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Notes From The Editor



After the completion of a twenty-hour visit to Nepal by Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi, both the governments have officially expressed satisfaction on Nepal-India relations coming back on track. Initially, the visit was termed as a religious trip of Indian Prime Minister Modi. However, the visit has also addressed several diplomatic and political issues between the two countries. In other words, the religious tour of Indian Prime Minister Modi also had a political significance. With the visit of such a high importance, we have looked into what the visit meant in Nepal's context. Even with so close cultural, religious and civilizational relations between Nepal and India, there are differences in political and economic level. The recent visit of Indian PM Modi helped the concerned to see the issues closely. Along with the visit, the internal political process was perceived as tricky as differences between ruling CPN-UML and Maoist Centre appeared to be growing, until a surprise announcement of their party merger into the biggest communist party, Nepal Communist Party.

Although it was surprising to see the unification of two communist parties sooner than expected, the recent event is just a regular event to those who watch Nepalese politics closely. This is not the first accidental event. A series of such events have been happening in Nepal. However, this kind of accidental event has always brought prolonged political instability in Nepal. We hope we don't have to see another accidental event again. Along with this, this edition also includes various columns and other contemporary issues.

Keshab Poudel
Editor

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A Question Of Time

There is now a tendency to state that vegetables produced in this country are 'Organic'. What this means, we do not really know. One reads occasionally in national papers of locals stating "The vegetables we ourselves consume are grown in a small patch where we use animal manure. We use the 'ausadi' for vegetables we produce for the vegetable markets." Such statements have caused panic amongst the city dwellers, and they have cause to. Laukas recently bought sometimes increase their sizes overnight and burst in the refrigerators where they have been stored! The vegetable vendors however insist that vegetables are free of pesticides harmful to human health. The authorities that test the vegetables say otherwise. What is the real truth?

An old fairly common phrase in Western Societies is 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away'. The red and alluring apples seem to be very juicy and invite one to take a bite. But beware for it may have been sprayed with pesticides too, coated and polished with wax. Are the pesticides in extensive use to grow more food and eatables for the ever increasing human race going to be the prime cause for its destruction too?

When I started my medical service in Nepal I used to examine children in the outpatients of Bir Hospital and wondered if those ill with kidney damage were because of the use of various ayurvedic Bhasmas made with gold and even mercury. Of course mercury has been now shown to be neurotoxic and very harmful to human health and its use in dental material and even thermometers for taking temperature are now banned. However, gold as an entity has sometimes been in therapeutic use.

What is a customary sight on the banks of likely sewage contaminated 'kholas' of Kathmandu Valley is the washing of recently dug out spring onions, radishes and carrots from the fields. Whilst green leaved vegetables, are laced out with pesticides, the underground 'veggies' probably propagate intestinal worms.

What is disheartening is the sharp rise in the number of kidney failure cases. Many require dialysis for life or even kidney transplants. Many such Nepal's have worked in the Gulf. Perhaps a number of them, fortunate not to die there in work or traffic accidents, come back with kidney damage as a result of the extreme heat and very limited daily water intake in the extreme hot conditions of the Middle East. The large numbers of Nepal's with kidney damage and undergoing dialysis or running around for kidney transplants are possibly a result of this scenario. Doctors working in this area all over Nepal need to be encouraged by the Health Research Council to investigate in this field and come up with answers for the future. One wonders if the rampant use of not only pesticides but also antibiotics, anabolics plus other hormones in the vegetable, fruit, animal and fish production food chains has led to not only kidney damage and failure but also other ills such as cancer and



BY HEMANG DIXIT

dementia too!

Some forty years ago I led a Nepal Medical Association delegation to China. The first city we visited was Kunming, where as we went around we saw men and women in wide brimmed straw hats carrying compost presumably horse, buffalo and pig origin and ? human, in buckets hanging on shoulder poles. So here was the basic fact - China then, with her tremendous potential was relying primarily on her people and asking each to contribute his or her mite for the formation of a new society - a new China. Of course the country with

motivation, mechanisation and modernisation is a completely changed society and a leading world power now.

We profess to be great and developing nation at times and then go on to state that we are progressing to be a 'Developing Country' soon. Is this a fact, a reality or simply a mirage? A few days later is issued a statement saying that we don't want to reach that stage for it will deprive us of much aid! At times we shout out loud that we must stand on our own feet and not depend on others. There is the trend in Nepal to say 'Yes' at one time and 'No' at others, again and again so that listeners around are always perplexed. Are we developing as a Nation with a 'Split Personality'?

What is required for the progress of our country is the development of agriculture with stress on cash crops. Tea, coffee, mushrooms and varieties of various fruits such as oranges, apples, mangoes, strawberries and even kiwi fruit are being grown in Nepal. We should be self sufficient in as many food stuffs that we can produce or manufacture ourselves. Our citizens enticed back from the Gulf countries can strive in the homeland so that we can export 'organically' grown vegetables in Nepal to many of the other countries of the world. Another necessity is to encourage kater or jackfruit and koiralo trees.

The late Stephen Hawking in his theory Panspermia, which has yet to be confirmed, postulated that life began with molecules which became dust or DNA from space billions of years ago. This is Hawking's postulation of start of life on earth. Statements in this line are the words that Christian priests utter as they perform the final rites of a member of their congregation - "From dust we came, to dust we shall return". In similar fashion our Hindu priests, after the final rites of Hindus direct that the last remnant ashes of the individual just cremated are swept into the river along which banks the recently deceased was cremated. In societies where cremation is done electrically, the ashes are given in urns and many disperse it by pouring it into the river or scattering it to the winds. Here too it is back to earth!

(The author writes fiction under the name of Mani Dixit. Website: www.hdixit.org.np. Twitter: @manidixithd) ■

NEWSNOTES

U.S Support For Nepal's First All-Girls School

U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, Alaina B. Teplitz; National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) Chief Executive Officer, Yuba Raj Bhushal; and other Government of Nepal officials



participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for the reconstruction of Kanya Mandir Secondary School - the first all-girls' school in Kathmandu.

During the event, Ambassador Teplitz said, "The U.S. Government continues to prioritize getting children back into school. As part of this commitment, we are partnering with the NRA to construct seismically safe, well-equipped, and child- and disabled-friendly schools and health facilities, from which disadvantaged communities can benefit most. This reflects the longstanding and continued support of the American people to help rebuild a safer Nepal."

The U.S. Government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is partnering with the NRA; the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology; and the Ministry of Health and Population to rebuild 36 permanent schools and health facilities in earthquake impacted districts. The event marked the start of reconstruction of three secondary schools in the Kathmandu Valley (Kanya Mandir in Nyokha, Shree Bhagawati in Sankhu, and Adarsha in Sanothimi, Bhaktapur).

Since the 2015 earthquakes, the U.S. Government has invested more than \$190 million in earthquake response and recovery. Parts of these funds have helped homeowners to rebuild over 16,000 homes using modern safety standards and trained more than 15,000 engineers, contractors, architects, masons, and carpenters on earthquake-resistant construction techniques. U.S. support also helped to establish 1,045 temporary learning centers and 58 transitional facilities with school supplies. This assistance has helped over 93,000 students resume their education with minimal disruption following the earthquakes.

Project For Enhancing Quality Of TVET

Korea International Cooperation Agency on behalf of the Government of Republic of Korea and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) on behalf of the Government of Nepal, on 06 May 2018, signed a Record of Discussions (RoD) to formalize their commitment to work together for the capacity building of TVET instructors in Nepal. The project aims to enhance the quality of TVET education in Nepal through strengthening the capacity of the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) instructors and TITI. The RoD was signed by Dr. Hyungkyoo Kim, Country Director of KOICA Nepal Office and Baikuntha Prasad Aryal, Joint Secretary of Planning

Division of MoEST, Government of Nepal.

According to a press release issued by KOICA, the agreement marks the mutual cooperation between the two governments, GoK and GoN, for bringing quality impact in the TVET teaching system of Nepal and building the capacity of the TITI, which is the only government institute responsible for capacity building of TVET teachers in Nepal.

Similarly, KOICA established Korea Nepal Institute of Technology (KNIT) in Butwal, Tamnagar and handed over to the Government of Nepal in 2012. Apart from the TVET projects, KOICA has been supporting the Government of Nepal in the areas of Health, Education, Agriculture/Rural Development and Capacity building of Human resources.

National Journalism Award

On the third National Journalism Day, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari awarded 'National Journalism Award' and 'Senior Journalist Award' to five journalists.

News chief of Image Channel Mahendra Bista and Chair of Madhes Media House Rajesh Jha were honoured with the National Journalism Award. Similarly, Babita Basnet, chairman of Media Advocacy Group; Kausal Chemjong, station manager at Udayapur-based Radio Prijuga and freelance journalist Nim Bahadur Budhathoki of Rukum, were awarded the 'Senior Journalist Award'.

Speaking at the programme, President Bhandari urged journalists to play a constructive role in maintaining social and cultural harmony in society. She said, "Journalism should help end social injustice, and must stand for truth and national sovereignty. The profession should also earn credibility by being accountable to the public and the country."

A seven-member committee including representatives of Federation of Nepali Journalists, Nepal Press Council



and members of Ministry of Communication and Information Technology unanimously had chosen the names of the honoured journalists.

The awards carry a purse of Rs 200,000 each.

Rs 180.74m Indian Aid For River Training

Ambassador of India to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri handed over a cheque of NRs. 180.74 million to Dr. Sanjay Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Energy, Irrigation & Water Resources, in the presence of Minister Barsha Man Pun, towards India's contribution for river training and construction of embankments along Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamla rivers in Nepal.

According to a press release issued by Embassy of India in Kathmandu, the river training and embankment works in the Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamla rivers in Nepal



aimed at flood control and water resources management, which benefit several million people inhabiting the watershed areas of these rivers in India and Nepal.

With the NRs. 180.74 million, the Government of India has so far given 13 installments since 2008 to Nepal for the river training and embankment works totaling to over NRs. 4.68 billion.

LDC Graduation Process Of Bangladesh: Learning For Nepal

The Embassy of Bangladesh in Kathmandu celebrated Bangladesh's graduation from LDC status by organizing a seminar "LDC Graduation Process of Bangladesh: Learning for Nepal" in collaboration with a reputed local think tank, the Institute of Strategic and Socio-Economic Research (ISSR), at the Hotel Yak and Yeti, Kathmandu.

Former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal graced the seminar as the Chief Guest, while Dr. Shankar Sharma, former Vice Chairman of Nepal Planning Commission and former Ambassador of Nepal to USA presented the key note papers and Gyan Chandra Acharya, former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) spoke as a Special Guest. The seminar was moderated by Professor Dr. Govinda Nepal, former Member of Nepal Planning Commission and Chairperson of ISSR. Mashfee Binte Shams, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Nepal, presented the concluding remarks and vote of thanks.

According to Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Kathmandu, the speakers at the seminar highlighted the rapid socio-economic development of Bangladesh and its historic achievement of graduating from an LDC into a Middle-Income Country, lauding the policies and programs of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. They also discussed the various areas where Nepal, which has decided to push back its deadline for graduation until the time its economy becomes more robust, can learn and benefit from Bangladesh's experience.

In her concluding remarks, Ambassador Mashfee briefly described the graduation process of Bangladesh, mentioning some of the initiative taken by the government of Bangladesh to achieve graduation and transforming the vision of the Father of Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Sonar Bangla into a reality. She also focussed on the thrust areas where the government will focus in order to move further ahead towards achieving the next goal of becoming a developed economy by 2041.

Speakers In Nepal Demand Respect For LGBTIQ Right

The World Health Organization Representative Dr Jos Vandelaer reminded everyone that the Nepal Constitution protects every citizen from discrimination irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Addressing the program, representing the United Nations Resident Coordinator Valerie Julliland at the LGBTIQ Rainbow Flag hoisted ceremony, he said that the federal system that devolves power at the local levels offers an amazing opportunity to build a nation in which every person, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity, lives free of discrimination; a Nepal that prides itself in being inclusive, diverse, and one that leaves no one behind.

"The global theme of this year's commemoration of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is "Alliances for Solidarity," he said.

According to a press release issued by UNIC-Nepal, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer and Questioning persons still face acts of discrimination, including by their family. They also face prejudice in employment, health care and education. Laxmi Ghalan, founder of Mitini Nepal, mentioned that society continues to view LGBTIQ people through a lens of fear and phobia; depriving many from the right to live with dignity in our

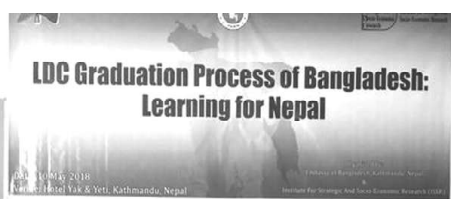


Nepali society.

She said: "For equality, sustainable development, peace, freedom and democracy, we need active participation of everyone - including people from sexual and gender minorities at the decision-making level." Wenny Kusuma, the UN Women Representative in Nepal, and the UN Globe Coordinator for Nepal explained that 'coming out' is LGBTIQ people's self-disclosure of their sexual orientation or of their gender identity.

It reinforces a view that heterosexuality is the norm. "Coming out," she said, "announces that gay people are different, and not the norm. It says that [homo] sexuality is so different that it must be proclaimed. We live in a world in which one is always assumed to be heterosexual.

Nobody asks: "when did you know that you were heterosexual?" UN Globe fights for the equality and non-discrimination of LGBTIQ staff in the UN and in its peacekeeping operations. Manisha Dhakal, the executive director of the Blue Diamond Society, spoke on behalf of the 'National Federation on Sexual and Gender Minorities' She said: "We LGBTIQ people of Nepal are very fortunate that we can participate in this rainbow flag raising ceremony, as many of our fellow LGBTIQ community members in many countries around the world cannot, because of legal and social hostility. ■



BUSINESS BRIEF

Binod Chaudhary's Address In The Pre-Budget Discussion

Member of Parliament from the Nepali Congress as well as the only billionaire of Nepal, Binod Chaudhary, has drawn the attention of the government to promote investment for the economic prosperity of the nation.

Speaking during a discussion at the parliament on appropriation bill, Chaudhary stressed on giving special



attention to investment in the upcoming budget for the fiscal year 2075/76. Chaudhary suggested to the government that the budget should be announced with the assurance of implementing it.

"Only discussing about the principles cannot improve the economy. The time has come to implement the principles," said Chaudhary.

According to the press release issued by Chaudhary Group, he appealed to the finance minister to draft the budget with a new perspective and new attitude. He also reminded the finance minister of his responsibility to usher economic prosperity after the successful conclusion of the elections at all three levels of the country.

According to Chaudhary, Nepal's neighbouring countries China and India have succeeded to attract the world's investors through Special Economic Zones (SEZ). Nepal can also follow the same theme of SEZ, which is popular around the world, stated Chaudhary.

World Bank's 266 Mil USD Concessional Loan To Nepal

The World Bank (WB) has agreed to provide concessional loan of 200 million US dollar under the First Programmatic Fiscal and Public Financial Management Development Policy Credit (DPC) in budgetary support and 66 million US dollar for Rani Jamara Kulariya Irrigation Scheme.

At a programme organised at Finance Ministry, Country Director of the World Bank, Qimiao Fan, and Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Rajan Khanal, signed the agreement to that effect.

The loan proceeds available under 'Development Policy Credit' will be utilized in the sector of government's priority through national budgetary system. This policy credit is tailored with prior actions of reform in fiscal and public financial management sector. The agreement remains effective until 28th February, 2019.

