can be managed successfully, Nepal Climate Change Support Program (NCCSP) is now already in the second phase. With support from DFID, the program will be extended for another five years.

NCCSP is a significant government-led initiative to

in 68 Gaupalika and Nagarpalika (former 87 VDCs and 9 Municipalities) of 14 climate vulnerable districts of 3 provinces-5, 6 and 7 namely Achham, Bajura, Kailali, Bardiya, Dang, Rukum, Rolpa, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Kalikot, Jumla, Humla, Mugu and Dolpa.

The NCCSP is also supporting efforts in building the institutional capacity of government and non-

local mechanisms are playing significant role in planning, implementation and monitoring of LAPAs.

So far, NCCSP has implemented more than 2431 local adaptation actions under six thematic areas namely: i) Agriculture, livestock development and food security; ii) Forest management and biodiversity; iii) Alternative energy; iv) Climate

induced hazards and physical infrastructures; v) Human resource, capacity development and livelihood; and vi) Human health. From the implementation of adaptation actions of LAPAs for more than 600,000 (51% women) climate vulnerable people, who



implement Nepal's National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) focusing on Priority Component-1, that is, promoting community-based adaption by integrated management of agriculture, water, forest and biodiversity sectors.

This program aims to mainstream climate change adaption into Nepal's national development agenda and to contribute to achieve sustainable development goals by fostering poverty reduction, livelihood diversification and community resilience while ensuring the implementation of most urgent and immediate adaptation actions for poorest and most vulnerable communities. To do so, the NCCSP is implementing 100 Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA)

government stakeholders to implement Nepal's Climate Change Policy and execute the most urgent and immediate adaptation actions to address the local adaptation needs and priorities. The NCCSP has supported initiatives to upgrade District Energy and Environment Units (DEEU) of the 14 districts above to District Energy Environment and Climate Change Sections (DEECCS) by expanding their roles to climate change agenda and strengthening institutional capacity. Similarly, it established and strengthened capacity of local mechanisms-District Energy, Environment and Climate Change Coordination Committee (DEECCC) and Village/Municipality level EECCCs at fourteen districts, 87 VDCs and 9 Municipalities. These

have benefited directly and indirectly. Of the total actions, 40% focus on agriculture and food security and livelihood. These sectors are dominated by women's involvement.

As women are vulnerable to climate change, NCCSP ensures that the LAPAs it implements are gender-sensitive as much as they are inclusive, participatory and empowering. To do so, NCCSP has adopted GESI strategy that explicitly mentions 50% women participation and programme beneficiary, encouraging women to take part in climate change adaptation. The programme encourages women to take the leadership roles in EECC coordination committees, sensitizes and develops capacity of women through training and skill

development activities. Likewise, NCCSP also encourages poor and vulnerable people to improve their livelihood through entrepreneurship training in income generating activities. Such activities have helped improve the livelihood of vulnerable people, specifically women, and eventually assisted them to adapt to climate change.

Vulnerable people, through orientation and awareness raising activities, have been able to understand climate change and its impact. They identify and articulate the need of adaption to minimize the effects of climate change. This programme has also been helping vulnerable communities to engage in income generating activities such as knitting and sewing, and other small enterprises, while building climate

programme also promotes renewable energy technologies such as ICS, biogas, solar power and micro hydropower. Support in implementation of such activities have been helpful in reducing drudgery of women and at the same time lessening in-door pollution.

For its LAPA model, the NCCSP has been recognized internationally as a model project on climate change adaption to enhance adaptive capacity of poor and most vulnerable people. It stood as one of the best five projects amongst 170 submissions in a Global Contest call by NWP/UNFCCC in CoP 21. Similarly, it received the "People's Champion" and "Honourable Mention" titles in Global Photo Contest organized by the Adaptation Fund Board. These winner photos

contributing to combined outputs of the NAPA but also providing learning opportunities in the formulation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). The MoPE is formulating the NAP based on NAPA and LAPA to address mid and long term adaptation needs in seven main themes and two cross-cutting themes.

Climate change is tremendously affecting people and livelihoods and there is a clear need of adaption to reach more vulnerable communities. The effectiveness of the programme has persuaded the development partners and other non-governmental organizations to scale up more LAPAs in vulnerable communities. At the same time, it is very important to support the vulnerable communities in sustaining their adaptive capacity built as a



resilience structures such as deep-boring irrigation system, elevated community building, elevated toilets and hand-pumps in terai districts as well as irrigation canal, land-slide control measures, drinking water taps, water ponds, improved water mills, etc in the hilly districts. Introduction of flood and drought resistant varieties of various crops and vegetables to the smallholder farmers with supply of training and seeds remain highly beneficial in the flood and drought-prone areas.

Amongst several other activities under various themes of LAPA, this

were displayed at World Bank headquarters in Washington DC during the Annual Global Climate Finance Readiness Seminar, and at CoP 22, Morocco.

The NCCSP is not only a model project for its LAPA but it also has explicitly translated Nepal's Climate Change Policy into practice by spending more than 80% of its total budget in the communities. This has highlighted and popularized government's on budget and on treasury fund flow system amongst the development partners.

The NCCSP is not only

result of NCCSP intervention.

The NCCSP is in implementation since 2013 under the leadership of the Ministry of Population and Environment in close collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development and the Alternative Energy Promotion Center with financial support of DFID and EU and technical support of UNDP. At the local level, the District Coordination Committees (former DDC) of 14 districts are taking the lead role in implementation through Line Agencies, NGOs, Private Sector and Users' Committees. ■

"Communities Key To Success Of Climate Plan"

As Nepal is celebrating the World Environment Day, **NARESH SHARMA**, Chief of Climate Finance Management Section at the Ministry of Population and Environment and National Program Manager of NCCSP, spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on various issues. Excerpts:

What are the trends in climate finance in Nepal?

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Climate-induced extreme events like floods, landslides, droughts have become more frequent resulting in the loss of human as well as physical properties. Nepal's economy is dependent on agriculture, which contributes to 30% of the national GDP. The agriculture sector is directly affected by the climate change impact and the production is getting down. Due to climate change effect, Nepal is bearing an annual loss of about 1.5% to 2% of its GDP, which will increase in the future.

The Government of Nepal has started to allocate budget under the climate finance category in the national budget, however, of the direct relevance to climate change is the 5.90 percent of the total budget allocated in fiscal year 2016/17.

In Nepal, climate adaptation and mitigation projects are implemented through different financial mechanisms- through government's fund flow mechanism and through various institutions, NGO s and INGOs. One of the projects implemented through government's fund flow system is the NCCSP project implemented by the Ministry of Population and Environment, which is the pioneer project that translates the Climate Change Policy's provision to spending 80 % of climate finance at the local level.

Nepal has already prepared Low Carbon Economic Development Strategy (LCEDS), which is in the endorsement process, and this encourages environmentally sustainable development. Nepal's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) further presents Nepal's commitments towards climate change adaptation and low carbon development. Similarly, Nepal is preparing National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to address mid and long term adaptation issues. However, the implementation of this important plan will largely depend on foreign financial and technical support.

Where does climate finance come from in Nepal?

Nepal accesses various international climate funds-multilateral and bilateral public sources. Nepal received financial support from the multilateral funding sources like CIF, SREP, LDCF and the Forest Fund. The Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) was implemented in Nepal in support of the CIF. Similarly, Nepal Climate Change Support Program (NCCSP), Ecosystem Based Adaptation are being implemented through bilateral support. The UK Government's DFID and EU provided £17.6 million to implement 100 LAPAs in 14 districts of the far and mid-western region through NCCSP.