The second agreement for Rani Jamara Kulariya Irrigation Scheme II envisions modernizing irrigation system and strengthening the water user's associations

committees and agricultural production support.

In the second phase of modernization of the project, the credit amount will be utilized to complete the remaining works of ongoing project. This credit agreement remains effective until December 31, 2023.

On the occasion, the Government of Nepal has expressed its sincere appreciation to the World Bank for the concessional loan assistance and for continued support in the socio-economic development of Nepal.

Nabil Bank Inaugurates 'Mid-Corporate And SME Hub'

Nabil Bank has announced the inauguration of its Mid-corporate and SME Hub at the United World Trade Center in Tripureshwar, Kathmandu.

According to a press release issued by Nabil Bank, the hub will cater to business enterprises involved in trading, manufacturing and services of Mid-corporate (MCOR) and SME sizes.

"The hub will also look after direct and indirect micro financing activities at various branch offices of the bank across the nation," the bank added in the statement.

"Mid-Corporate lending covers loans above Rs 30 million up to Rs 100 million to a single unit or group. SME lending covers loan exposure up to Rs 30 million, whereas micro finance covers direct lending to individuals and units, wholesale lending to MFIs and cooperatives, as well as Equity Investments in MFIs," reads a statement issued by the bank.

Meanwhile, the bank and UKaid Sakcham Access to Finance Programme (Sakcham) have joined hands to promote access to finance to the Micro and SME sector.

Similarly, Nabil Bank has opened branch offices in four different locations of the country. The commercial bank said that new branch offices have been opened in Lahan of Siraha, Bardibas of Mahottari, Hariwon of Sarlahi and Taandi of Chitwan. With the opening of new branch offices, the number of branch offices of bank has reached 62. Nabil



also has 111 ATMs and more than 1500 Nabil Remit agents across the country, according to the statement.

World Bank Country Manager Takes Up Position In Kathmandu

Faris Hadad-Zervos, the World Bank's new Country Manager for Nepal, has arrived in Kathmandu to take up his position. Hadad-Zervos, an American national, joined the Bank in 2001 in the Middle East and North Africa Region.



According to a press release issued by The World Bank, he has since held various management positions, his most recent assignment being Country Manager for Malaysia. "I consider it a privilege and an honor to serve Nepal during these very exciting times," said Hadad-Zervos. "I look forward to contributing to the excellent partnership we

have built up over the last 50 years," he said. Hadad-Zervos was selected to this position through the Bank-wide competitive managerial selection process.

Ncell Contributed \$692 Million To Nepal's GDP In 2017: Axiata

Axiata - the parent company of Ncell - has claimed that Ncell contributed \$692 million to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Nepal in 2017.

Releasing its annual report recently, Axiata informed that Ncell's estimated contribution to Nepal's economy last year stood at \$692 million, including operating expenditure of \$208 million and capital investment of \$96 million.

"The total estimated GDP contribution includes the company's direct operation of \$373 million, indirect contribution of \$132 million through procurement from local suppliers, \$76 million generated by Ncell's capital investment and productivity gains of \$110 million through increase in mobile penetration rate in 2017," states the Axiata's report.

As per Axiata's report, Ncell has been contributing to the government treasury in the forms of licence fees, telephone service tax, ownership tax, value added tax, income tax, royalty, frequency fees and Rural Telecommunication Development Fund (RTDF) fees.

According to NTA, the telecommunications sector is generating almost Rs 45 billion in revenue for the government annually through various taxes, including value added tax (VAT), telecom service charge (TSC), royalty and RTDF fees, among others.

Mega Bank, Tourism Development Bank Complete Merger

Mega Bank and Tourism Development Bank have successfully completed their merger process and started their joint operation.

Inaugurating the joint operation of a merged bank, Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Chiranjivi Nepal stated that



Rastra Bank is committed to securing the Public property, which is invested in the Banking sector. He further said, "The public property must be secure due to the high investment (90 percent) of the public in the banking sector while proprietors invest 10 percent."

Nepal added that the concerned authorities should be aware to secure the public property invested in the commercial sector.

The then chairman of Tourism Development Pusparaj Kandel stated that the banking sector is facing problems due to loan invested in the interest of members of Board.

The then Chairman of Mega Bank Bhoj Bahadur Thapa expressed his happiness on completing its merger and stated that the merged bank will support the economic prosperity of the nation.

Nepal Hosting Himalayan Travel Mart

Nepal is hosting Himalayan Travel Mart (HTM) 2018 in Kathmandu on June 1-3, the organizers said in a press meet.

The three-day event is being organized with the theme 'Nepal, Gateway to Himalaya'.

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) is organizing the event in association with Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Nepal Chapter and Nepal Airlines Corporation along with number of travel trade associations and private enterprises.

Speaking at the press meet, Sunil Sakya, president of PATA Nepal Chapter, said that around 225 delegates from 53 different countries are attending the event. Likewise, there will be more than 350 local participants, he added.

"As a unique B2B (Business to Business) event for the Himalayan tourism industry, HTM 2018 will have a remarkable gathering of global buyers, Himalayan sellers, travel bloggers, influencers, national and international media, travel industry professionals and delegates from



several countries," said Sakya.

According to the organizers, more than 100 international travel bloggers, more than 15 high value speakers, 74 international buyers, more than 50 sellers from Nepal and international market along with 1,500 pre-matched business appointments are the major attractions of the event. The event has been divided into three phases. The first phase will be Himalayan Travel Mart (HTM) Conference. Similarly, there will be International Travel Bloggers & Media Conference (ITBMC) in the second phase, while there will be Buyers & Sellers Meet (Business Sessions) in the third phase. Speaking at the press meet, Deepak Raj Joshi, CEO of NTB, said that HTM 2018 is being organized with three major motives. "The first is to establish Nepal as a gateway to every Himalayan region across the world. Secondly, renowned speakers and bloggers, who are participating in the event, are expected to promote Nepal and its tourism potentials in the international market," he said, adding: "Third is the business session which we think will be fruitful for both buyers and sellers."

Modi-3 + Arun-3 = L³?

After India's PM Modi's blitzkrieg visit in May two weeks ago - his third visit to Nepal after the first in August 2014, second during the SAARC summit in November 2014 - Nepali politics is abuzz with the L* word targeted towards his host, Nepali Prime Minister Oli. One of the best places to get a download debrief on the latest political pulse is the news kiosk at Patan Dhoka. Unlike other newsstands, this one is special because of its proximity to the highly politicized Patan Campus, and its regular faces are student leaders and teachers from across the political spectrum - Maley, Mashaley, Mandaley to borrow Girija Koirala's phrasing that captures the left to right range, and to add to the list Kamandaleys, Girija's own loyalists from the Kangress as well as other communist factions, and to correctly rename the Panchayat leftovers as Pamandaleys.

The consensus wisdom of the kiosk cognoscenti is that Modi's third visit has completely washed away any sheen of nationalism left on Oli and exposed him to the L epithet. Wait, say the Pamandaleys and other far left communist Kamandaleys, when was he ever a nationalist? Did he not



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

The Maleys no longer display any vestige of triumphalism (especially since the Prachanda-Oli merger) and have stopped saying Oli is greater than Prithvi Narayan Shah but ask meekly that final opinion be deferred till Oli's visit to China. Indeed, we may have to wait for that, and to begin to piece together what consensus might have been reached between Modi and Xi Jinping in Wuhan at the end of April, consensus on Doklam, indeed the entire Himalayan frontier between the two including Nepal. Oli's success in the forthcoming China visit will definitely be within the constraining

parameters of Wuhan, and one may not even have to read the tea leaves for that.

What went wrong for Oli? Public memory is short (remember Harold Wilson's "a week is a long time in politics"?) and few remember the "sun rising from the West" hype of Mahakali twenty-two years ago. People, however, do remember India's blockade of September 2015 and blame Modi squarely for it even though he is



sell out on Mahakali in 1996 with his recorded statement hoodwinking the parliament that Nepal would earn 120 billion rupees per annum from the project? Harrumph the Mashaleys, he was still a comrade-in-arms then that might have been led astray by his worthless advisors and bureaucrats, but this time he has crossed the L line irredeemably.

as much a victim of the Indian Deep State which was its main architect that made mulch out of his "neighbourhood first" policy. Oli in 2015/16 had refused to make the obligatory first trip to India until India lifted the blockade (much to the chagrin of its Madhesi clients who felt let down). He had opened the China route

leaving Nepal much less India-locked despite the fact that India managed to get his partner Prachanda to subsequently stab him in the back and team up with the Kangress.

His nationalist credentials remained intact, and they remained mainly undamaged with his early April visit to Delhi when the plan to jointly lay the foundation of Arun-3 from Delhi was shelved at the last minute. All this happened despite the fact that all outstanding projects promised by Modi-1 and Modi-2 are pending or badly behind schedule, and despite no relief forthcoming to Nepal on many Nepal-India issues including border inundation, demonetization loot and harassment of travelers.

All that Teflon protecting Oli took a nasty beating in May with Modi's Janakpur-Mustang visit which was billed as a mainly religious visit, but often had the subtlety of a military invasion. He arrived directly from Delhi (not Patna as originally planned) to Janakpur in a military aircraft and was welcomed at the Janaki temple's official podium with a caricatured distortion of the Nepali flag planted by the Indian security apparatus that was in control. The municipal reception was packed with (reports have it) over fifty thousand Bihari BJP supporters from across the border, and the chief minister of Province 2 insulted the rest of the Nepalis and the Nepali constitution on this solemn occasion. Mustang pilgrimage was less controversial but the locals are reported to be upset because (as with his visit to Pashupatinath temple during his first visit) he entered the sanctum sanctorum where none save the priest (and previously the King of Nepal) should have. Oli's atheist government of Nepal remained a mute spectator, angering the faithful.

The worst example of L-ism was the laying of the foundation of Arun-3 from remote control at Dwarika's Hotel. However, to understand why that was bad, one must first step back in history. When this project, then promoted by the World Bank with six other donors, was opposed by activists, it was because of its excessive planned cost and the unacceptable to any sovereign country conditionalities that came with the Arun-3 package. Hydropower projects of that kind are usually built at costs of around US\$ 1000 per kilowatt: the World Bank was planning to do so at US\$ 5400/kW.

This criminal irony of developing a hydel project at five times the market cost in one of the poorest country with some of the richest hydropower potential was discussed by some of us opposing it at Senate Dirksen Building of the US Senate with senators responsible for foreign aid appropriations, with the US assistant secretary for treasury, at the House of Lords in the UK, with a very high powered Japanese delegation consisting of several directors who find it difficult to meet as one even in Japan (it was said), as well as with the then US ambassador Julia Chang Bloch. Her words still ring in my ears: "The US government does not put in money for infrastructure

development through the USAID but through the World Bank because we believe it does the best professional job. If Arun-3 is an example, we certainly need to re-think that policy." Well, the US certainly has, having now created the Millennium Challenge Corporation with Nepal benefitting from its proposed transmission line development.

In the face of this professional opposition, the World Bank backed out in 1995; but Nepal's main political parties failed to learn the right lessons from it. They vowed to "return Arun-3" but in their misguided attempt, what they managed to do is to make it an export project where its cheap electricity goes to India (including what Nepal is to get "free"), with Nepal being forced to buy back dirty coal-fired electricity (as she does now) at higher price. This handing over Arun-3 was done bypassing the parliament and the provision in its constitution for parliamentary ratification thus making it wholly illegitimate in the eyes of many Nepalis. By relying on an institutional memory- and capacity-less formality called the Investment Board and allowing that body to issue the generating license which by law only the Energy Ministry can, and that too without first concluding a power purchase agreement and financial closure as per the law, Oli is now completely entombed within the treasonous-sounding L word. Arun-3 has now become not only illegitimate but also illegal, and that is hardly a good foundation not only for such a big project but also for Nepal-India relations.

Oli has forcibly merged his UML party with Prachanda's Cash Maoists in a top-down manner that has left many senior figures and many more party cadres of both parties very dissatisfied. His energy minister Barsha Man Pun did not attend the Arun-3 foundation laying ceremony and the Maoist spokesperson Pampha Bhusal said in parliament that it violated Nepal's constitution. But by

taking away the energy ministry's power to the Investment board chaired by the prime minister and by taking away key investigative powers of the home ministry to the prime minister's office, Oli might have succeeded in cutting his partner Maoist ministers down to size and humiliated them. But would that lead to the "five years of stability" that Oli-Prachanda promised to the Nepali people? But then maybe that rift is precisely what the staunchly anti-communist BJP prime minister wanted to engineer in the first place with his third visit to Nepal! We may just have to wait for Oli's pending China visit to see how the "Wuhan Understanding" is going to play out.

*L = Lampasaarbad (i.e. "prostration-ism" or excessive kowtowing to foreign powers) ■

All this happened despite the fact that all outstanding projects promised by Modi-1 and Modi-2 are pending or badly behind schedule, and despite no relief forthcoming to Nepal on many Nepal-India issues including border inundation, demonetization loot and harassment of travelers.



PM MODI'S NEPAL VISIT

Faithfully Yours

Although Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent trip focused on visits to Hindu shrines, his visit also helped bring Nepal-India relations back on track

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Narendra Modi is a politician and prime minister of India, he is a person with strong inner faith as a Hindu. This is the reason he made his two days' visit to Nepal more religious.

Showing a great respect to Janakpurdham, home of Sita, he offered a special puja to Janaki Temple. Then, Prime Minister Modi worshipped at Muktinath Temple, one of the most sacred temples of Hindus at the northern Himalaya. Before leaving, he concluded his religious trip offering a special puja to Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu.

After visiting three most important Hindu shrines of Nepal, Prime Minister Modi has made a record as the first Indian Prime Minister of India to perform this. Modi's personal belief on Hindu religion also served to fulfill broader political and diplomatic interests of India.

Visiting and worshipping the

temples and shrines of Hindus and Buddhists, Indian Prime Minister Modi has also shown the centuries old close religious and culture relations between Nepal and India. He has also given the message how Hindu religion has connected Nepal's three regions, plains, hills and mountains, without any ethnic discrimination.

At Janakpur, Modi said that he was a 'prime pilgrim' in his third visit to Nepal and not just a prime minister. Addressing a function organized after offering special prayer to Goddess Janaki, Indian Prime Minister Modi said he was happy to step in Janakpur as the first sitting Indian prime minister to do so. Recalling that the people in Uttar Pradesh in general and Banaras in particular had made him the prime minister of India, Modi said the relations between Nepal and India are deep-rooted.

PM Modi and KP Oli have distinct political philosophies, one

a religious spiritual leader and other a communist without any religious faith. However, PM Modi, a spiritual person, visited Nepal when Oli, a staunch communist who claims himself to be a non-believer of any religion, was prime minister leading a communist government. They do hold different ideologies as well. As Modi has high respect and regard on Gita, Ramayana and Ved, Oli prefers to preach Mao's red book and Marx's Das Capital.

PM Oli and PM Modi have made all possible efforts to avoid any confrontation. PM Oli even hailed efforts connecting all places associated with Lord Ram and Mother Sita. He also underscored the need for including other places associated with Ram and Sita, including the place where Sage Balmiki lived and Sita ended her life in Nepal.

PM Modi echoed Oli. "Without

Nepal, even Lord Ram would have been incomplete," said Modi, lauding historical and religious ties with Nepal.

Modi gave a clear message to all the Hindus that they share similar faith wherever they live, including in plains, hills or mountains. In Nepal, a lot of efforts have been made from different quarters to divide the Hindus of the hills, plains and mountains.

As Janakpur is home of Sita, Muktichhetra has also a very close connection with Ramayana or Kagbeni. For Vaishnav, Mukti Chhetra is a place for salvation where river Gandak originated. Just above Muktichhetra, there is Damodarkunda, from where one of Stream of Gandak River originates. The temple Pashupatinath remains a sacred place, as well.

The message of Indian Prime Minister Modi was that religion teaches harmony. However, it remains to be seen how Modi's

power to show to the world that relations between Nepal and India are indeed unique. However, Nepal has seen a gradual decay of Hinduism with abolition of Hindu Monarchy and Hindu religion.

Nepal's current government even cancelled the national holiday on Ramnavami and Krshnajanmasthami, two important days of Hindus in a Hindu majority state. After abolition of Hindu monarchy, which used to be a symbol of religious and civilization continuity with India, India's soft power influence has drastically reduced in Nepal and there is a rise of radicals hostile to Nepal's tradition and culture. Given this situation, how Modi's soft power diplomacy will work remains to be seen.

With Modi visiting religious sites, tourism entrepreneurs are hopeful that the Prime Minister's stint would entice Indian tourists to reach religious sites in Nepal

As Modi came to Nepal with religious message, radicals from all fronts including Madhesh, who even marched to border to block the border, felt a threat of existence. They united to oppose Modi's recent religious visit to Nepal.

His Indian and Nepali critics said Modi's whirlwind tour of Nepal was largely aimed at shoring up the support of Hindu voters at home.

Aljazeera's commentator termed the visit 'High on style and low on substance.' Geja Sharma Wagle, a geostrategic analyst based in the capital, Kathmandu, said "the visit was high on style and low on substance," writes Aljazeera.

"The visit helped publicize Nepal's religious sites, which were not widely known outside the country. Aside from that, I don't see any significant achievement for Nepal," he said.

Political Importance

Modi's recent visit was



NC Leaders with Indian PM Modi

message will be taken.

Indian Prime Minister Modi has used religious and cultural soft

and boost the country's tourism industry.

Modi's Opposition

projected as a pilgrimage but it has made many successful political and diplomatic ventures.

NEIGHBOURS

Modi's visit came ahead of Oli's trip to China, with whom he had signed a major framework agreement regarding trade and transit in March 2016.

"Modi's choice of Janakpur as the first step also seemed to be an indication that India has not yet given up on the Terai issue, though it withdrew support to a party that boycotted the constitution over the matter," writes Yubaraj Ghimire in his article in Indian Express. "Also, Modi ought to know that the European Union, India's ally in promoting democracy in Nepal, has a much larger presence in the Tarai and that India is viewed with suspicion for the secessionist trends in some pockets here. "PM Modi wants to explore the symbolism in visiting Hindu shrines and use government-sponsored public felicitations, instead of government channels, for outreach. There is a distinct realization that India has lost its influence in Nepal," writes Ghimire.

Upon receiving civic felicitation, Modi said that he was extremely honored in the city that always lured him. "Kathmandu has always lured me by its diversity, depth and progressive attitude," he said adding that he'd soon visit Lumbini, birthplace of Lord Gautama Buddha.

Strength to Strength

There are contradictions in the personality between Modi and Oli in terms of their views and faith. Yet Modi and Oli have achieved a certain level of political and diplomatic success. As it is said an individual's personal faith has little to do with state affairs, Modi seems to have been able to influence Oli on India's core interests.

"I am very much fascinated by Prime Minister Modi's idea of HIT - highway, information and transmission. I want to add two

more on that - inland waterways and airways," Oli said at a press meet jointly addressed by him and Indian Prime Minister Modi at Dwarika's Hotel. The two prime ministers addressed the press after their one-on-one meeting and bilateral meeting of the delegations of the two countries.

Prime Minister KP Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi have agreed to strengthen air, waterways and rail connectivity of Nepal so as to transform Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked and water-linked country.

Modi in his address applauded Nepal for successfully holding three tiers of elections within a year. "This period will be remembered as a golden period in Nepal's history," he said. "India is ready to support

expressed their commitments to address various other serious issues such as inundation and cross-border crimes. "We will further strengthen our joint efforts on defense and security to control cross-border crimes that have been taking place by misusing our open-borders that are quite important for people on both the sides," said Modi.

China Factor

Domestic and international media analyzed Modi's visit in another context as well. "Though it had religious overtones, some analysts saw the visit, a month after Oli's trip to India, as New Delhi's strategic move to undermine China's increasing footprint in Nepal," writes Aljazeera in its commentary.

As views and analyses were



Indian PM Modi in Mukti Nath Temple, Mustang

Nepal in its efforts toward inclusive development and economic prosperity."

Oli sought Indian permission for four additional air routes for Nepal. Nepal wants air routes via Janakpur, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj and Mahendranagar.

Oli also stressed the need for reducing Nepal's trade deficit with India. "India is our largest trading partner. However, the growing trade deficit [of Nepal] has been a serious matter of concern for Nepal," said Oli. "I believe that India has both the capacity and willingness to address our genuine concerns."

The two prime ministers also

flooding, Indian Prime Minister Modi said all misunderstandings with Nepal are over and the bilateral ties are heading to a new high.

In a tweet, Modi said "My Nepal visit was historic. It gave me a great opportunity to connect with the wonderful people of Nepal. Talks with PM Oli were productive. New vigor has been added to India-Nepal relations through this visit. Gratitude to the people and Government of Nepal for their warmth."

As there are jubilations on both the sides, the outcome is still awaited.

Reshaping India's Neighbourhood Policy

India's neighbourhood policy has been a critical aspect of its foreign policy. The consistently raised issues are that India has not been able to frame a comprehensive neighbourhood policy. Some scholars have pointed out that there is no consistency in India's policy towards its neighbours. These issues are important in the context of the history of India's neighbourhood policy. Nevertheless India has tried to shape its neighbourhood policy from time to time. But the problem is that India has to operate in an asymmetric region. The Pakistan factor plays an important role. Infact, it can be argued that its relations with Pakistan determine India's neighbourhood policy. It is due to this that India's neighbourhood policy has lacked consistency and uniformity. India's own preference for bilateralism and also its attitudinal problems at times, and reactionary approach has also worked as stumbling blocks.

India's good neighbourly policy in the mid 1990's was an important initiative. It succeeded to some extent except in the case of Pakistan.

When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister of India in 2014 he made it very clear that neighbours will be India's first priority. The first step he took in this direction was to invite all the heads of SAARC countries in his oath taking ceremony. It went very well and there was an overwhelming response from the neighbours. The second step that Modi took was state visits to the neighbouring countries. Some of the contentious issues with some countries were also resolved during his visit. There was an attempt to create an atmosphere of friendship in the region. But relations with Pakistan again came in its way. India made it clear that peace talks are not possible with Pakistan so long it continues to support terrorism. But all did not go well with other countries as well. Thus the enthusiasm that PM Modi tried to generate at the beginning lost enthusiasm. However India has once again tried to take initiatives to reshape and revitalize its neighbourhood policy.

Nepal First

India's attempts to reshape its neighbourhood policy have started with taking India-Nepal relations back in track. Actually India- Nepal relations had reached to its lowest web during last few years over several impinging issues. PM Oli's visit to India in April 2018 proved an important breakthrough. Oli on the eve of his Delhi visit made it clear that the age old historical and cultural relations with a neighbor can not be allowed to be ruined.

PM Modi has reciprocated PM Oli's visit in a shortest time on 11-12 May 2018. This was PM Modi's third visit in the last four years period. This it self speaks of the importance that India has accorded to Nepal in the context of taking its policy of neighbor first back on track. It may be reminded here that PM Modi's first visit to Nepal in 2014 took place after a gap of 17 years.



BY PROF. BHUVAN UPRETI

An Experiment in Religious Diplomacy

There has been lot of emphasis in recent years on the use of soft power diplomacy. It can be argued here that soft power diplomacy works where political diplomacy has failed. In South Asia there is vast scope for the use of soft power diplomacy as the countries of the region belong to the same civilization. However due to several political hangovers these countries have always tried to refrain from soft power diplomacy. The religion, culture,

language etc. are the major instruments of soft power diplomacy. It is difficult to conceptualize PM Modi's visit to Nepal in the framework of soft power diplomacy. But it needs to be discussed here as in the case of India and Nepal religion and culture are two very powerful instruments that can replace the political space by a civilizational space.

The Indian PM's visit to Jankidham in Janakpur, Muktinath and Pashupatinath and his expressions that Ayoudhya and Jankidham and India and Nepal are complimentary to each other and that there is a shared heritage will go a long way in shaping relations between the two countries and has the potential to accord a new direction to their relations.

Looking in a South Asian perspective there are similar religious, cultural, linguistic and other bindings among the countries of the region. So the notion of soft power diplomacy can be useful in reshaping India's relations in South Asia as well.

The Notion of Cultural Connectivity

India has been emphasizing strengthening connectivity in the region. Infact, connectivity is a powerful and basic instrument of binding the countries of the region together. PM Modi has tried to give a new twist to the issue of connectivity by coloring it as cultural connectivity. It is infact important to bring people, places and temples nearer but also to encourage religious tourism, which has its immense economic significance for a country like Nepal. Modi ji announced direct bus service from Janakpur to Ayoudhya. It has also been decided to connect a number of places under the scheme of Ramayana Circuit. These places are Nandigram, Shringverpur, Chitrakoot, Sitamarhi, Buxar, Darbhanga, Chitrakoot (MP), Mahendragiri, Jagdalpur, Nashik, Nagpur, Bhadrachalam, Hampi and Rameshwaram. There are many other places both in India and Nepal, which can be connected by rail or roads.

In countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also such cultural connectivity is possible.

Five Mantras for Neighbours

PM Modi, while speaking at a civic reception in Janakpur said that the two neighbours can work on five Ts. These are: Tradition, Trade, Tourism, Technology and Transport. He further said that these are important in order to attain progress and prosperity. It is not only that these two neighbours need progress and prosperity but rest of the countries are also looking for peace, prosperity and progress. One may hope that PM Modi would like to spread

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this message to rest of South Asia. It can prove to be an instrument to generate good will for India in South Asia.

Bridging Gaps

South Asia is a complex region. There are common interests but there are individual sensitivities as well. There are expectations as well from a country like India. India is a larger entity in the region while others are smaller and least developed to middle range developing countries. The mutual misunderstandings, misperceptions and diversions of policies are obvious. There is always a need to take into consideration the expectations and sensitivities of the neighbours. Whenever there is a breakdown of mutuality of interests and mutual understanding there have been gaps in the relations of the courtiers of the region. India has a larger responsibility to mend fences.

During his current visit to Nepal PM Modi praised Nepali people for their successful journey from "War to Buddha." He commended Nepal's successful completion

of three layers of elections and in bringing democracy back on foot. PM Modi also praised PM Oli's leadership. Modi clearly mentioned that India is ready to be the closest partner in Nepal's development but Nepal herself will have to decide its priorities. India praised Nepal's constitutional process in the recent past but did not make any reference to Nepal's domestic issues.

Are these any indications towards India's attempts to reshape its neighbourhood policy? There is still time to ponder upon this question. But it is certain that India has lost much of its space and good will in the neighbourhood due to lack of policy initiatives and at times a reactionary approach. There is a need to look a fresh at its policy initiatives in the region. May one hope that PM Modi has made a modest beginning from his visit to Nepal.

(Prof. Upreti is a former director of South Asia studies centre University of Rajasthan Jaipur and senior fellow of Vivekanand international foundation and Indian council of social science research) ■

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Communists And Insurgents: Nepal's Past And Present

For over half a century Nepal has had significant radical communist movements that have shaped its political and cultural landscape. Twelve years since the end of the civil war, this period of instability and insurgency seems to finally be coming to a close. However, with some authoritarian actions from Oli and the government, we could see a resurgence.

Nepal's 1951 uprising and the 1990 democratic movement both featured intense communist involvement. Setting the scene for the left's role in contemporary Nepalese history.

Since the inclusion of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist - Leninist) (UML) in mainstream politics in the 1990s, the radical left has had a far more bloody involvement in Nepal's history. The UML believed in the political process (UML) whilst some communists believed armed resistance was necessary to achieve the left's goals. This group of radicals were the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN(M)).

Eleven years after the decade long "people's war", the CPN(M) formed a left-wing alliance with the UML. The elections for the House of Representatives saw the left alliance win 47% of the vote and nearly two-thirds of the seats - a huge achievement. Moving forwards, they



BY ALEX BUSHNELL

decade is promising for peace, it bears a striking resemblance to the situation with the UML in the 1990s. When the UML joined the political process they isolated their radical wing, which led to the formation of the CPN(M). Today, the CPN(M) have joined the political process, so what's happened to radicals within their ranks? Have they toed that party line or do revolutionaries still roam Nepal?

Splinters have happened, with the most obvious example being the Communist Party of Nepal Revolutionary Maoist (CPN-M), led by Mohan Baidya. This group believes that the CPN(M) has lost its way and is no longer fulfilling the ambitions of the people's war, which can only be brought about by an armed struggle. Again, this is a mirror image of the split between the UML and the CPN(M) in the 1990s. However, the CPN-M has failed to have any major impact and in 2014 split again when Netra Bikram Chand broke off to form a new party.

Unlike Baidya's faction, this new splinter group has taken up arms against the state. Nepal Monitor reported as many as one-hundred and twenty-eight cases of violence during the 2017 elections, with as many as ninety-six of these potentially being perpetrated by Chand's group. These violent acts mostly included IEDs (improvised explosive devices) aimed at polling stations, candidates and campaign events. In addition to this, Chand's group intimidated voters in the Thawang Rural Municipality in Rolpa so greatly that the turnout was just 30%, the report suggests.

This subsequently questions the legitimacy of such a vote - their ultimate aim.

By Nepal still struggling with poverty and corruption, one wonders if radical groups like Chand's could still gain mass appeal.

Aditya Adhikari, author of *The Bullet and the Ballot Box* and an

expert in Nepali Maoism, doesn't view Chand's organisation as any kind of real threat to the political process though. He claims that Chand has no real platform or base support and only appeals to "pissed of Maoist



announced their seven-point agreement last month, including their plans to merge and become the Nepal Communist Party.

Whilst the CPN(M)'s transformation over the last

FORUM

fighters" who view the CPN(M) as abandoning their cause. The reality is that armed resistance to the state seems unlikely to return, he claims.

People in Nepal are tired of conflict after the ten-year war and have little desire to return to those times. This is in addition to the fact that whilst the CPN(M) might have isolated some of its fighters and followers, it still maintains broad support in its heartlands as shown through the spread of votes in 2017.

He acknowledges that support for insurgency could return but the conditions for this are unlikely. Adhikari claims, the state would need to persecute ethnic minorities, and the insurgents would then need to help said minorities, or Nepal would have to return to a dictatorship.

Until either of these things happen, the revolutionary Maoists that still exist stand very little chance of gathering any real public support for their cause, he says.

Recent developments with Chief Justice Parajuli do not bode well for the government's commitment to democracy though. According to the 2015 Constitution, a chief justice may only be removed through impeachment by the House of Representatives. The Judicial Council tendered his resignation last week upon finding out that he's of retirement age.



Communist Leader Baidhya (left) and Biplav

In fact, there are reports that Prime Minister Oli stated that if Parajuli didn't resign, or wasn't forced to leave, he would fire him himself.

Former attorney general and constitutional lawyer Badri Bahadur Kari dubs this as equivalent to a constitutional coup.