As a Least Developed Country, Nepal also accesses finance from international funds established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Recently the Adaptation Fund Board agreed to provide financial support of US\$ 29 million to Nepal through WFP as an MIE to implement Adaptation to climate-induced threats to food production and food security in the Karnali region of Nepal. Likewise, the MoPE is going to get the support of 2.9 million US \$ from GCF to facilitate National Adaptation Plan formulation process. Nepal has utilized funds from LDCF through UNDP, UNEP, and FAO for GLOF and

Agriculture related projects. Not only climate change adaptation, several initiatives on climate change mitigation were undertaken by Nepal. The CDM, REDD are some of the projects of this category.

The government of Nepal has itself allocated certain climate change related budget from its national budget. In the FY 2016/17, the GoN allocated 19.22 percent of the national budget for climate change related activities (both direct and indirect) through various ministries.

What institutions in Nepal facilitate international climate finance into Nepal?

The Ministry of Population and Environment has established Climate Change Finance Management Section to effectively access and mobilize financial resources to confront climate change issues in Nepal. The MoPE supported the Agriculture Development Bank Limited to lodge the application of NIE accreditation, which is an initial step to harness climate finance from AF for climate change adaptation. Similarly, there are other international sources such as GCF, LDCF, SCCF that Nepal is eligible to access. However, our institutions should be strengthened with a dedicated structure and capable human resources to understand the process and facilitate international climate finances into our country.

Nepal worked effectively as a Chair to Adaptation Fund Board to deliver climate finance in adaptation. During the tenure of Nepal's leadership, the AFD could deliver around 81% against a target of 80% within one and half year.

Can financial planning systems and institutional arrangements ensure climate change finance management in Nepal?

We have a periodic planning system that prioritizes and allocates resources to sector-wise programs. Five-year plans are rolled out by three-year plans and annual plans. These government plans, basically after 10th five-year plan, have articulated climate change issues. Nepal's recent approach paper for its 14th five-year plan has specified the country's commitment to adopting a green economy to minimize the impacts of climate change and to sustain the economic development. In the case of climate change adaptation, the LAPA framework also emphasized bottom-up planning to flow the climate finance to the local adaptation.

Nepal has practiced climate change budget code which helps to understand and address key issues of climate change. However, guidance on how to mainstream climate finance is needed which will support to track aid related to climate change that lies outside the government's fund flow mechanism.

In recent years, Nepal is taking fast steps in addressing climate change issues. The Ministry of Population and Environment, the focal point to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has Climate Change Management Division with overall responsibility to manage and address climate change related issues. With a need to oversee the climate finance and coordinate and facilitate the climate finance into the country, the MoPE has recently established Climate Finance Management Section. The Climate Change Council, chaired by the Prime Minister provides strategic and policy level decisions on climate change related issues. Similarly, the Multi-stakeholder Climate Change Initiative Coordination Committee (MCCICC) coordinates to bring various stakeholders concerned with climate change in a form to discuss climate change issues. At

the local level, in NCCSP project districts, there are local coordination mechanisms established at district, municipality and village level with working objective to plan, implement and monitor climate change adaptation and alternative energy-related interventions.

What are the main challenges for the government of Nepal in mobilizing climate finance?

Nepal is mobilizing the climate finance both from international and national sources to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. After formulation and implementation of NAPA and LAPA, the MoPE is preparing the NAP to address mid-term and long-term adaptation issues. It mainly focuses on seven climate sensitive thematic areas and two cross-cutting areas. This will open another window of opportunity to harness international funding as by NAPA and LAPA. The LAPA has drawn national and international attention as it ensures the fund flow directly

to the local level to implement community-based adaptation interventions for the benefit of poor and vulnerable people. However, due to existing political instability and government's local restructuring, the development partners are in a "wait and see" mood. Due to poor understanding of climate finance by different sector-led organizations and weak institutional capacity, Nepal is lying behind to access international climate change fund. As already mentioned above, there international funds such as GCF, AF, LDCF, SCCF are there to support climate vulnerable and least developed countries. However, it is difficult to access due to complex, lengthy and highly competitive process. So, we need to develop both institutional and human resource capacity to harness and manage the international support for climate change.

How can climate finance contribute to sustainable development goals in Nepal?

To achieve the long-term sustainability of any development project, it is very important that the organizations follow the highest possible environmental, social and economic development as far as possible. Climate adaptation and mitigation action present the communities with an opportunity to natural resource management and their livelihood improvement. In doing so, they can also contribute to broader sustainability and development benefits such as poverty reduction, food security, and ecosystem restoration and management.

At Last, why did LAPA implementation become effective from the perspective of climate finance?



The LAPAs were prepared based on guiding principles of LAPA Framework- bottom-up, inclusive, responsive and flexible and following the seven steps outlined in the LAPA framework that ensures integration of LAPA into the local development plan. The implementation modality of LAPA involves multi-stakeholders' engagement including local communities. At the local level, the District Development Committee (now District Coordination Committee) takes leading role and implement LAPAs involving Line Agencies, NGOs and Users Committee. Those communities which were involved in preparing LAPAs are involved in the implementation of their plan and they monitor their work by themselves. This is why a feeling of ownership developed there. The major factor responsible for making LAPA implementation successful is its fund flow mechanism. It adopts government's public finance management system that is on treasury and on the budget system. This system makes implementers responsible for public hearing and public auditing to ensure financial transparency and accountability.

LAPA is mainly focused on agriculture, livestock and food security, forest, and biodiversity management, alternative energy, climate-induced hazards and infrastructures, capacity development and livelihood and human health and GESI and environment sustainability as cross-cutting themes. These sectors are crucial from the point of view of climate change. Vulnerable people- women and poor -- are the main target group of the LAPA. The project has mandatory provisions to get the participation of at least 50 percent women and people from the marginalized community in the implementation and benefit them from the project. ■



An Indian Tourist's Day In Kathmandu

BY RUSHITH REDDY

Kathmandu is a melting pot of over 100 different ethnicities that inhabit Nepal. This brings together a multitude of cultures that unite the rich cultures of Kathmandu Valley. From the minute you land at the Tribhuvan International Airport, you get to see the cultural diffusion which is so overwhelming to experience.

People travel from all over the world to witness the beauty and grandeur the Kingdom of Nepal has to offer. The beautiful scenery around you is mesmerizing, after hours and hours of traveling finally you're getting to see the mighty Himalayas. Adam Auther, a backpacking tourist from Canada, said, "It's always been on my bucket list to travel to Nepal and trek in the Himalayas, and this is the starting point to it." On the way from the airport to Thamel, there is so much to see, from the local markets to the bus stands to the very famous and sacred Pashupatinath Temple.

For starters, Thamel is the most happening place in Kathmandu and also the traveler's hub, which is also home to the most progressive elements of the modern world. If you're looking for a place to stay, then this would be your best shot since you get to see the best of Kathmandu here. From 5 star hotels to Backpacker's hostels, you can choose from more than a thousand options. Thamel is filled with tons and tons of shops and stalls, where you can get almost everything. These shops sell one of the best tea, prayer flags, clothes, books, groceries and much more. The stuff sold here sure do have intense influence from Tibet, China and India but the place is also famous for its Nepali culture since it's a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic country.

If you just have a day and want to learn more about the history and culture of Nepal, then you should definitely visit the Durbar Square of Kathmandu (which is located in the centre of the city), Patan and Bhaktapur. Along the Durbar Marg, you can find all the International Brands, available only in this part of the country, at the end of this road you will also find the very famous Narayanhiti Palace Museum. One of the most important things in a human's life is Food, and Kathmandu has one of the best restaurants to answer to your cravings no matter what kind of food you're looking for.

If you're a coffee person and are looking for Starbuck, you will surely be disappointed but don't worry there are so many local cafes which offer the best beverages, Himalayan Java Coffee stands out, located in the middle to be the best. During the evenings, the streets swell up with beautiful lights and eager travelers, this is one of the best things to see in Kathmandu. However, most shops and restaurants close by 8 PM, though some of the cafes and bars are open till 12 AM. If you want to experience the best of things, you need to find happiness in the smallest of them, and the city of Kathmandu does justice to that.

(Rusith is an intern from Bangalore)■

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