He says that whether you agree or not with Parajuli's departure, his resignation should have been put to the House of Representatives.

Pashupati SJB Rana, Nepal's ex-panchayat era foreign minister, has also voiced concerns over Oli's actions, calling them "stupid" and "needless".

"There is a danger that this two-thirds majority will go to Oli's head ... [but] it's too early to say".

Oli has already shown totalitarian tendencies by bringing the national investigation department (NID) directly under his control. This agency is the principal collector of information on public security, economic crimes, corruption and domestic and foreign terrorism. Usually the NID answers to the house committees but now Oli has unfettered access to this information and

the whole process has become far less transparent.

There are few checks and balances within the Nepali system and Rana acknowledges that if Oli chooses to act autocratically then there is very little that can stop him.

These aren't the only instances of undemocratic actions within the government. During the decade long conflict over seventeen-thousand people were killed and thousands more went missing. Since the fighting ended there has been a push for bringing the perpetrators of such war crimes to justice. Abductions, executions and sexual violence occurred from both sides during the insurgency but as of yet no one is being held accountable. To inflict further pain, the CPN(M) and Oli's UML signed a deal last year to give people accused of such crimes amnesty. Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists have accused the two parties of trying to "wash away the crimes of conflict".

In addition to this, Nepal is ranked 122nd in the world for corruption, and there was widespread censorship and arresting of journalists covering the election last year.

This being said, Nepal has moved up eight places in the most recent EIU Democracy index from the 102nd to 94th most democratic country in the world. Nepal is currently regarded as a "hybrid regime". It's not a "flawed democracy" such as the likes of India or Malaysia but instead finds itself in a list of countries including Iraq and Pakistan which are recovering from authoritarian regimes too. This improvement could also help explain the appetite for people engaging with the democratic process instead of armed rebellion.

Another factor in people's willingness to cooperate with democracy is the hope that the Left-wing alliance can aid social mobility and alleviate the struggles of Nepal's working class. Their manifesto is very clear in this aim but it's too soon to know if they're going to be able to do it. Baidya and co. believe the "people's war" has been a conflict that has served to help the leaders of the CPN(M) and solidify the status quo the insurgents believed they were fighting. He further says that if people come under the control of a ruling class, and the left alliance fails to deliver, then another people's war is not off the table. Adhikari and Rana see this as unlikely in the short-run, but Baidya could be right. People's willingness to buy into a system that disenfranchises them might last whilst the memories of war are fresh, but this can't last forever.

Whilst the new left-wing government could push forward with democratic norms, we are left to question the likelihood of this. Nepal's dogged history of authoritarian regimes, the assiduous abuses of democracy, and the persistent presence of mass poverty means a question mark hangs over this new era of politics. If the Government can continue taking Nepal down a path of democracy, the country's prolonged relationship with communist insurgencies could well be over. However, if they choose to go down a darker path, Nepal's insurgency era may yet see more days.

(Alex is an intern from England) ■

MAOIST AND CPN-UML UNIFICATION

Regular Accident

Dissolving two older communist parties, CPN-UML leaders and Maoist Center leaders set up a new party giving up their old legacy

By KESHAB POUDEL

As soon as CPN-UML leaders and Maoist Center leaders applied for registration of a new party at Election Commission, four decades old CPN-UML and two decades old CPN-Maoist were formally dissolved, paving the way for a new party with new ideology and new leadership at the helm.

Although the decision of merger was very accidental and surprising for many including CPN-UML leaders, as both the parties do not share many things in common, Nepal has a history of events happening accidentally but regularly. The unification of two ideologically hostile parties is also part of the series of events.

Nepal's recent political development is also strange in the regional political context as well. At a time rightist political force under the leadership of Prime Minister Naredra Modi is gaining his strength all over India, communists

are gaining strength in Nepal. Interestingly, the announcement of unification of communist parties has taken place just a week after the religious visit of Prime Minister Modi to Nepal.

"I had not thought that our two parties would unite so quickly," wrote Kamal Koirala, senior CPN-UML leader and son of former prime minister late Matrika Prasad Koirala, on his Facebook wall.

In the history of Nepali politics, there are many impossible events that have turned into reality. Nepali Congress, Nepal's oldest liberal democratic party, giving all its political ideology, launched agitation jointly with extreme and moderate communist parties against Panchayat regime in 1990.

Just a decade later, Nepali Congress and all other communist parties, including the Maoists launched a joint agitation to overthrow monarchy and established Nepal as Federal

Republic state. After earthquake, Nepali Congress backed two communist factions to promulgate the current constitution, which is against the spirit of liberal democracy.

Just a year ago, Maoist Center and Nepali Congress jointly contested local elections against CPN-UML. All these political events were unimaginable for many. However, all the events as they unfolded looked like regular phenomenon of Nepalese politics.

PM Oli and Prachanda: Two In one

After the dissolution of two communist parties, Maoist Center leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal and prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli are two main winners. With the mandate to continue for two years as co-chair, these two are likely to rule the party in a decree as they decide.

Strategically Maoist leader Prachanda, who was unable to wipe

COVER STORY

out CPN-UML in his decade long armed struggle and the three elections, is a main beneficiary as he is able to constitute a new party

With well organized party structures and party management, CPN-UML is like corporate party with everything under it. CPN-UML has a

already shown his way of playing politics in new party.

Politically, the unification gives a lion's share to Maoist Center, which



dissolving the largest communist party with strength and structure.

Prachanda has also found opportunities to lead underground communist party as a rebel leader in a bloody civil war and finally secured the co-chair of a largest communist party of Nepal in electoral politics.

With his politically cunning nature, co-chair Prachanda will now slowly move to dismantle the UML's old structure. He needs to dismantle all of them to establish his leadership in the new party.

For PM Oli, who has shown that power is the only way in politics, the unification gives stability to run the country for at least two years as he wishes. As Prime Minister Oli has already achieved what he aspired as an individual political leader, he has nothing to lose individually.

"Pushpa Lal Shrestha would be happy today to see his dream of one strong communist party ruling the nation with comfortable majority being realized and now we have achieved that," said Prime Minister Oli. "The unification will now help government to achieve the goal of prosperous Nepal."

Maoist Gain over UML's Strength

wide network throughout the country in all the sectors including NGOs, Civil Service, business transport, farmers and various social groups.

With its strong base in school teachers, with almost 200,000 memberships, CPN-UML's organizational strength reaches at the lowest level of village and it has a good influence in the hill dominated middleclass with anti-Indian radical nationalistic orientation.

Establishing as a party reaching all different sectors of society and resources required to run organizational set up, CPN-UML is strong in competitive politics of Nepal. CPN-UML leaders were able to retain their strength even during 10 years old Maoist violence. Although they suffered badly in the first elections of Constituent Assembly in 2008 reaching to the third position, they recovered their position pushing Maoists in the third position.

In the local and national elections, CPN-UML again proved its strength winning the elections in all the seven provinces and national parliament. With equal status as co-chairman of the party, Maoist leader Prachanda will play a crucial role within the divided house of UML. Taking the decision after meeting with CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, Dahal has

is virtually at the state of losing its ideological base with most of its rebel cadres joining new Maoist Party led by Netra Bikram Chand Biplab. Senior and revolutionary leaders who were with Prachanda are now with Mohan Vaidya. Ideologue Dr. Baburam Bhattarai is leading his own party leaving Maoist. So, unification was Prachanda's wish.

Getting over 45 percent of position in the central committee and standing committee in the unified party, Maoist Center leaders have gained as much as their own strength.

Given the costly elections and losing its own identity, Maoist Center leaders are likely to gain much more in unified communist with CPN-UML than contesting the elections on their own.

CPN-UML's Gain

Although CPN-UML has given a lot more than Maoist Center, the unification has also strengthened the position of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. With the unification, Prime Minister Oli's government is stronger now.

Despite giving almost equal numbers of executive positions to Maoist Center, Prime Minister Oli is the kingmaker in the party as a co-chair. For coming two years till

holding the general convention, Prime Minister Oli's only challenge is to keep Prachanda in good humor.

Proving as a man of command in the leadership forcing all CPN-UML's leaders to agree on his proposal for unification, prime minister Oli has shown that he can dictate his terms in the party.

Although there is a certain disenchantment within the party, prime minister Oli has completely sidelined those who are against his decision to unify the party. For senior leaders of CPN-UML, Oli seems to have thought the positions.

Challenges Ahead

Although officially two communist parties got united, the unification of the party up to the grass root level is not easy. The forthcoming general convention, which it is agreed, will be held within two years, and it will choose the leaders of the party. In that process, the main political tussle is likely to focus on controlling the grass root level organizations.

The decision to allocate the number of members at the district and provincial level is yet to be taken. Grass root levels will have to see more political tussle. Groomed in Maoist and Leninist ideology, Maoist Center cadres are more aggressive and oriented by violence than CPN-UML.

Before completing the total unification of the party, CPN-UML and Maoist center will likely face much turmoil generated by the internal dissensions and disenchantments. According to the Prime Minister Oli, the committees in all levels will be unified within three months.

"Six months back people did not believe that a unified party would take shape, the credit of this unification goes to our voters, cadres, well wishers and all the people who want Nepal as a

prosperous nation, not just to leadership of two parties," said PM Oli, co-chair of Nepal Communist Party,

"Now there will be no UML or Maoist Centre, we are Nepal Communist Party and there will be no issues among the leaders of the unified party," thundered Dahal.

Dissolution of Mother Party

The date of unification was also significant. They declared the dissolution of old party on 25th Madan-Ashrit Memorial Day. After a decision of unification, Nepal Communist Party-UML which was constituted by Madan Bhandary and Jeev Raj Ashrit was dissolved.

According to the agreement, the new party will be guided ideologically by the philosophy of

Registered at Election Commission

Following a decision to unite, CPN-UML Chair KP Sharma Oli and CPN (Maoist Centre) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal went to the Election Commission and filed an application for registration of the 'Communist Party of Nepal'.

They told the EC that the two parties have become one; hence the registration was for a new unified party called Communist Party of Nepal. UML Chair and Prime Minister Oli said, "We have come for the official recognition with the formation of a joint central committee," he said.

Maoist Centre Chair Dahal said the new party was being registered as per the democratic procedure to



Marxist-Leninist and on political line, People's Democracy will be adopted and leadership of the new party will be shared alternatively. The new party will have 441-member central committee (241 members from the UML and 200 from the Maoist Center).

Likewise, it will have a 43-member standing committee with 25 representatives from the UML and 18 from the Maoist Centre. The party will have 'Sun' as its electoral symbol, the one the UML has been using for long.

forge a unity between the two parties. The commitment made before the people for unity for development and prosperity of the nation.

Although there is a jubilant mood in certain sections, how the dissolution of two major communist parties and emergence of new communist parties will bring stability to the country is still to be seen. However, CPN-UML, Nepal's largest and strong communist party is moving from stable and strong path to uncertain and rough course. ■

A Momentous Partnership - Nepal And Germany

On a TV show recently, I heard a wise man say about his difficult youth: You don't judge a life by the hand you were initially dealt. You judge a life by how you played that hand.

60 years ago Nepal established diplomatic relations with Germany. Both countries were emerging from dark and difficult times, both were trying to establish a new identity. They wanted to open up to the world and define a new place for themselves within this world.

Both countries were very different from each other, in many ways. But both wanted to actively play the hand History had dealt them, no matter what those cards said. 60 years, almost a lifetime later, let us ask: how have we both played our hand?

Look at Nepal today. It has overcome decades of profiteering by a rent seeking elite, it has overcome a decade of civil strife, it has given itself a new, democratic, republican and federal constitution, and the Nepali people have validated all this by voting massively last year, installing the most powerful government in Nepal's modern history. This government, carried by a united party, knows it has to fulfill the promises which got it elected. It has the power and - I believe - the wisdom to reconcile the country with its past and help it look boldly to the future. Building the future on the foundation of a well understood past shared by all - this will be a process. It cannot be achieved by the stroke of a pen or the handing out of some money from state coffers. But if this process gets to a credible start now, in the coming two to five years, it will be empowering Nepali women and men like never before in History.

Look at Germany today. The country is re-united. The roughly 80 Million Germans are part of a European Union of 500 Million citizens. These 500 Million freely trade, travel, work and transfer assets among themselves. And the European Union ensures the rule of law for all and organizes the outside protection of the Union territory. Germany has established its own particular brand of foreign and security policy - not so much by talking, but by how we behaved. We have taken on responsibility such as intervening militarily against dictatorship and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, offering the parties to the conflict the option to become members of the European Union. But we refused to participate in the invasion of Iraq at the beginning of the century. The most important point for us today: the European Union as a whole is establishing its own particular Foreign and Security policy through its High Representative, Federica Mogherini. As Germans, we are fully part of this European Foreign and Security policy.

Both countries can be proud of these achievements. From many conversations in the last nine months here, I am confident to say: It seems to feel good to be a Nepali today. And I can tell you myself: it feels good to be a German today. This is a new set of cards we've been dealt. Some of it we earned, most of it was luck or due to geopolitical circumstances beyond our reach. Little does it matter. What matters is:

What will we both do with it?

It is a good timing that today we finish our consultations on the next two years cycle of development cooperation between Germany and Nepal. Both delegations have worked hard in the past days, and I congratulate them on the atmosphere of cooperation and understanding which was established. Germany will continue to engage in the Health and Energy sectors and will continue to work on



BY ROLAND SCHÄFER

enabling Nepali small and medium sized enterprise for a competitive world market.

Our cooperation builds on decades of common work, decades of experiences. A lot of stories can already be told. I specifically greet the Deputy Mayor of the city of Bhaktapur, Rajani Joshi, who has come to share this moment with us. Bhaktapur may have the longest story to tell about "the Germans", about successes in cooperation, about trust built, even after initial failures were overcome. This learning process

never ends. I am happy to further engage with this proud, able city and its citizens on a cooperation that makes best use of what Bhaktapur can give to the nation and of what a modern Germany can contribute to this long standing partnership.

Cooperation is a constant learning process. Just ten days before the Government will release the national budget, and a day before the right honourable President will announce the government's policies to the Parliament, this was the right moment to harmonize our engagement with the fundamental policies Nepal is choosing to implement. These were consultations, not yet negotiations, which we will hope to finalize in autumn. Announcements will come only then, but we are confident that the work done so far will help getting it right. So stay tuned.

Not all is government to government cooperation. We want to make Nepal a place for German and European industry to invest in. Through private sector engagement, employment will be created, durably and reliably, in this competitive world.

Warsteiner, one of the best established beer brands in Germany and in the world, has trusted the Shrestha Family with opening a brewery in Nepal. I thank Santosh Shrestha for offering his Warsteiner beer to us today. What could be more symbolic than sharing a glass of beer? This is the German way of saying: "I want to continue to be friends with you."

And I cannot even begin thanking all those Germans and Nepali who have made friends with each other and have transformed this friendship into lasting engagement: helping to build schools, houses, hospitals, homes for sick and disabled, and updating Nepali

doctors on the latest technologies. I also want to thank all those who engage in teaching our language and explain our culture - I believe all teachers of the Goethe-Zentrum are here, as well as its new director, Katrin Junken.

The Logo which will accompany all our events this year, right up to the concert from the roof of the world which we boldly plan to hold end of December, this Logo symbolizes the richness of our relation. It was designed by Neelam Bhurtel. She won a tough competition in which many excellent designs competed. Congratulations to Neelam! We will reveal your work after the Chief Guest's speech.

Allow me to thank Nepal for extending support to Germany in the upcoming election to non-permanent membership of the United Nations. We count on your support, so that we can work for multilateral peace-making, something to which Nepal's army is contributing so much.

(Roland Schäfer is the Ambassador of Germany to Nepal. Excerpts of his speech delivered at 20 May 2018 in a program.) ■



NO LOAD SHEDDING!

Mission Accomplished

After two years of intense efforts, Kul Man Ghishing, managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority, has been able to declare the country load-shedding free

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the rise in water levels of major rivers and proper management, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has announced the entire country as free of load-shedding. This was one of the major commitments made by Ghishing in his appointment as MD.

Although NEA has been implementing it since last few weeks, the power utility has officially announced elimination of load-shedding for the industrial sector from May 14, 2018, a year after relieving residential customers who had suffered never-ending power cuts for decades.

Although the power cut for households ended two years ago, the industrial sector was facing blackouts lasting 3-4 hours daily. During an inspection at the NEA's load dispatch centre last month, Energy Minister Barsha Man Pun had directed the authorities concerned to remove power cuts in the industrial sector from mid-May.

"Now, the industrial sector is also free of power cuts," said MD Ghishing. "We have ended load-shedding in the industrial sector as the power generation from the run-of-the-river plants has increased due to the rise in water levels of key rivers and utilisation of the Kulekhani hydropower project reservoir," said Ghishing, adding that the deficit has been met by imports from India.

"The entire country is free of load-shedding now." The demand of electricity in the industrial sector hovers around 300MW. Initially, the industrial corridors in Birgunj and

Biratnagar were getting uninterrupted power supply on a trial basis.

NEA has been supplying uninterrupted energy to residential customers for more than a year at the expense of factories where there is load-shedding lasting 3-4 hours during peak times.

According to NEA, currently, the total electricity supply amounts to 1,000MW while demand during peak hours stands at 1,300MW. The NEA has been supplying electricity imported over the Raxaul-Parwanipur cross-border



MD Ghishing

power line to the industrial corridor in Birgunj.

The NEA has increased energy imports over the cross-border power line by around 40MW. The power utility said that the domestic generation, which currently stands at 500MW, was expected to rise in the near future.

Although Nepal's total installed capacity of the hydropower plants stands at around 1,000MW, production goes down by more than 50 percent when water levels in the rivers fall during the dry season.

With the announcement, NEA has taken numbers of measures to optimise available electricity by controlling leakage and encouraging the use of LED lights, among others.

NEA will be able to sustain the supply during winter as the 456-megawatt Upper Tamakoshi Hydroelectric Project will start generating power by the end of this year and some private sector projects will also be completed.

Although the NEA's power utility has been generating full electricity now, the generation from snow-fed rivers falls to one-third of the installed capacity of run-of-the-river hydropower plants.

As per NEA, 80 per cent of the total electricity supplied is being consumed by domestic users and the industry sector consumes only eight per cent of the total electricity.

According to Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), hydroelectric projects with the capacity to produce 94.8 megawatts of electricity are in the last stage of construction and will be completed within

the end of this fiscal year.

Out of total installed capacity of 1,073 megawatts, NEA projects contribute 562 megawatts and 511 megawatts is contributed by independent power producers (IPPs). NEA is currently importing 450 MW of electricity from India to fulfill the demand in the country.

With the addition of 94 megawatts of power, the country's total installed capacity will rise to 1,167 megawatts, but it will still fall short of the demand.

Of the seven projects nearing completion, 25-megawatt Kabeli B1,

21.6-megawatt Lower Hewa Khola and 20-megawatt Lower Modi are the three major projects.

Also, 100 megawatts of electricity has already been connected to the national grid till date this fiscal, with contribution of 14 projects constructed by NEA and IPPs. These included NEA's key project - the 30MW Chamelia. Likewise, 13.6MW Thapa Khola and 13MW Madkyu Khola were the major projects that were completed by the private sector.

Looking ahead, a total of 661 megawatts of electricity is expected to be connected to the national grid in fiscal 2018-19. The government and NEA will frequently monitor, coordinate and provide necessary support to the projects to ensure they are completed on time, according to officials.

Among others, 456-megawatt Upper Tamakoshi hydel project, one of the national pride projects, is scheduled to be connected to national grid next fiscal. Similarly, 40MW Khanu Khola 1; 27MW Dordi Khola; 25MW Upper Dordi A; 23.5MW Solu Khola; 22.2 MW Upper Chaku A; 22MW Bagmati Khola Small are the other major projects, out of the total 12 projects, to be connected to the national grid next fiscal.

"We are focused on expediting construction of key NEA projects. These include 456MW Upper Tamakoshi, 14.8MW Upper Sanjen, 102MW Middle Bhotekoshi, 111MW Rasuwagadhi and 42.5MW Sanjen, which are to be completed by 2020," said Prabal Adhikari, spokesperson for NEA. "Along with these hydropower projects, the government has completed the construction of 132 kV Balanch-Attaria transmission line, which is providing the backbone for the entire Province 7."

In the last two years, NEA has taken all steps to complete the transmission line and many projects under the construction of private and NEA's subsidiary. With this initiative, NEA has been in a position to announce load-shedding free Nepal. ■

NEPALI WOMEN

Gaining Strength

Nepali Women Experience Less Partner Violence Than Bangladesh And India

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the change in legal systems, constitutional provisions, Nepalese women have made a tremendous progress in the last decade. With the strong acts against domestic violence, Nepalese women are feeling strong.

Although Nepal's South Asian neighbors started women empowerment program long before Nepal, they are unable to make major progress to reduce domestic violence.

A recently published report shows that Nepali women experience less partner violence, both physical and sexual, than in Bangladesh and India.

India has been ranked second among thirteen Asian and Middle Eastern countries in terms of number of women experiencing partner violence, according to the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission's report on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

According to the report, Bangladesh has the highest number of women who have faced partner violence, while Singapore has recorded the least number of such incidents.

Nepal fares better than India in terms of women experiencing partner violence, the report said. Pakistan also fares better than India, but data for that country has been given only for the last 12 months.

The violence can take different forms, physical, sexual, or psychological, and it encompasses harmful practices, such as child marriage, sex trafficking, honor killings, sex-selective abortion, female genital mutilation, and sexual

harassment and abuse.

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes targets calling for the elimination of violence against women and all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation by 2030, the report said.

The report states that in India, where law reform in 1971 permitted abortion under broad criteria, most abortions did not meet legal requirements by 2015.

Abortions have become safer in some developing countries where grounds for legal abortion have been expanded.

The report stressed that improving health depends not only on implementing effective programs, but

also on advancing rights, including those frequently neglected in global discussions, such as the right to freely choose sexual partners and the right to safe and legal abortion care.

It also called on countries to tackle restrictive social norms, laws and policies, and to hold governments accountable to their commitments.

The commission also underscored the importance of gathering more evidence on the sexual and reproductive health needs of distinct populations that are often marginalized and vulnerable, including adolescents, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, displaced people and refugees, and people living with disabilities. ■



Adaptation In Bonn Session

Over 3400 participants from 183 Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Paris Agreement (PA), including participants from UN and agencies, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and media attended the 48th session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the 5th session of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on PA (APA 1-5) from 30 to 10 May 2018 in Bonn, Germany. Parties have agreed on draft conclusions in several agenda items for consideration in the Climate Change Conference to be held in Katowice, Poland from 3 to 14 December 2018.

The Bonn session largely focused on advancing the work of the PA Work Programme (WP) to facilitate its implementation. Before Katowice session, Parties will meet in Bangkok from 3 to 8 September 2018 to further negotiate on PAWP. This note updates the negotiation of the Parties on adaptation.

On adaptation stream, SBI considered a report on progress, experience, best practices, lessons learned, gaps, needs and supports provided and received in the process to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), including a report of the Adaptation Committee in assessing the readiness and preparatory support programme of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for adaptation, and LDC Expert Group (LEG) events on national adaptation planning. The SBI agreed to continue negotiation on NAP issues at SBI 49 (December 2018).

Parties under the agenda item on Nairobi work programme (NWP) on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change focused on human settlements and adaptation, welcomed efforts of the partners to identify, communicate and bridge priority knowledge gaps as part of the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiatives (LAKI), encouraged, inter alia, to continue enhancing the role of the NWP as a knowledge-for-action hub for adaptation and resilience. Parties included extreme weather events, drought, water scarcity and land degradation neutrality, agriculture and food security, forests and grasslands, and wetlands in the NWP thematic areas.

Appreciating the work of the LEG, including the NAP Expo, Parties in the agenda item 'matters related to the LDCs' agreed to continue LDC WP as decided in 2001 in Marrakech, and include new elements in the WP for consideration in Katowice session (CoP 24). Parties decided to add two key elements of the Paris Agreement in the LDC WP, namely to support the: (i) process to formulate and implement NAPs and relevant adaptation strategies, including National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA); and (ii) preparation and implementation of successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Parties agreed to continue strengthening: (i) national climate change secretariats/



BY BATU UPRETY

focal points; (ii) cooperative action on adaptation technology development and transfer; and (iii) capacity of meteorological and hydrological services; and also to continue to providing training in negotiating skills and language, promoting public awareness programs, and supporting capacity building initiatives for effective implementation of the UNFCCC, KP and the PA in the LDCs. Parties requested the LEG to support, and encourages other relevant bodies and programs to assist the LDCs in implementing its WP. As per the Article 4.9 of the Convention, developed

countries are obliged to provide finance and technology to the LDCs. In addition, the Technical Expert Meeting on adaptation in Bonn promoted constructive exchange on adaptation planning for vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems.

Nepal is attending all negotiating sessions and meetings right from the adoption of the UNFCCC in May 1992 in New York and CoP1 in 1995. My previous article on 'turning points' (4 May 2018 in Spotlight), SBI and SBSTA mentions over 35 agendas for negotiation. In this session, Nepal returned to the stage of 1995 in terms of participation as one-member delegation attended this Bonn session, indicating climate change negotiation as a least priority of the present government. Two Nepali participants who regularly attended from Nepal delegation since nearly a decade participated on behalf of the African countries.

Nepal's work on adaptation is regularly reflected in major publications. The UNFCCC Secretariat in its Annual Report 2017 has cited Nepal's NAP process as an example that 'has taken advantage of the Convention's adaptation architecture to build strong national systems for adaptation'. It also mentioned Nepal as the 'first country to receive GCF grant' to create the NAP'. Nepal accessed the GCF resources (US\$ 2.95 million) for NAP formulation in 2016 in Marrakech.

Besides NAPA preparation and implementation, the Government of Nepal received support from UK Aid through Oxford Policy Management and Practical Action, including support from ICIMOD for the NAP formulation process from May 2016 to May 2017, including previous preliminary works, and planned to continue the NAP formulation process with GCF support. Although, process for channeling funding is considered complete, accessing GCF support has been a 'tragic' to NAP process as almost one and half-year has lapsed and it is still unclear the time required from now to re-start the NAP process. Several countries are in the advance stage of NAP formulation, but the 'first country' accessing the GCF resource and initiating the NAP process is now at the 'cross-road'. Climate vulnerable people have to 'pay for delay in action'. ■

Widening Gap

The data released by TEPC shows that Nepal's trade deficit widens by 21.5% to Rs 815.26 billion in nine months

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the weakening of Nepalese currency against dollar and rise of oil price globally, Nepal's total bill to import petroleum products has gone up. It resulted in a wide trade gap. Given the current soaring price of crude oil and rising dollar, Nepal's trade deficit will further increase.

At a time when Nepal is importing a large number of vehicles, import of PLO is likely to increase many folds. According to Trade and Export Promotion Center (TEPC), the import of petroleum products has gone up significantly in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year, making it a prime contributor in further exacerbating the yawning trade deficit of Nepal with India.

According to the provisional data released by the Center, the import bill of the petroleum products rose by whopping 34.2 percent, or Rs 29.9 billion, over the nine months of the current fiscal year -- FY2017/18 to Rs 117.29 billion, compared to the same period of the last fiscal year.

The report shows that the petroleum products now alone account for 13.4 percent of the total import of the country. Nepal had imported petroleum products worth Rs 87.39 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year, shows the TEPC data.

The whopping rise in the import bill of the petroleum products in the current fiscal year despite the end of the load-shedding is attributed mainly to the increase in the price of the crude oil in the international market.

"The rise in the consumption of petroleum products by industries coupled with the recovery of price of crude oil prices in international market has increased the import bill of petroleum products in Nepal," said Suyash Khanal, deputy director at the TEPC.

"Many industries are still facing load-shedding for some hours and they rely on petroleum products to power their plants. This has

oil worldwide -- rose above \$78 per barrel this month. Given the present state of Iran crisis and OPEC's decision to cut the price of oil, it will likely to go further up.

With the increase of imports of various products, Nepal's trade deficit continues to widen at an alarming rate. The TEPC data shows that Nepal registered a trade deficit of Rs 815.26 billion in the nine-month period of the current fiscal year, a massive rise of 21.5 percent from the trade imbalance that the country faced in the same period of the last fiscal year -- FY2016/17.

The total import rose 20.4 percent to Rs 874.88 billion while the export grew by merely 7.4 percent to Rs 59.62 billion. With the

huge mismatch between import and export growth, the export to import ratio is now 1:14.7. Such ratio was 1:13.1 in the corresponding period in the last fiscal year.

The export of the woolen carpet has taken a dive of 10 percent to Rs 5.1 billion while products like

readymade garments, lentils, cardamom, ginger, tea, medicinal and aromatic plants, leather, footwear, pashmina and carpets have performed well in the review period.

Although Nepal has seen increase in the rise in export products, it is far away from the reality to meet the widening gap in trade deficit. ■



sustained the demand of the petroleum products," said Khanal. "The recovery of the price of petroleum products in the international market has also increased our import bill," Khanal said.

After slumping to as low as 28 US Dollar in January 2016, the per barrel price of bent crude -- a major benchmark price for purchases of

TRADE AND TRANSIT

Significance Of Kosi Canal Waterway

Kosi Canal Waterway can be developed for operation of relatively large river vessels. The proposed canal waterway, connected with the sea, will have exceptionally great significance for our landlocked country to boost foreign trade and facilitate transit across India.

Unique Connectivity

The greatest advantage of the Kosi Canal Waterway would be its suitability for operation of relatively big river vessels that can connect future river port in Nepal with other neighbouring coastal seaports, also located far away from the Haldia seaport, which is at the terminus of the Hooghly river. This type of sea-river shipping is prevalent in Europe and other countries.

The strong advantage of sea-river shipping is found in its unique connectivity. Seaport transshipment is not required for sea-river vessels to be able to connect the hinterland with overseas destinations. This results in lower transport cost and reduced risk of damage on account of the absence additional transshipment. In our case the storage of goods at Haldia or Calcutta port could be avoided.

Good railways and highways cannot be substitutes for waterways. This is the reason why new navigation canals are now being built in China and European countries despite the fact that those countries are covered by dense network of excellent railways and highways.

New Navigation Canals

Towards the end of the last century the construction of the Mainz-Danube canal had been completed. Now German waterways has been connected with the Black Sea. According to Waterway Journal of the USA, dated 23 May, 2011, construction works are to be undertaken on a massive scale to enlarge the capacity of existing waterways in China and France.

China's Ministry of Transport has announced that it intends to double its investment on waterways construction to US\$ 30.5 billion over the next five years. Similarly, France too has announced that it intends to build 66-mile-long super canal to link Paris waterway to a canal network in northern France and the low countries at a cost of US\$ 6.5 billion.



BY DR. AB THAPA

Nepal's Waterway Development Policy

In 1960s, Nepal had constituted the Waterway Development Board (WDB), comprising secretaries of all relevant ministries, like the foreign, law, transport, water-energy ministries, etc., as members. The function of the WDB was to facilitate works related to all aspects of inland waterway development to provide our country access to sea.

Needless to mention that for any landlocked country proper access to sea is crucial for its development. Our right to freedom of transit is guaranteed by Barcelona Convention Treaties of 1921 and particularly the Statute on the

Regime of Navigable Waterways of International Concern.

Barcelona Convention Treaties

Two international treaties were signed under Barcelona Convention. One of them is the Barcelona Convention and Statute on Freedom of Transit. This is an international treaty signed in Barcelona on 20 April 1921. The treaty ensures freedom of transit for various commercial goods across national boundaries. Another

treaty is the Barcelona Convention and Statute on the Regime of Navigable Waterways of International Concern, which is a multilateral treaty concluded at Barcelona on 20 April 1921. The purpose of this treaty is to ensure freedom of navigation in waters (i.e. ports, rivers and artificial canals) which bears international significance.

Both above treaties are registered in League of Nations Treaty Series on 8 October 1922. They went into effect on 31 October 1922. Both these treaties are still in force.

Trade and Transit Treaties with India

Towards the end of the 1960s, a special high level committee had been constituted to finalize Nepal's proposal for the complete revision of then existing trade and transit treaty with India. Nepal's proposal included the development of inland waterway leading to a seaport access to our country. Unfortunately due to intransient of Indian Government the finalization of treaty was deadlocked for several years. Finally the treaty was signed but waterway development aspect was dropped. ■

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Job Prospects

ILO report estimates job losses and job creation as the world moves to a greener economy

By A CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-four million new jobs will be created globally by 2030 if the right policies to promote a greener economy are put in place, a new ILO report says.

According to World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with Jobs, action to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius will result in sufficient job creation to more than offset job losses of 6 million elsewhere.

New jobs will be created by adopting sustainable practices in the energy sector, including changes in the energy mix, promoting the use of electric vehicles and improving the energy efficiency of buildings.

Ecosystem services - including air and water purification, soil renewal and fertilization, pest control, pollination and protection against extreme weather conditions - sustain, among others, farming, fishing, forestry and tourism activities, which employ 1.2 billion workers.

But projected temperature increases will make heat stress, particularly in agriculture, more common. It can lead to several medical conditions, including exhaustion and stroke. The report calculates that heat stress will cause a 2 per cent global loss in hours worked by 2030 due to sickness.

"The findings of our report underline that jobs rely heavily on a healthy environment and the services that it provides. The green economy can enable millions more people to overcome poverty, and deliver improved livelihoods for this and future generations. This is a very positive message of opportunity in a world of complex choices," ILO Deputy Director-General Deborah Greenfield said at the launch.

At the regional level, there will be net job creation in the Americas, Asia and the Pacific and Europe, representing some 3 million, 14 million and 2 million jobs respectively, resulting from measures taken in the

production and use of energy.

In contrast, there could be net job losses in the Middle East (-0.48 per cent) and Africa (-0.04 per cent) if current trends continue, due to the dependence of these regions on fossil fuel and mining, respectively.

The report calls on countries to take urgent action to train workers in the skills needed for the transition to a greener economy, and provide them with social protection that facilitates the transition to new jobs, contributes to preventing poverty and reduces the vulnerability of households and communities.

"Policy changes in these regions could offset the anticipated job losses or their negative impact. Low- and some middle- income countries still need support to develop data collection, and adopt and finance

economy' which includes activities like recycling, repair, rent and remanufacture - replacing the traditional economic model of "extracting, making, using and disposing".

No gains without the right policies

Although measures to address climate change may result in short-term employment losses in some cases, their negative impact can be reduced through appropriate policies.

The report calls for synergies between social protection and environmental policies which support both workers' incomes and the transition to a greener economy. A policy mix comprising cash transfers, stronger social insurance and limits on the use of fossil fuels would lead to faster economic growth, stronger employment creation and a fairer income distribution, as well as lower greenhouse gas emissions.

According to ILO News, countries should take urgent action to anticipate the skills needed for the transition to greener economies and provide new training programmes. The transition to more sustainable agricultural systems would create jobs in medium and large organic farms, and allow smallholders to diversify their sources of income, notably if farmers have the right skills.

The report also shows that environmental laws, regulations and policies that include labour issues offer a powerful means to advance the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and environmental objectives.

"Social dialogue which allows employers and workers to participate in the political decision-making process alongside governments plays a key role in reconciling social and economic objectives with environmental concerns. There are cases in which such dialogue not only helped to reduce the environmental impact of policies but also avoided a negative impact on employment or working conditions," concludes Saget. ■



strategies towards a just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy and society that includes everyone from all groups of society," says Catherine Saget, the lead author of the report.

Other key findings

Most sectors of the economy will benefit from net job creation: of the 163 economic sectors analysed, only 14 will suffer employment losses of more than 10,000 jobs worldwide.

Only two sectors, petroleum extraction and petroleum refining, show losses of 1 million or more jobs.

2.5 million jobs will be created in renewables-based electricity, offsetting some 400,000 jobs lost in fossil fuel-based electricity generation.

6 million jobs can be created by transitioning towards a 'circular

Ten Things To Do In Kathmandu

Besides the main tourist attractions in the valley such as Pashupatinath Temple, Durbar Marg or Kumbheshwar Temple, there are some ways to enjoy Kathmandu like a local would do.

1. A day exploring Thamel. - Thamel is a prime tourist spot and hence the cluster of many ethnic and religious stores. It also is known for its fine dines such as Fire and Ice to hangout places like Electric Pagoda.

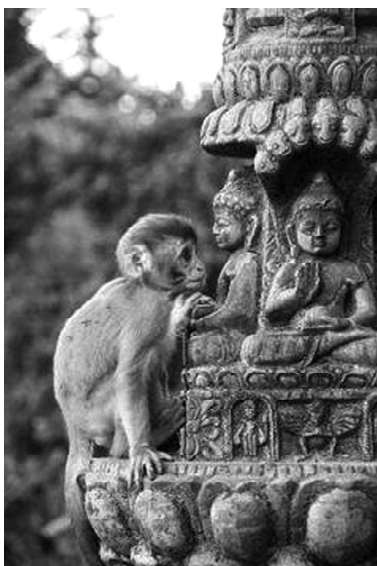


BY AYUSHI SUREKA

2. Take artsy pictures in Basantpur - Basantpur is yet another fascinating spot to wander around, which has several beautiful and historical architectural buildings that are of great value to our customs. It naturally has a good view to take artsy pictures with friends.

3. Lhaphing at Boju, Boudha - In the midst of the noisy crowd in Boudha lies a very peaceful little place called 'Boju' that serves the best la-phing in my experience. Lhaphing is a Tibetan summer snack and also one of the main street items of Nepal.

4. 1000 steps at Dhulikhel - In the outskirts of the town lies a mild hike of 1000 steps atop a mountain called Dhulikhel. Let alone the explicit view of the Kathmandu valley with shimmering lights like a panorama, the path leads you to a vintage temple that freshens one's mood.



perfect way to spend a warm sunny day with friends or family in the nature.

5. Golf at Gokarna - Gokarna a.k.a Le Meridien Resort is a massive resort with many activities, which also includes a downhill golf course. I believe that this is a

6. Wear dhaka with pride - Dhaka is a traditional Nepali clothing material that ranges in many colors and patterns. As a fashion enthusiast, I think there are many ways to jazz up the piece. Imagine wearing a dress of dhaka material, you would be wearing western, but it'd still be ethnic, how cool is that?

7. Swayambhunath Stupa - One of the most attractive spots for me is this unique



world heritage site. It is truly intoxicating that the stupa has ancient work carved to its structure. The ambience created spreads a strong positivity in the body and mind.

8. Go cycling around Patan - Patan Durbar Square is clustered with the finest remarkable ancient foundations with intricate carvings jammed up to its structure. This beautiful place lights up at night making it even more mesmerizing.

9. The Shangri-La Rooftop Swimming - The Shangri-La Hotel is listed as one of the top reputed hotels in the Kathmandu Valley. The rooftop swimming pool is a great idea to bask beneath the sun and the view from top is inexplicable.

10. Momo Competition at Nandan - How could our list as a foodie possibly end without having a momo competition? For those who haven't, check out the restaurant 'Nandan' in New Road that serves the most delicious momo's of all time. ■

PLANE CRASH

Policy Failure

Nepal's Civil Aviation policy is responsible for a number of plane crashes in remote Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although certain pre-requisites need to be fulfilled to issue permission to fly single engine aircraft in Nepal's hilly terrains, the civil aviation authority issues the permission undermining such pre-requisites.

Mountain Air's recent plane crash is the latest case of Nepal's Civil Aviation's negligence over single engine planes. Just three years ago, CAN had completely banned one engine to fly in the mountain terrains.

With the pressure from political leaders and business community, CAN revoked its decision allowing single aircraft for cargo purpose. The Probe Committees have clearly recommended CAN not to allow single engines to fly in Nepal's terrains as there are no places to safely land the plane in case of engine failure.

According to an old saying, "There is safety in numbers." If the saying is true, if one engine is safe, are two engines twice as safe? This means single engines are more vulnerable than the two engines in case of emergency.

According to a study, a light twin engine pilot finds time to pick a spot for an emergency landing in case of failure of one engine. This is not so with the case of single engine. The single-engine pilot's limited choices from the twin-engine pilot's options.

Single engine pilots have very few options for survival in case of failure of engine.

In most cases the only choice is selecting what not to hit. This is where prior planning is important. However, with only few open spaces in mountain terrains, even a safe pilot familiar with the local area cannot

save himself.

In the recent case, even with a long experience of flying the single engine in the mountain, Makalu Air cargo aircraft Pilot Kiran Bhattarai and co-pilot Aditya Nepali were

Representatives in the aftermath of the crash of a single-engine cargo aircraft of Makalu Air. Lawmaker Dilendra Prasad Badu said such accidents involving single-engine aircraft had been repeating frequently.



unable to survive. Both of them died in the crash that occurred at an altitude of 12,800 feet.

The single-engine Cessna 208B Grand Caravan with call sign 9N-AJU had flown to Humla headquarters Simikot from Surkhet. The plane had taken off from Surkhet to Humla district headquarters Simikot.

Makalu Air has three single-engine Cessna 208B Grand Caravan aircraft in its fleet. Based in Nepalgunj, Makalu Air provides chartered passenger and cargo services.

Lawmakers raised issues related to air safety in the House of

Citing a study report that had shown single-engine aircraft were prone to accidents, Badu said the government should conduct proper study and come up with a clear policy on single-engine aircraft.

Member of Chhakka Bahadur Lama said air transport was not an option but compulsion for the people of Humla with no road access, and such accidents occurred frequently.

Although several fatalities have already occurred in the mid-west in the accidents of single engine, the time has come for CAN to consider whether it is appropriate to allow single engines to fly. ■

Memory Of Lives Lost in Langtang

Unable to hold tears, men choke with a loss of words in remembering their relatives lost in the devastating earthquake in 2015. Out of 600 inhabitants of Langtang, 175 had died in the devastation. Many tourists, foreign and domestic, lost their lives as well. Those who survived have been left with wounds, which will take decades to heal. Almost every household has lost someone. Some have lost their newly married wives, while others have lost beloved husbands and still others have lost their dear children and parents. The wound is fresh. People in Langtang might have accepted their relatives' fate but haven't been able to overcome the wound that the 2015 earthquake has left.

Advocate Phurpa Tamang (Dai) is from Thulo Bharkhu, Rasuwa. He planned a literary visit to Langtang to recite poems in memory of those who perished in Langtang on that fateful day of April 25, 2015. Several Nepalese and foreigners had lost their lives on that day. The stories told by Ghyalbu Dai still sends a shiver down my spine. His daughters were playing in the house. Two of the daughters were locked inside the kitchen during the play. Suddenly the earth shook and the 'snow' came and hit the house. The girls were smart enough to conceal themselves under tables, as they had learnt in the school. They survived. This was in Kyanjin. His sister in Langtang couldn't survive the fury of nature. Her legs were chopped by the tin

sheet that is used
as roof in these
areas. His
other sister



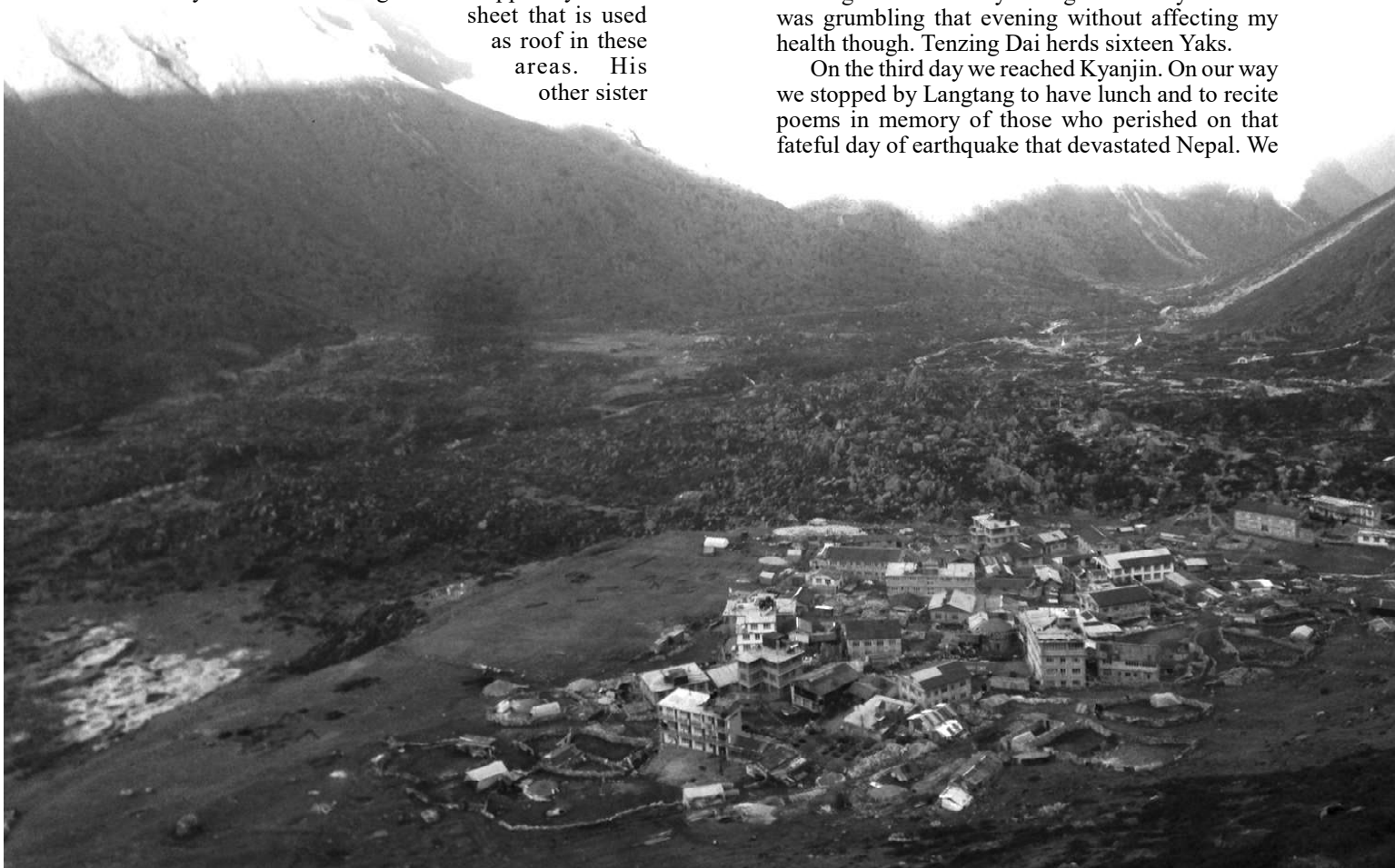
BY ABHISHEKH ADHIKARI

is bereaved of her husband leaving three surviving daughters. I listened to him helpless. I cannot undo what had happened on that day but I only wish it was undone. It was a war declared and concluded by nature mercilessly on those who were helpless.

On 26th of Baishak (May 9, 2018) I left home and reached Dhunche. Phurpa Dai hosted me at his brother Lakpa Dai's place. On 27th of Baishak (May 10, 2018) eleven of us gathered at Shyaphrubesi -- Shiva Pudasaini (Dai) from Jiling, Nuwakot, Phurpa Tamang (Dai) from Thulo Bharkhu, Rasuwa, Bishwash Sunuwar (Dai) from Okhaldhunga, Dipendra Singh Thapa (Dai) from Dhading, Sashi Kumar Dangol (Dai) from Betrawati, Rasuwa, Bhimshen Pandey from Devighat, Nuwakot, Sanjok Dangol from Betrawati, Rasuwa, Buddhi Lal Chitrakar from Devighat, Nuwakot, Sujina Lawat from Uttargaya, Rasuwa and Bijaya Tiwari from Laharepauwa, Rasuwa.

From Shyaphrubesi we started our trek in the afternoon after quickly grabbing some snacks. Our destination for that day was Pahirol. We didn't have problems reaching there. On the second day we reached Ghoda Tabela. Some of us decided to try Yak milk in Tenzing Dai's cowshed. It was rich in taste and nourishment. I am glad we had it in the evening. It wasn't easy to digest and my stomach was grumbling that evening without affecting my health though. Tenzing Dai herds sixteen Yaks.

On the third day we reached Kyanjin. On our way we stopped by Langtang to have lunch and to recite poems in memory of those who perished on that fateful day of earthquake that devastated Nepal. We



TRAVELOGUE

were less organized than I had thought. We had few local witnesses to the recitation. We recited poems on the trail right in front of the rock on which Sashi Dangol (Dai), also an artist, painted our trek objectives. Tears flowed and voices choked as Phurpa Dai recited poems. From Langtang it's two and half hour trek to Kyanjin. When we were about to reach Kyanjin my breath became heavy and short. I struggled to walk every step. Kyanjin is at a height of 3870 meters.

On the fourth day we rested in Kyanjin. We took a

short of Shyaphurbesi. We spent the night at Kancha Dai's (Tara Shrestha's) guest house. Tara Dai had lost his left limb to frost bite eleven years ago. The hardships people suffer in these mountains are unbelievable. Yet their sense of humor is unparalleled. Phurpa Dai humorously told that all the bubbly and life giving girls which make Langtang come alive perished. The pun was intended. Ghyalbu Dai seconded his thought. That's true. I could see few young women there. Those young people who had



walk around the valley. Some of us hiked to the nearest view point, Kyanjin Ri. I accompanied Phurpa Dai and met his relatives. That's when I realized tears being contained and voices being uttered with pain and difficulty. On the fifth day fortunately there was snowfall. Everyone had wanted to experience snowfall. In fact trekking to Kyanjin would have been incomplete without the feel of the snow. After playing with snow we descended and reached Shepra Gaun on the same day. It was a long walk. It was easy because it was downhill and none of us had the knee problem. Shepra Gaun is an alternative trail. It took us one hour and forty minutes to reach Sherpa Gaun from Lama Hotel. I saw two mountain goats (Ghorel) on the way. I admire their sense of balance. After I made my appearance suddenly on that trail the mountain goat jumped right into that steep slope from a cliff. I felt bad for having spoilt its peace but that was a sight worth seeing. Sherpa Gaun is four to five hours

come in search of jobs were from Okhaldhunga, Solukhumbu and other districts.

The weather didn't play spoilsport for us throughout our trek. I had been a little worried when I had looked at the weather forecast for the week before we started our journey. There was plenty of rain in the forecast. But for four days it didn't rain during day time and the sky was clear. On the fifth day as we were trekking downhill from Kyanjin to Sherpa Gaun it drizzled a bit throughout the day and kept the weather pleasant. On the sixth day again the weather cleared up and it was a comfortable trek from Shepra Gaun to Shyaphurbesi.

We climbed up and down the trail. The weather was pristine. The birds were chirpy. The animals active. There were plenty of rhododendrons, pink, white and crimson. The hills were lush green, the mountains were snow-clad and the sky was azure. ■

Socially Constructed Identities

Men and women come with different but innately defined social roles. From the moment a child is born, we follow the custom of fitting the infant within one of the binaries. The child is molded to be either masculine or feminine depending on the gender; male and female. As today we notice the positive inclination towards gender equality, the growing LGBTQ scenarios as well as acceptance of individuality, are we unaware that gender may not be a binary or do we conveniently ignore it?

We have always been oblivious to the possibility of multiple genders as our culture enforces us to believe that there exist only two sexes. As mentioned by Dr. Anne Fausto Sterling, the concept of intersexual bodies have been studied upon with great interest by medical professionals and within this category lie three other subgroups, characteristic of a mixture of both male and female biological features. Hermaphrodites (Herms) are individuals with one testis and one ovary whereas the male pseudohermaphrodites (Merms) possess testis no ovaries but some aspects of the female body and female pseudohermaphrodites (Ferms) with one ovary and minor male features but no testis. Most intersexual undergo a surgery to be either male or female at birth as otherwise the 'deformed' child will have a difficult time fitting into the society. While science justifies the possibility of the intersexual to survive the way they were born, our culture needs the distinction between just two sexes. Prior to considering any of these possibilities such as the peaceful existence of other genders, there are a lot of things we need to be open and accepting about. These issues such as intersexuality and homosexuality maybe be difficult to deal with in a society that still shuns away the act of sex, as if it doesn't exist.

Our acceptance of differences and deviations may be improving each day but it is imperative to realize that we often reduce an individual's choices or behaviours as one's identity. Along the lines of Judith Butler, I urge all of us to think that gender may not be an identity but a series of our socially constructed behaviours. Similarly, being lesbian, gay or transgender is just a choice or performance and not somebody's identity. We all should be given a free choice of deciding how we wish to identify ourselves rather than letting someone else assume their rights to label us. As I read about the Mati Work amongst the Creole working class women in Suriname I realised the



BY SHREYA GYAWALI

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As the male god may get jealous of these woman being involved with another man, the religion itself justifies Mati work for them. This kind of religious explanation is also important as it is an alternative to the hegemonic western definition of homosexuality that we assume is absolute.

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problematic western embedded notion of homosexuality that we are trapped within. Mati in Suriname are women who have sex with both men and women, consecutively or simultaneously. These women maybe married to men with children but they form close sexual bonds with their female friends too. They usually share a transactional relationship with men but prefer to be involved more with women. Their relationship with males isn't always due to the economic factor; for instance the young Mati women who are economically independent may need to be sexually involved with a man in order to gain the status of motherhood that she highly values. The Mati work stems from their Winti religion that carries the belief of an individual being composed of two deities, the male and female. As the male god may get jealous of these woman being involved with another man, the religion itself justifies Mati work for them. This kind of religious explanation is also important as it is an alternative to the hegemonic western definition of homosexuality that we assume is absolute.

As I'd like all of us to embrace these possible scenarios such as the ones I've mentioned above, I do realize that the transition from traditional beliefs will not be without friction. However, I'd like to think about the agency each one of us deserves to have over our lives. Even within the society's dichotomous gender category, several variations exist with some women being more hairy and others broad chested whereas some men may have less facial hair. Similarly, the intersex individuals are people simply with variations in genitals and we must accept our gender diverse world. Our society is far from accepting these multi-gender situations as while we do consider the existence of the third gender today, we still officially term them as the 'other'. Our language itself limits their peaceful existence and instills in them a fear of transgression. While the males can be referred to as he/him and females as her/she, how do we address the others? Why is it necessary to 'come out of the closet' if you wish to sexually be involved with the person from the same gender but not the opposite? Change may seem like a challenge but we could always start small. So, instead of readily accepting these absurd societal rules maybe it is time we question them and try changing the way we perceive things. ■

Himalayan Glaciers Are Wasting Away, Threatening Mountain Communities

By NEHA JAIN

Himalayan glaciers have been retreating, shrinking and losing mass since the 1960s, consistent with rising temperatures and decreasing precipitation.

In contrast, glaciers in the northwest region of Karakoram have shown stable mass balances since the 1970s, likely due to cooler summer temperatures, increased snowfall, and a lower sensitivity to climate change.

Mass wastage is resulting in rising debris-cover on glaciers and more glacial lakes. Extreme rainfall events in the future may cause floods due to the bursting of glacial lakes, posing a threat to mountain communities.

At the top of the world, the iconic and majestic Himalayas boast a quarter of the almost 200,000 mountain glaciers found on Earth. Dubbed the "water towers of Asia", these lofty glaciers store huge amounts of freshwater. In late spring, summer and early autumn, snow and glacial melt runoff feeds India's most important rivers

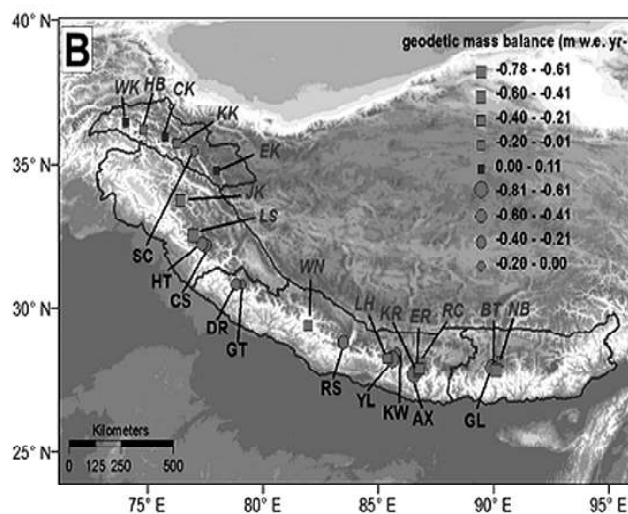
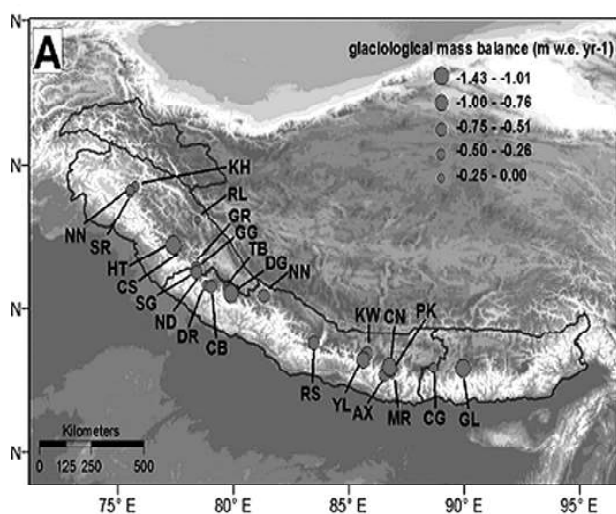
witnessed an increase in glacial debris-cover and lakes and are projecting a surge in melt runoff until 2050.

The "new review is welcome" given the "manifold studies" published over the past few years, said Tobias Bolch, a glaciologist at the University of Zurich, who was the lead author of the last review in 2012 on the long-term state of Himalayan glaciers.

"Most important is that some biased in-situ (field-based) measurements were excluded for providing the best estimates of glaciers' mass changes in the Himalayas. The best estimate is less negative than estimated before, but the mass loss is still significant," he highlighted.

Challenges in conducting field work on glaciers

Glaciologists assess the health of glaciers by studying their mass balance, length and area, among other features. Glaciers gain mass (accumulation) mainly by snowfall and when avalanches occur while they lose



- the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra - and the water is used for drinking, irrigating farmland and powering hydro-electric plants for almost half of India's population.

Glaciers are vulnerable to rising temperatures and changes in precipitation. With the livelihood and water security of almost a billion people living in the Himalayan countries - Pakistan, China, India, Nepal, and Bhutan - at stake, glaciologists are scrambling to monitor the health and dynamics of these precious glaciers.

Now, an international team of scientists has comprehensively reviewed the state of Himalayan and Karakoram glaciers confirming that Himalayan glaciers are indeed retreating, shrinking in area, and losing mass while in the northwest Karakoram Range - traversing the borders of Pakistan, India, and China - mass has been stable. As ice mass wastes away, researchers have

mass (ablation) by melting and sublimation (evaporation of ice without melting). When more mass is lost than gained, the mass balance of a glacier is negative. Surface mass loss is a direct and swift response to a warming climate whereas decreasing glacial area and length, for example, are slower, taking a few decades to a century to show up.

Directly measuring the mass balance is often hampered by the inaccessibility of the region due to various obstacles like the treacherously jagged terrain, the high elevations, and the hostile weather conditions. Consequently, field measurements are scarce; most studies rely on the trove of indirect data obtained from satellites.

Some past field studies were biased and one reason,

ENVIRONMENT

says glaciologist Christian Vincent from the University of Grenoble in France and co-author of the study, was that they were based on the more-accessible smaller and lower elevation glaciers, which tend to have a lower mass balance.

Using data from those studies led to a higher average mass loss compared with satellite-based estimations and inaccurately reflected the responses of the glaciers in the region, said Etienne Berthier, a glaciologist at University of Toulouse in France and co-author of the study. He added that it also led to an overestimation of the contribution of glacier wastage to sea-level rise.

A further complication: Even within the same region, individual glacier responses are varied depending on factors such as their avalanche activity and extent of debris-cover. Field studies based on carefully selected glaciers with limited debris-cover and avalanche activity are needed to validate satellite-based estimates, said Mohd Farooq Azam, lead author of the review and a glacio-hydrologist at the Indian Institute of Technology in Indore.

A consistent decline in the Himalayas versus stability in the Karakoram

After weeding out dubious field-data, the team found that the average glacier mass wastage in the Himalayas from 1975 to 2015 (-0.49 metres of water equivalent per year) is similar to estimates from satellite-derived data (-0.37 metres of water equivalent per year) and also agrees with the global average until 2000, after which mass loss appears to be less negative. The reasons for the decreasing mass loss are unknown and is "the next standing question," said Azam.

Since the 1960s, most glaciers in the Himalayas are retreating, shrinking in area, and losing mass consistent with rising temperatures and decreasing precipitation. On an average, Himalayan glaciers shrunk 0.36 percent in area per year from 1960 to 2010, which is lower than the shrinkage rate of 0.57 percent per year during the same period for the entire High Mountain Asia (HMA) region covering the Hindu Kush in the west and Tien Shan up in the north.

But there is an exception: Glaciers in the heavily glaciated northwest Karakoram region and the western part of the Tibetan Plateau have had, on average, stable mass balances since the 1970s-with some even gaining mass-known as the Karakoram anomaly. The unusual stability, the researchers believe, is likely due to cooler summer temperatures, increased snowfall, and a lower sensitivity to changes in temperature.

Understanding the behavior of these glaciers is complicated by a phenomenon called surging. "Glaciers in the Karakoram Range are behaving completely different than other glaciers in the world," said Azam. "This is due to the surging (sudden advancement) of some of the glaciers," but the exact mechanism "is not well understood at the moment."

In the dry regions of Karakoram, the central Tibetan Plateau, and Ladakh, especially in areas where the monsoon doesn't reach, "sublimation could be a significant loss contributor," added Azam.

The sun's shortwave energy that is absorbed by glaciers contributes the most to glacier melting in the Himalayas, said Azam. So, glacier wastage is very sensitive to changes in surface albedo (a measure of the reflected shortwave radiation out of the total

incoming shortwave radiation), explained Koji Fujita, a glaciologist at Japan's Nagoya University, and co-author of the study. Snowfall increases surface albedo meaning more energy is reflected and so less is absorbed by the glacier, which reduces melting.

With glacial area shrinking, larger glaciers have become fragmented giving rise to many smaller glaciers over the past five to six decades. Small glaciers as well as those at



lower elevations, the team notes, are "shrinking faster than larger ones."

The western Himalayan glaciers are losing mass slightly more rapidly than the central and eastern Himalayas, observed Azam. Bolch agreed, stating that this has been the trend for the last two decades adding that his own recent satellite-based study from the Lahaul-Spiti region in the Indian western Himalayas found that mass loss has intensified since 2000. He suggested that this may be because glaciers in this region "are located on average on lower elevation" exposing them to higher temperatures. As you move northward closer to the Karakoram, mass loss is lower, he pointed out.

Rising debris cover and glacial lakes

Debris-covered glaciers are common throughout the Himalayas, said Anil Kulkarni, a scientist at the Divecha Center for Climate Change at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. This debris, explained Azam, originates from past avalanches and weathering of rocks from the steep walls of the valley. "Then they are buried with snow for several years and travel with the glacier."

As glacial mass has shrunk, said Azam, embedded debris at the lower parts of the glaciers, especially at the snout, where most melting occurs, is exposed. As a result,

surface-debris, also known as supraglacial debris-cover, has been increasing over the past 5-6 decades. "The upper boundaries of clean and debris-covered ice are getting pushed back higher," said Argha Banerjee, a glaciologist at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Pune.

Recently, Kulkarni along with his colleague found a steady rise in supraglacial debris-cover on 48 glaciers in the Baspa basin located in the western Indian Himalayas from 1997 to 2014. As the "thickness of ice reduces", said Kulkarni, more debris along the sides of the glacier are exposed.

Azam says that the blanket of supraglacial debris, if thick enough, can protect glaciers from the rising temperatures due to their insulating effect. A moderate layer of debris may initially provide some protection, said Kulkarni. But Banerjee reveals that "while initial ice-loss rates are lower in debris-covered glaciers, over a few decades, they catch up with their debris-free counterparts and may lose mass at higher rates."

Bolch explained that this is because "debris-covered glaciers are prone for the development of exposed ice cliffs" and lakes on the surface of glaciers known as supraglacial lakes, "which are hot spots of ice melt." He added that "the tongues of debris-covered glaciers are on average located at lower elevation where they are now exposed to higher temperatures."

Another consequence of melting ice: glacial lakes are cropping up. Patrick Wagon, a glaciologist at the University of Grenoble and co-author of the review, observed that glacial lakes are growing both in number and in size over the past few decades, especially in the central and eastern regions of the Himalayas such as in Nepal, Bhutan, and the Indian state of Sikkim.

These lakes, he noted, can accelerate melting. "Supraglacial lakes absorb more of the sun's energy than the surrounding debris-covered areas, resulting in more heat transferred to the glacier," he elaborated. And glaciers with lakes forming at the end show an "increased velocity at their snout and have an accelerated mass loss due to calving."

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(For full article log in www.spotlightnepal.com) ■

OBITUARY

MANI BIKRAM SHAH

Football Legend Dies

Nepal's Popular Footballer Mani Bikram Shah Passes Away

By A CORRESPONDENT

Scoring numbers of important goals for Nepal during 1990s, national footballer Mani Bikram Shah made his name and fame in Nepal. Starting international football debut by taking part in Prince Cup Football Tournament in Bangkok, he entered Nepal's national team in very early days.

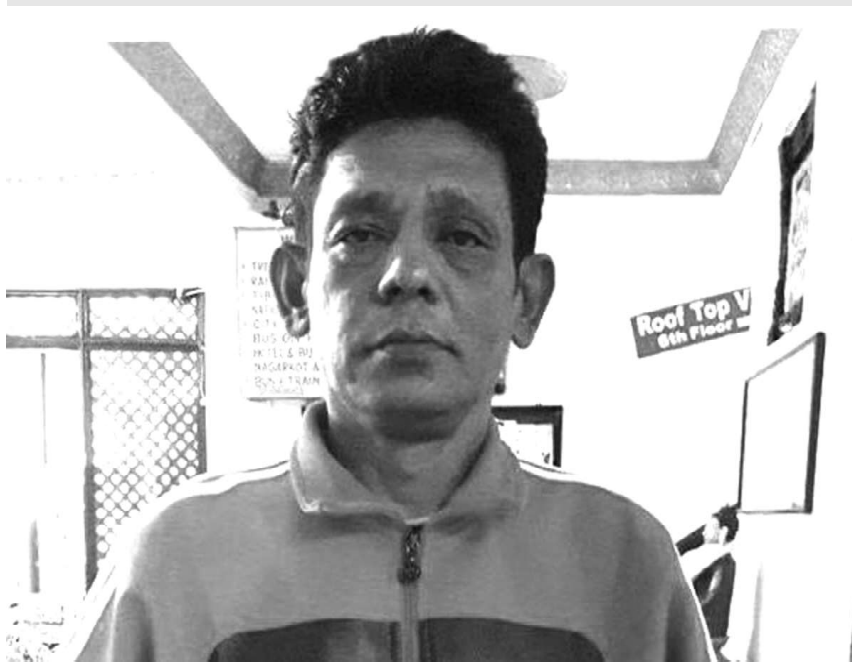
Shah started football from Manang Marsyangdi Club and played a key role to promote Manang Marsyangdi from D to A division. All his contemporary national players regard him as a very friendly player of Nepal. He always played in the team spirit.

was admitted to the GICU (General Intensive Care Unit) in the hospital. He died of liver failure, the official said.

Shah rose to fame with his dazzling performance in 1993 South Asian Games (SAG) in Bangladesh, where Nepal clinched gold medal after defeating arch rival India in the final.

His father, who himself was a great football fan, promoted his son supporting him in all his efforts.

At times, Shah was compared to Diego Maradona of Argentina because of his unbelievable footballing skills and debuted for



His goal helped Nepal lift Football gold at Dhaka South Asian Games in 1993.

Nepal's legendary footballer Shah passed away while undergoing treatment at the Norvic International Hospital in Kathmandu. He was 51.

"Shah was a great player who always inspired the youngsters to play good football," said Upendra Man Singh, former goal keeper of national team. Mani, who was brought to the hospital with chronic liver cirrhosis

National team in the tender age of 18 years. Born in 1967 in Kaldhara Kathmandu, left footer Shah rarely missed the score when he found the ball in D area. His dribbling capability was so strong that his opponents found it hard to snatch the ball from his foot.

He always made opponents panic whenever he found the ball in the opponent territory. Under his leadership in front, Manang Marsyangdi Club won several football tournaments. ■

SANDEEP LAMICHHANE

Rising In New Delhi

Nepalese Teenager Sandeep Lamichhane has made what he aspired in New Delhi

By A CORRESPONDENT

Sandeep Lamichhane spent 11 matches warming the Delhi Daredevils bench at the Indian Premier League and the Nepalese teenage spin bowler's patience was finally rewarded when he made an impressive tournament debut.

The 17-year-old became the first player from Nepal to land an IPL deal in January, but it seemed like an endless wait for the tiny Himalayan nation to see one of its own play in Twenty20 cricket's most glamorous league across the border.

When his chance finally arrived at Feroz Shah Kotla, the leg-spinner gave a good account of himself by returning figures of 4-0-25-1 against Royal Challengers Bangalore, who went on to win the match. "Obviously [performance] doesn't matter if your team is not winning. But I'm still happy and looking forward to giving my best again," Lamichhane said.

He had been flooded with messages of support after appearing in the IPL two months after Nepal secured their one-day international status, he said.

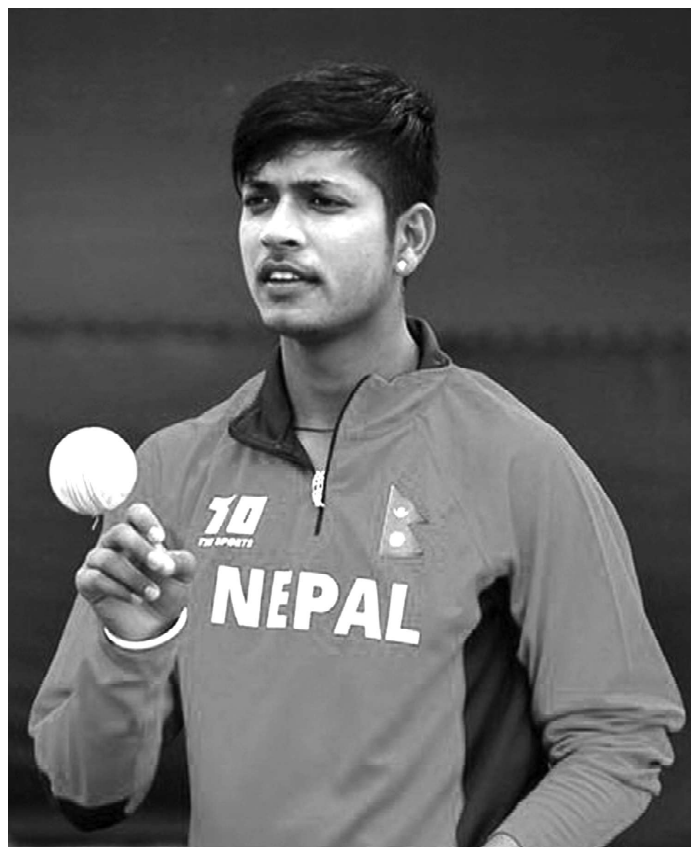
"I've got lots of messages from fans all over the world. They were

waiting to see me on the ground. Fortunately I got this opportunity today," he said.

"It was fantastic. I have been training hard with [head coach] Ricky Ponting. He has been an exceptional coach. I've learned many things from him. I'm really enjoying this moment."

The spin prodigy made his national team debut at 16 and was Nepal's highest wicket-taker at the 2016 Under-19 World Cup. Former Australia captain Michael Clarke played an important role in his career, inviting the youngster to play club cricket in Sydney. "My little buddy @IamSandeep25 gets his first opportunity in the IPL today. What an amazing story," Clarke tweeted.

Lamichhane was pressed into service



immediately, opening the Daredevils attack and striking in his second over, trapping Parthiv Patel leg-before for six. He nearly dismissed AB de Villiers (72 not out) in a similar fashion with his next delivery but the South African not only survived but went on to steer Bangalore home in unison with India skipper Virat Kohli (70).

"It was a great opportunity bowling against the top two batsmen in the world. I got to learn a lot from them. I really enjoyed bowling to them," Lamichhane said.

The Daredevils may be out of the playoff race but Lamichhane values what he learned. "There is a long way to go," he said. "I have to be grounded, I have to stay humble, because I have to play a lot of cricket." ■



Old Age Is A Flood

I am using the most poignant words I ever heard come out of a politician's mouth. Normally he was one who, as a teenager, I had marked as a 'constant deliverer of boredom' Charles de Gaulle (the late). He wasn't a boring man; it was just his narcissism that was boring. It was almost like listening to repeated pictures of Napoleon saying "moi, je suis la France." But coming to think of it now where do we find a politician who doesn't think they are a personification of the country they supposedly represent?



BY GRETA RANA

One has to move down, not up the line. The lower down in the pecking order they go, the more genuine politicians seem. Once the heady haze of power is infused into them, they're gone and narcissism takes over. It doesn't differ across professions. Bank managers affect a swagger once they become managing directors and sportsmen lose that charming humility once they become sports idols.

For a good long time I truly believed that women were different but now, having closely observed how women deal with fame and power, I have come to the conclusion that women manage to hide their narcissism and arrogance better than men do, or maybe men are more honest than women about what they think of themselves and their achievements. Whatever it is, it is for certain that we have now moved into an era when everyone wants to be 'famous': the era of the fame game.

It's taken over the newspapers, the television, and the media in general: they are all plastered with intimate details of the Angelina Jolies and Aishwarya Rai Bacchans of this world! From talent shows to peeks at celebrity mansions the hoi polloi get to share in the excitement. Once it enters family life the tension among family members can sometimes be cut with a knife, figuratively speaking.

It seems that familiarity really can breed contempt. Nowadays there are journalists even whose remit is to dish out the dirt about famous people, or their families. They are aided and abetted quite often by family members who sometimes believe they are more deserving of the limelight than the family member of focus. This is truly bringing the worms out of the apple of family life and we don't have to go far nowadays to find examples.

This weekend's wedding at St. Georges in Windsor has excited a lot of support; particularly from those close enough to wish the best for Diana's youngest son. It's been a lonely journey for Harry in many ways, but he seems to have found a woman he can build a life

with-if only her family weren't so jealous!

One sees the signs in all the comments coming -thanks to the Daily Wail (aka Mail)- from the US, a nation enamored with fame and now 'royalty'. Over 200 years ago the American colonists literally bent over backwards to get rid of the British monarchy. It then seems amazing that they now want a piece of it. Think back at the number of Presidents who have claimed kin. One of the Bush Presidents claims descent from Charles 2nd. Considering that Charles had no legitimate descendants and, so it's claimed, scores of illegitimate ones, a goodly proportion of the British population must be now be able to claim descent from this colourful royal!

This is all to say that there is really nothing new under the sun. This is an age, however, when people are googling to find their ancestry, hoping to find what? We may well wonder. It seems, however, that the older we get the more curious we become about the past. Along with the curiosity comes the usual plethora of ailments: rheumatism, arthritis, overweight or under whichever chooses you, failing eyesight, you just best one and another floods in. That is why de Gaulle in one of his bombasts declared to the French people that 'old age is a flood'.

In the current environment it appears to me that the person who needs most public support is Queen Elizabeth herself. She's had much more to cope with than her mother ever had. Three of her children went through divorces, not pleasant things at the best of times but particularly unpleasant for a woman who has built her whole life on keeping her promises and fulfilling her commitments; and then has to witness her offspring stumble. These are the rough patches the Queen has had to smooth over and carry on doing what she was born to do.

The media barons, of course, love it when people in high places falter. Would they love it as much if it happened to them? No, of course they wouldn't. So, isn't it reasonable to expect a certain amount of decorum around other people's families, especially when there's a wedding in the offing? Weddings rarely bring out the best in people. There's always plenty to squabble about especially if a family has stepsiblings, and especially when siblings believe that one among them has received more parental affection and advantages than others. Those who have more experience than we always advice 'putting up' and 'shutting up'. It's not new wisdom by any means but it's still good advice. A prophet once taught us that only those of us without sin have the right to cast stones at others. We should stick to that because after all as de Gaulle once said "Old age is a flood" and we have no way of knowing when the flood will pour down on us! ■